



Original Research Article

A study on awareness and the influence of the posh act on the work environment in the service sector

Sindhu KK¹, Satheesh Kumar Rangasamy^{*2},

¹Dept. of Management Studies, Global Academy of Technology, Bengaluru, Karnataka, India

²Dept. of MBA and Research Centre, Surana College (Autonomous), Kengeri, Bangalore, Karnataka, India

Abstract

Sexual Harassment on women is not a new issue, but it is not much discussed or reported on time and not resolved in an efficient manner.

Background: This study evaluates the awareness of Prevention of Sexual Harassment (POSH) Act among employees and effectiveness of the Prevention of Sexual Harassment Act in creating a safer work environment within an organization.

Objective: The objective of the present research is to assess employee awareness about the POSH Act, evaluate the implementation of POSH policies, and to analyze the correlation between effective enforcement of the act and a positive work environment.

Hypothesizes of the study includes that there is a significant relationship between the effective enforcement of the POSH Act and a positive work environment, and employee awareness positively influences the effectiveness of its implementation.

Results: The findings reveal that most of the employees are aware of the POSH Act, and companies in the service sector provide regular training for their employees. Most employees feel that the implementation POSH Act will and has improved workplace safety and behavior, even though are some concerns about transparency and there is a need for more frequent training on the POSH Policies.

Conclusion: The study concludes that the introduction and implementation of POSH Act has positively influenced workplace behavior and safety, but continuous efforts are needed to enhance its implementation.

Keywords: Sexual Harassment, Vishaka Guidelines, Posh Act, Safe Work Environment.

Received: 01-02-2025; **Accepted:** 24-02-2025; **Available Online:** 05-03-2025

This is an Open Access (OA) journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/), which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work non-commercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

For reprints contact: reprint@ipinnovative.com

1. Introduction

The Vishaka Guidelines were a landmark set of procedural guidelines established in India to address and prevent of any sexual harassment experience at the workplace. These guidelines were initially laid down by the Indian Supreme Court in the landmark case of Vishaka v. State of Rajasthan and the Vishaka Guidelines served as the foundation for the Posh Act, 2013. POSH (The Prevention of Sexual Harassment) plays significant role in creating a safe workplace environment for women in India. POSH act mandates every organization to define their sexual harassment policies, prevention systems, procedures and service rules for its employees. Posh act clearly defines sexual harassment and workplace as:

Sexual harassment includes any unwelcome behavior of a sexual nature, whether explicit or implied this can take various forms such as a) unwanted physical contact and advances; b) request or demand for any kind of sexual favors; c) sexually suggestive comments or remarks; d) displaying or showing pornography materials; e) any other unwelcome physical verbal or non-verbal action with a sexual undertone. If any act is committed that makes the victim reasonably fear for her safety or feel humiliated in her workplace, whether she is salaried, receiving an honorarium, or working voluntarily, in any government organization, public enterprises, or private organization, it can be considered a safety concern.

The scope of workplace under the POSH Act has been broadened significantly to include not just the office building

*Corresponding author: Satheesh Kumar Rangasamy
Email: satheeshk5282@yahoo.com

but also areas like parking lots, the canteen, transportation and accommodation provided by the office for work related travel, electronic communications, and more. Any organization, whether public or private, which has 10 or more individuals, be it permanent staff, temporary hires, consultants, interns or contract workers irrespective of gender, are legally required to comply with the specified regulations mentioned in the act.

1.1 The posh act identifies two main types of sexual harassment

1. **Quid Pro Quo (Tangible Employment Action):** Quid Pro Quo means “this for that” in Latin, refers to any situations where preferential treatments are offered in exchange of sexual favors. In some cases, it also includes situations where an individual faces negative consequences for refusing such demands.
2. **Hostile Work Environment**– This occurs when the workplace becomes intimidating or is charged with inappropriate sexual behavior, creating any kind of environment or atmosphere where employees feel unsafe, uncomfortable, or unable to perform their work effectively.

The COVID-19 pandemic led to a shift towards remote work, raising new challenges for preventing sexual harassment. Initially, some believed the POSH Act was irrelevant for virtual workspaces, but it covers both physical and online environments. The Rajasthan High Court in 2021 expanded the definition of the workplace to include virtual spaces, emphasizing that harassment can occur at home during remote work. Companies need to have a robust POSH policies to ensure that everyone who work any organization or institution, feels safe and respected, regardless of whether they're working in person from office or remotely.

The POSH act is critical in creating a safe and healthy work environment. The purpose of this study is to investigate and evaluate the Influence of the POSH Act on the work environment in the service industry.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Organization culture

POSH Act to be introduced and implemented in any organization and to be effective and to create a secure and respectful work atmosphere, it completely depends upon the organization culture. Organization culture is an important aspect that involves shared values and rules that tell employees how they must perceive and react to workplace harassment. Organization culture gives importance to safety and encourages employees to report incidents without any hesitation. The whole process is supported by respective organizations by setting up Internal Complaints Committees (ICCs), which are essential for addressing the issue effectively and fearlessly. The right organization culture will

make sure employees are trained in the POSH Act, steps to be followed in case employees encounter workplace harassment. It also focuses on employees' awareness and understanding of POSH act for preventing workplace harassment.

2.2. Psychological and social factor

Psychological factors like perception, mental process, perception, emotions and attitudes influence how individuals perceive workplace safety, employee confidence in reporting harassment incidents, and their ability to engage in the workplace. Social factors include cultural norms, groups dynamics, organizational behavior and societal influence on the work setting and the policy enforcement.

2.3. Literature review

(Chawla, 2024)¹ A study was conducted based on the data from 300 listed companies on the National Stock Exchange (NSE), categorized into large, mid-range, and small companies. Data covers a period of 11 years, ranging from FY 2012-13 to FY 2022-23, sourced from annual reports and Business Responsibility Reports (BRR). It was found from the study that there has been a noticeable growth in the prevalence of sexual harassment cases reported by Indian companies in their annual reports over the years. Most cases are reported by a small number of large companies, while many medium and small companies report fewer or no cases, raising concerns about awareness and compliance. The article highlighted the progress made under the POSH Act while also pointing out significant gaps in awareness, reporting, and compliance. It underscores the need for continuous efforts to ensure that all companies, regardless of size, adhere to the Act's provisions to create a safer work environment for women.

(Namrata Prakash, 2023)⁴ This study analyses the influence of the POSH Act on workplace environments. It highlights that the Act has given power to women by providing a platform voice out harassment cases, express grievances. The act has increased awareness about sexual harassment among the employees and contributed to a positive work environment. However, challenges remain the same in smaller organizations regarding implementation and confidentiality. The study emphasizes the need for more awareness programs and training to ensure effective implementation compliance. Overall, the POSH Act has played vital role in promoting gender equality and is creating safer workplaces for women.

(Pulkit Raj, 2023)⁵ The study explores the effectiveness of the POSH Act, 2013, in curb sexual harassment at workplaces in India. It highlights the vital role played by Internal Complaints Committees (ICCs) in creating a protective and inclusive environment workplace for women. The study also discusses challenges like poor enforcement, especially in smaller organizations, and the importance of spreading the scope of POSH Act to include virtual

workspaces. It also finds the need of continuous awareness programs and training by the employer. The author expressed the need to adopt POSH policies to address harassment in both physical and digital spaces, particularly in the context of increased remote work due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It highlights that the active participation of all parties involved is required, such as employers, workers, and appropriate authorities, to accomplish their desired objectives.

(Karuna Jadhav, 2022)³ The research identifies the extent of awareness and view regarding the POSH Act, 2013, among female employees. It finds out that half of the respondents are unaware of the Act's provisions and the existence of Internal Complaints Committees (ICCs). The study mentions the need for and importance of awareness programs and training sessions to employees to ensure effective implementation of the Act. It also investigates the psychological impact of sexual harassment on women employees and the need and urgency for organizations to establish a safe and supportive workplace. The study found out that the increased awareness among the employees and proper implementation of the POSH Act can drastically reduce the incidents of sexual misconduct in the workplace.

(Dr.V.Uma1, 2022)² This research explores the implementation and awareness of POSH Act in a leading hospital and mentions the role played by Vishaka judgement to deal workplace sexual abuse. The study shows that most of the employees have an awareness of POSH ACT, and they also agreed that sufficient training is provided by the organization. The paper concludes that respectful workplace can be witnessed only through continuous education and clear communication about the policy to the employees.

(Sarma, 2021)⁶ This research study examines the evolution and effectiveness of laws in addressing sexual harassment on Women employees in India. It identifies the importance of the Vishaka recommendations and the POSH Act, 2013, in providing a legal outline and base for protecting women at work. The study understands the requirement for comprehensive workplace policies and sensitization programs to reduce harassment effectively. It also discusses international conventions and constitutional safeguards that support women's rights. The paper emphasizes the psychological and professional impact of harassment on victims and calls for robust implementation of laws and policies to create a secure and fair workplace for women.

(Rouf Ahmad Bhat, 2017)⁶ This research paper identifies the causes that leads to sexual misconduct on women at workplace and measures the increase and decrease in sexual harassment cases.

(Rachan Sareen, Surabhi Dhingra, 2024) discusses the POSH Act and its shortcomings, and proposes concrete improvements to make it more effective in combating workplace against sexual harassment.

(Merkin, R.S., Shah, M.K 2014)⁸ carried out research to compare how differences in perceptions of sexual harassment impact productive work environments for employees in Pakistan as compared to the US and Significant results indicated that employees who were sexually harassed reported (a) a decrease in job satisfaction (b) greater turnover intentions and (c) a higher rate of absenteeism.

Gupta, P., Fatima, N., & Kandikuppa, S. (2021)⁹ found that the enforcement of the law against sexual harassment is influenced by factors like caste, class and gender, both survivor and of the perpetrator.

2.4. Statement of problem

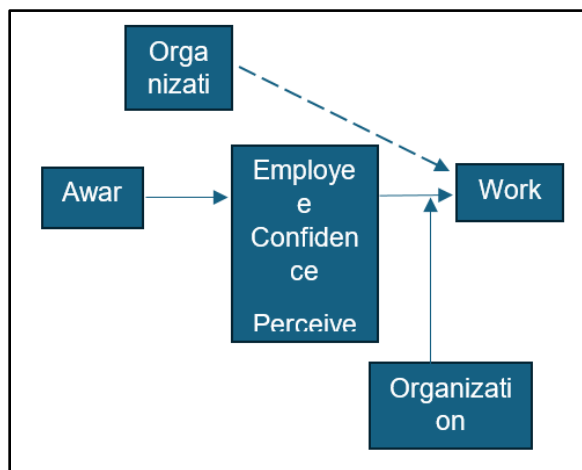
The introduction of the Prevention of Sexual Harassment (POSH) Act, 2013, aims to create a safer and healthy workplace for female employees. However, its effectiveness in the service sector, which is characterized by diverse work settings and different levels of awareness and compliance, remains under-explored. This study seeks to evaluate the influence of the POSH Act on the work environment within the service sector, identifying the awareness among the employees about the POSH act. This study aims to review the effectiveness of organization in preventing and handling harassment incidents. This study also identifies legal hurdles and ethical considerations in implementing the Act.

2.5. Objective of the study

1. To evaluate the awareness level of employees regarding the provisions and implications of Posh act within the organization.
2. To assess the effectiveness of implementation of Posh policies and procedures in creating a safer and more inclusive work environment.
3. To analyze the correlation between effective enforcement of Posh act on Positive work environment.

2.6. Hypotheses

1. HO1- There is no significant relationship between effective enforcement of the Posh Act and positive work environment.
2. HO2- There is no positive association between the awareness about Posh Act among the employees and the effectiveness of its implementation within the organization.



3. Materials and Methods

3.1 Research type

Researchers have applied descriptive research design and presented the data in a descriptive manner.

Demographic Details of the Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
Below 30 Years	32	40
31-35 Years	19	23.75
36-40 Years	12	15
41-45 Years	11	13.75
46+ Years	6	7.5
Total	80	100
Gender		
Male	52	65
Female	28	35
Total	80	100
Marital Status		
Unmarried	32	41.25
Married	47	58.75
Total	80	100

Source of data: Primary data

Interpretation: Most of the respondents (40%) are below 30 year and majority of the respondents (65%) are male and most of the respondents (41.25%) are married.

4.2. Employees

Perception and experiences on posh act enforcement and its impact in the workplace

Particular	Mean	Std. Deviation
Awareness of Posh Act and its provision	4.05	0.82
Received Training on Posh Act	1.13	0.34
Awareness of the internal complaint mechanism for addressing sexual harassment complaints	4.08	0.9
Employee's comfort level in reporting cases of sexual misconduct at the workplace	3.81	0.85
Employees witnessed or experienced any form of sexual harassment at workplace	2	0
Employee's belief that the POSH Act has positively impacted on the work environment	4.01	0.87
Satisfaction level of the assistance offered to survivors of sexual harassment in the organization	4.02	0.77
Employee's observation in changes of behavior towards sexual harassment since POSH Act	1.11	0.31

3.2 Source of data

Primary data has been collected through the structure questionnaire from respondents and the secondary data has been collected through various magazines, journal articles and websites.

3.3 Sample size

Data has been collected from 80 employees from various service firms.

3.4 Statistical tools applied for analysis

Researchers have applied descriptive statistics and Correlation analyze the data.

4. Data Analysis and Interpretation

4.1. Demographic details of the respondents

Confidence of employees in the confidentiality of the complaint redressal process under the POSH Act.	3.88	0.89
Employees believe that reporting cases of sexual harassment would lead to fair and timely resolution	3.87	0.89
Transparency in the process of investigation and resolution of sexual harassment complaints in the organization.	3.83	0.87
Employee's belief in need for more frequent training sessions to control sexual harassment and enhance awareness.	3.82	1
Employee's perspective that POSH Act has helped in creating a safer workplace for women	3.95	0.84
Employee's belief that complaining against a superior will affect their work life negatively	1.77	0.69

Source of data: Primary data

4.3 Interpretation

The above data reflects employees' perception and experiences of POSH Act implementation and its impact on the work. It is interpreted from the above analysis that employees are highly aware of the POSH Act and its internal complaint mechanism. Also, employees have faith that the POSH Act positively influences the work environment. But it is also identified that employees have not received sufficient training, and employees have expressed that there is less change in behavior of employees after implementation of POSH Act. The study also indicates that employees are hesitant to report against superiors and complaining will negatively affect their work life.

4.4 Testing of hypothesis

Objective: To analyze the correlation between effective enforcement of Posh act on positive work environment.

4.5 Hypothesis 1

1. **H0** - There is no significant relationship between effective enforcement of Posh Act and positive work environment.
2. **H1** - There is a significant relationship between effective enforcement of Posh Act and positive work environment.

4.6 Correlation matrix

Relationship between the effective enforcement of posh act and positive work environment.

Effective enforcement of POSH Act	Positive Work Environment	
	Pearson's r	0.691***
	D.F	78
	p-value	< .001
	N	80

Source of data: Primary data

4.7 Interpretation

Since the r value (correlation coefficient) is 0.691, the variables have a strong positive correlation between effective enforcement of POSH Act and positive work environment. Which means that when effective enforcement of POSH Act is high then there is high positive work environment and when effective enforcement of POSH Act is low then there is low positive work environment. 3 stars are associated with

the r value which shows that the variables are having the most Significant relationship.

Here as mentioned above there is a evident correlation between dependent variable positive work environment and independent variable effective enforcement of POSH Act, we can conclude that the alternate hypothesis (H1) is accepted, and null hypothesis (H0) is rejected.

5. Objective

To evaluate the awareness level of employees regarding the provisions and implications of POSH act within the organization.

5.1 Hypothesis 2

1. **H0** - There is no positive association between the level of awareness about the POSH Act among the employees and the effectiveness of its implementation within the organization.
2. **H1** - There is a positive association between the level of awareness about the POSH Act among the employees and the effectiveness of its implementation within the organization.

5.2 Correlation matrix

Association between the level of awareness about posh act among the employees and the effectiveness of its implementation within the organization.

Effectiveness of Implementation of POSH Act	Awareness about POSH Act among employees	
	Pearson's r	0.607***
	df	78
	p-value	< .001
	N	80

Source of data: Primary data

5.3 Interpretation

Since the r value (correlation coefficient) is 0.607, the variables have a strong positive correlation between effectiveness of implementation POSH Act and awareness about POSH Act among employees. Which means that when awareness about POSH Act among employees is high then there is high effectiveness of implementation of POSH Act and when awareness about POSH Act among employees is

low then there is low effectiveness of implementation of POSH Act. There are 3 stars with an r value which indicates that the variables are having the most significant relationship.

Here as mentioned above there is a strong positive correlation between dependent variable effectiveness of implementation of POSH Act and independent variable awareness about POSH Act among employees, we can conclude that the alternate hypothesis (H1) is accepted, and null hypothesis (H0) is rejected.

6. Summary of the Findings, Suggestions and Conclusion

6.1. Findings of the study

Most of the respondents (40%) are below 30 year and majority of the respondents (65%) are male and most of the respondents (41.25%) are married.

Employees exhibit a high level of knowledge about the POSH Act and its internal complaint mechanism. Also, employees have faith that the POSH Act positively influences the work environment. But it is also identified that employees have not received sufficient training, and employees have expressed that there is less change in behavior of employees after implementation of POSH Act. The study also indicates that employees are hesitant to report against superiors and complaining will negatively affect their work life.

There is a robust positive association between dependent variable positive work environment and independent variable effective enforcement of POSH Act.

There is a significant positive relationship between dependent variable effectiveness of implementation of POSH Act and independent variable awareness about POSH Act among employees.

6.2. Suggestions of the study

It is suggested to provide mandatory and regular training programs intended for all employees, focusing on practical scenarios.

It is suggested to ensure a clear, confidential, and accessible reporting process with independent investigations and timely resolutions.

It is suggested to encourage a workplace culture that create respect and does not tolerate harassment at any levels, with strong leadership commitment and open communication.

Reassure employees about the confidentiality of complaints and the measures in place to protect them from retaliation.

Utilize online platforms for training, consider a secure reporting app, and use data analytics to identify and address potential concerns proactively.

7. Conclusion

It is concluded based on the findings that the awareness of POSH ACT among the employees has created a safer and more inclusive workplace. Regular programs and internal mechanisms in place to tackle sexual harassment are viewed positively, with most employees perceiving them as effective. However, there are some areas for improvement, such as increasing the frequency of training, ensuring greater transparency in complaint handling, and addressing concerns related to power dynamics and confidentiality. Overall, the POSH Act has had a positive influence on workplace behavior and safety, but continuous efforts are needed to strengthen certain aspects of its implementation.

8. Source of Funding

None.

9. Conflict of Interest

None.

References

1. Chawla, A. (2024, May 16). A decade of the POSH Act: What the data tells us about how India Inc. has fared. Retrieved from Centre for Economic Data and Analysis: https://ceda.ashoka.edu.in/a-decade-of-the-posh-act-what-the-data-tells-us-about-how-india-inc-has-fared/?print_page=true#cite
2. Uma1 V. (2022). A study on employee awareness on anti-sexualharassment policy (posh), in one of the leading hospitals in vellore. *Int J Creat Res Thoug*, 10(5), 346–51
3. Karuna Jadhav, S. P. (2022). Awareness of Sexual Harassment among Women Working in Chakan. *National. J Profe Soc Work*, 23(2), 173–82.
4. Namrata Prakash, D. G. (2023). Role of POSH (Prevention of Sexual Harassment) of Women at Workplace Act in Making Workplace better for women: An Empirical Study. *J Inf Educ Res*, 3(2), 103–7.
5. Raj, G. A. (2023). Addressing workplace Harassment: The role of POSH committees. *Social Science Research Network*. doi:10.2139/ssrn.4637149
6. Ahmad Bhat1, P. D. (2017). An Overview of Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace in India: An Analytical Study. *Int J Innov Res in Sci, Engineering and Technol*, 6(7), 14361–9.
7. Sarma, R. J. (2021). Sexual Harassment in Work Place and Legal Protection Therein. *J Res Hum Soc Sci*, 9(10), 84–90.
8. Rachan Sareen, Surabhi Dhingra. The POSH Act in India: Progress, Shortcomings, and the Path Forward. *Int J Adv Soc Sci*. 2024; 12(2):47–2.
9. Merkin, R.S., Shah, M.K. The impact of sexual harassment on job satisfaction, turnover intentions, and absenteeism: findings from Pakistan compared to the United States. *Springer Plus* 3, p–215 (2014).
10. Gupta, P., Fatima, N., & Kandikuppa, S. (2021). Sexual Harassment at the Workplace Act: Providing Redress or Maintaining Status Quo? *Social Change*, 51(2), 246–57.

Cite this article: Rangasamy SK, Sindhu KK. A study on awareness and the influence of the posh act on the work environment in the service sector: *J Manag Res Anal*. 2025;12(1):23-28