

NCPE International Women's Day Conference
5th March – Aula Magna, University of Malta, Valletta Campus
Il-Fastidju Sesswali: Fil-Post tax-Xogħol u Fil-Kuntest Soċjali

Panel discussions

Presentation – Sexual Harassment at the Workplace – Dr Lara Dimitrijevic

Please refer to the presentation enclosed with this document.

Panel 1 – Sexual Harassment at the Workplace

Moderator: Dr Lara Dimitrijevic

Panel: Sandra Gatt (DIER), Josef Bugeja (GWU), Joseph Farrugia (MEA), Abigail Mamo (GRTU), Antoinette Aquilina (UHM)

- Having a sexual harassment policy at the place of work is a clear declaration by the employer that such behaviour is not accepted in the organisation. A sexual harassment policy should include specific provisions on what constitutes sexual harassment, the procedure to be followed in cases of sexual harassment and the consequences of such acts.
- Having a sexual harassment policy should not be an end in itself. Other measures need to be taken, such as:
 - Informing employees about the sexual harassment policy and the provisions therein;
 - Providing training to employees;
 - Raising awareness to address the mentality that certain behaviour is not acceptable;
 - Having a representative or HR member who is knowledgeable on how to address cases of sexual harassment to whom employees feel safe to report.
- Clauses on sexual harassment should be included in collective agreements.
- Employers should ensure that persons who are present in the organisation are not sexually harassed. Management should curb any inappropriate behaviour and practices.
- Cases of sexual harassment should not be trivialised. Adequate action has to be taken even if only one episode/case of sexual harassment occurs.
- Challenges related to the underreporting of sexual harassment:
 - Proving a case because of lack of evidence;
 - Work environments where sexual harassment is 'normalised' and/or where victims do not feel safe to report;
 - Work environments where there is no policy on sexual harassment with victims who do not feel safe or who don't know to whom to report;
 - Family and friends who may discourage reporting;

- Long proceedings in the Industrial Tribunal.
- Trade unions provide training to shop stewards on sexual harassment and support management in cases of sexual harassment.
- The employers' association provides a draft sexual harassment policy to its members to encourage employers to put in place such policy.
- Should sexual harassment policy be obligatory?
- The Public Service Management Code provides for cases of sexual harassment in the public administration, particularly through the 'Equality Policy for the Public Service' and the 'Employee Wellbeing: A Harassment and Bullying Free Workplace'.
- NCPE provides training on sexual harassment to any group that requests such training.
- NCPE awards the Equality Mark to organisations that foster gender equality in their policies and practices. One of the criteria is to have a sexual harassment policy in place.
- NCPE provides assistance to organisations to develop and/or strengthen their sexual harassment policies.

Presentation – Power and Sexual Harassment– Dr Marceline Naudi

Please refer to the presentation enclosed with this document.

Panel 2 - Power and Sexual Harassment

Moderator: Dr Marceline Naudi (Senior Lecturer, Department of Gender Studies, University of Malta)

Panel: Miriam Teuma (Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ), Dr Chris Bonnett (SportMalta), Lorraine Spiteri (MCWO), Sandra Cortis (National School Support Services)

- Sexual harassment cases result from the historical imbalance of power between women and men in society. Sexual harassment can occur anywhere and can be verbal, written and physical.
- Sexual harassment is not perceived in the same way by everyone. It is subjective.
- In a patriarchal society, women have to face men who are in power to advance and succeed. This is also evident in the sports sector.
- Equal opportunities must be ensured so that women do not have to face numerous barriers to arrive at the same point as men.
- In many subtle ways and on the media, women are portrayed as sexual objects, and this is being reflected in cases of sexual harassment, sexism and discrimination.
- On the other hand, women's bodies are strong and resilient. Through sports women can develop a healthy relationship with their bodies as well as enhance their assertiveness and self-confidence.
- Gender stereotypes are ingrained in children from a young age whereby boys and girls are 'taught' to act in certain 'socially acceptable' ways.

- Children and adolescents are generally led by example from adults. The use of social media and what is considered as acceptable by parents can impinge on the behaviour of children.
- The educational system has taken steps to provide guidelines for educators in cases of harassment.
- Raising awareness with youth and children is crucial to combat sexist mentalities and to foster boundaries in relationships and on social media, in order to minimise the risk of sexual harassment.
- Irrespective of the adolescents' educational status, life skills are required to prevent and combat sexual harassment.
- Youth workers discuss issues of gender equality with youth groups.
- Having more women in decision making positions can contribute to empower more victims of sexual harassment to report their cases.
- Women should support and empower each other to encourage reporting of sexual harassment cases; as well as to safeguard a person's dignity and individuality, while respecting women with different abilities and backgrounds.
- Policies, particularly sexual harassment policies, should be amended from time to time to reflect the changing circumstances and needs of the workplace and of society in general.