

# A Study of Harassment in The It Field in Chennai

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**ABSTRACT:** This study focuses at the frequency and type of workplace harassment in Chennai's information technology (IT) industry. Its goal is to determine how frequently IT employees experience or witness harassment, identify common forms such as verbal, physical, psychological, and cyber harassment, and assess employee awareness of organizational policies and legal frameworks such as the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act, 2013 (POSH Act). This study is also examining the reporting behavior of victims and how the organization response to such incidents. The finding of this study shows that despite existing legal protections, there is a considerable underreporting of harassment instances, typically owing to fear of reprisal or a lack of knowledge about reporting methods. The report emphasizes the need of increased awareness initiatives, strong internal complaint committees, and proactive organizational policies in fostering a safer and more inclusive work environment in Chennai's IT industry.

**KEYWORDS:** Workplace harassment, information technology (IT) sectors, sexual harassment, employee awareness, POSH act, reporting behavior.

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## I.INTRODUCTION

The Information Technology (IT) industry has been a driving force behind Chennai's economic growth, creating countless job opportunities and contributing considerably to India's digital revolution. However, along with its rapid growth, concerns have arisen about workplace harassment, which jeopardizes employee well-being and organizational integrity.

Workplace harassment refers to a variety of unwanted behaviors—verbal, physical, psychological, and cyber—that create a hostile work environment. Extended work hours, gender inequities, and hierarchical structures in Chennai's IT industry may all contribute to the occurrence of such misbehavior.

Despite the passage of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act, 2013 (also known as the POSH Act), which requires the formation of Internal Complaints Committees (ICCs) and outlines procedures for resolving grievances, awareness and implementation remain inconsistent. Many employees are either ignorant of these laws or are hesitant to disclose instances for fear of reprisal or distrust in the redressal systems.

This study seeks to determine the prevalence and frequency of workplace harassment reported or seen by IT personnel in Chennai. It tries to investigate the most prevalent kinds of harassment faced, assess employee understanding of organizational rules and legal requirements, and measure victims' reporting behavior as well as the efficacy of organizational remedies. By shining light on these characteristics, the research hopes to inspire policy improvements and build a safer, more inclusive work environment within Chennai's IT sector.

This study is significant because it throws light on the prevalent issue of workplace harassment in Chennai's information technology (IT) sector. According to recent research, more than 52% of IT workers have encountered workplace harassment, with over half changing companies owing to cultural concerns. Despite the adoption of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act, 2013 (POSH Act), a large percentage of employees are still uninformed of their rights and the processes available for recourse. This lack of understanding, along with the fear of reprisal, adds to underreporting, with around 69% of victims declining to register complaints.

## II.RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

- To assess the frequency of workplace harassment experienced or witnessed by IT employees.
- To explore the common types of harassment (verbal, physical, psychological, cyber) encountered in the IT workplace.

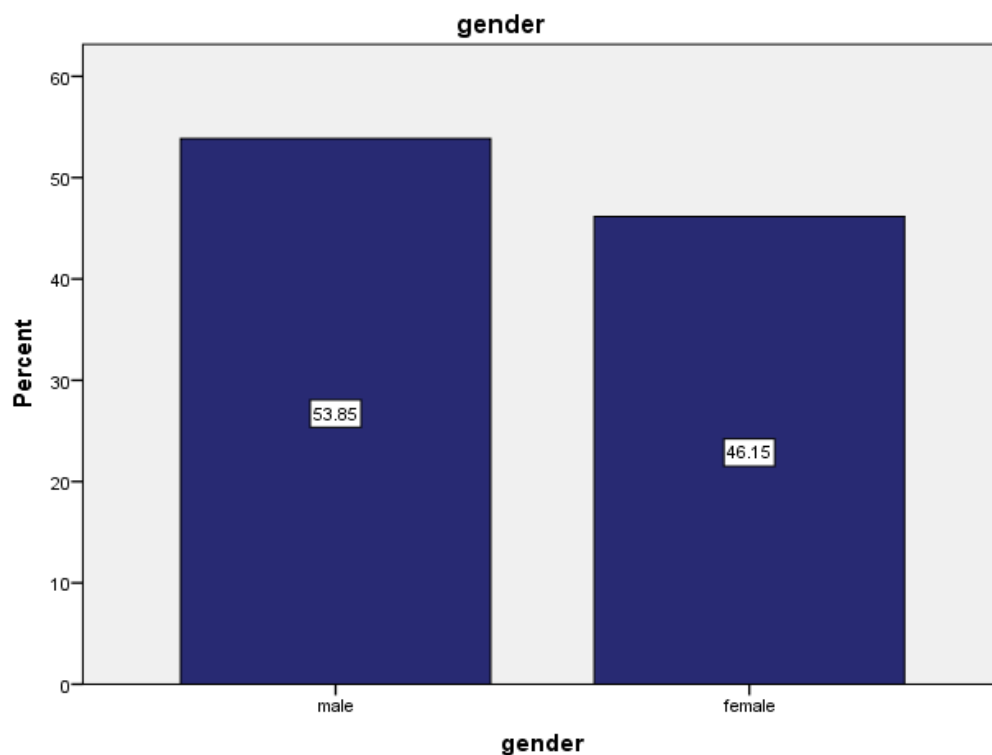
- To determine the level of awareness among employees regarding organizational policies and legal provisions (such as the POSH Act).
- To examine the reporting behavior of harassment victims and the effectiveness of the responses/actions taken by the organization.

### III.METHODOLOGY

This study used a quantitative approach. A sample collection was conducted in both online and offline mode by using standardized questionnaires designed to analyze the Workplace harassment among the workers in Information Technology (IT) sector workers. In the online mode Google form is shared with the workers and in the offline mode the printed question paper is distributed to the workers with the consent of the respective IT Management. Before distributing the questionnaires, the nature of the survey was informed which is voluntary and anonymous. The sample of this study was a Information Technology (IT) sector workers. The Stratified Random sampling techniques were employed to select samples from the IT workers in Chennai. The 40 samples were statically analyzed in IBM SPSS version 20.

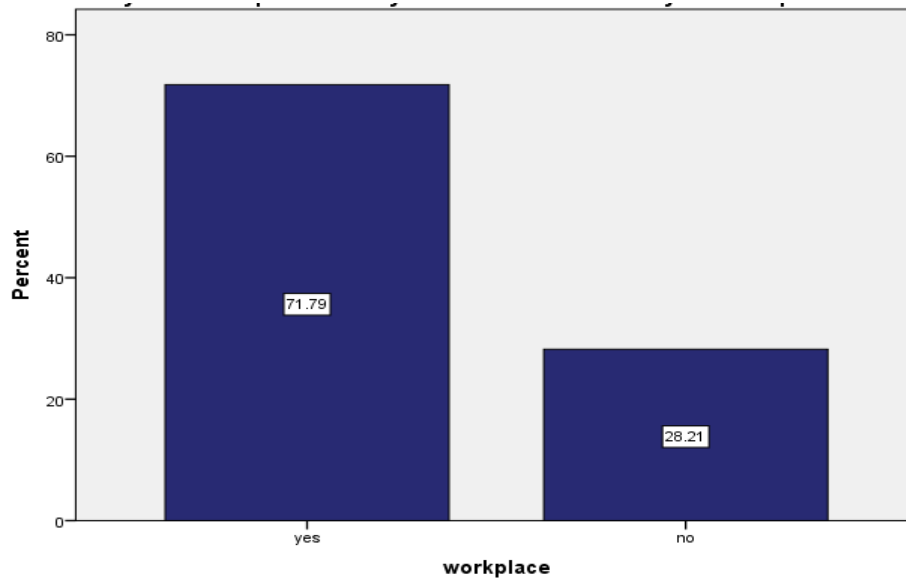
### IV.FINDINGS

*Demographic information:* The majority of the respondents are belonging to the age group of 25-35 (51.3%) and 56.4% below 25 (48.7%). The maximum number of respondents are male 53.8% (21 respondents) and females are 46.2%. the majority of the respondents had a work experience of less than 1 year 56.4% (22 respondents). 17.9% of respondents had experience of 1-3 years followed by the 15.4% of respondents had a experience of 4-7 years and the least number of respondent had a work experience of more than 7 years.



*Table 1: Gender of respondents*

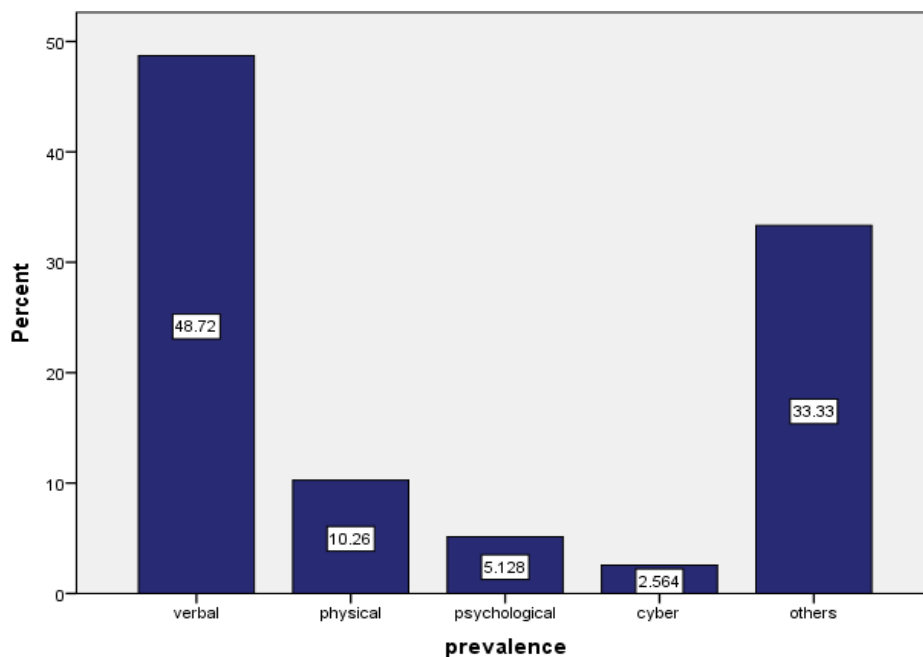
### The frequency of workplace harassment in IT field



**Table 2: Frequency of workplace harassment**

Out of 100%, 71.8% (29 respondents) had experience the workplace harassment. Whereas the 28.2% (11 respondents) had not experience the harassment. This incidence exceeds national estimates, such as the 52.57% recorded in a TechGig poll, implying a potentially more serious issue within the Chennai IT scene.

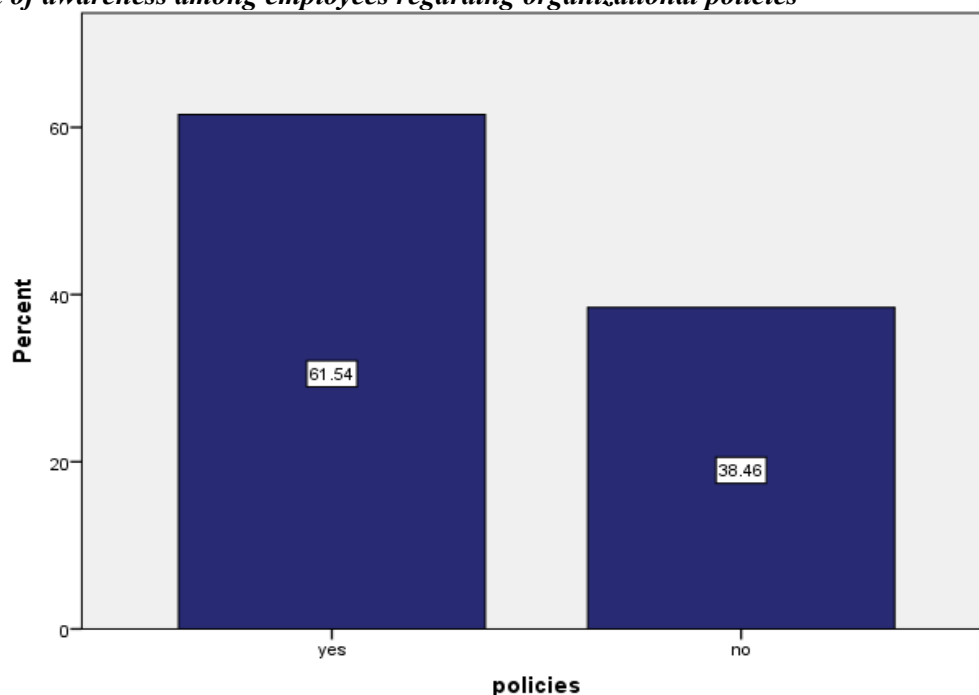
### The common types of harassment (verbal, physical, psychological, cyber) encountered in the IT workplace.



**Table 3: The most common types of harassment in IT field**

The maximum number of respondents reported, verbal harassment is the most prevalent type of harassment in their workplace (48.7%) which followed by other types (33%). 10.3% of the respondents were reported, physical harassment is most prevalent in their workplace. The least members had experienced cyber and psychological harassment.

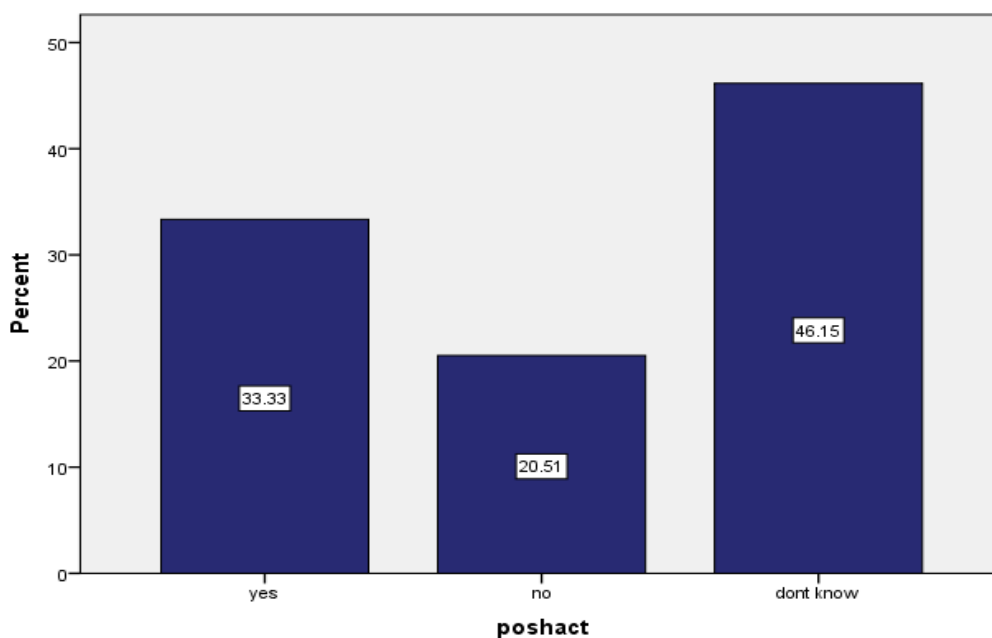
### The level of awareness among employees regarding organizational policies



**Table 4: The level of awareness of employee about the organizational policies**

The majority of the respondents (61.54%) were aware of the policies in their working organization. Whereas, 38% of the respondents were not aware of the policies in their working organization.

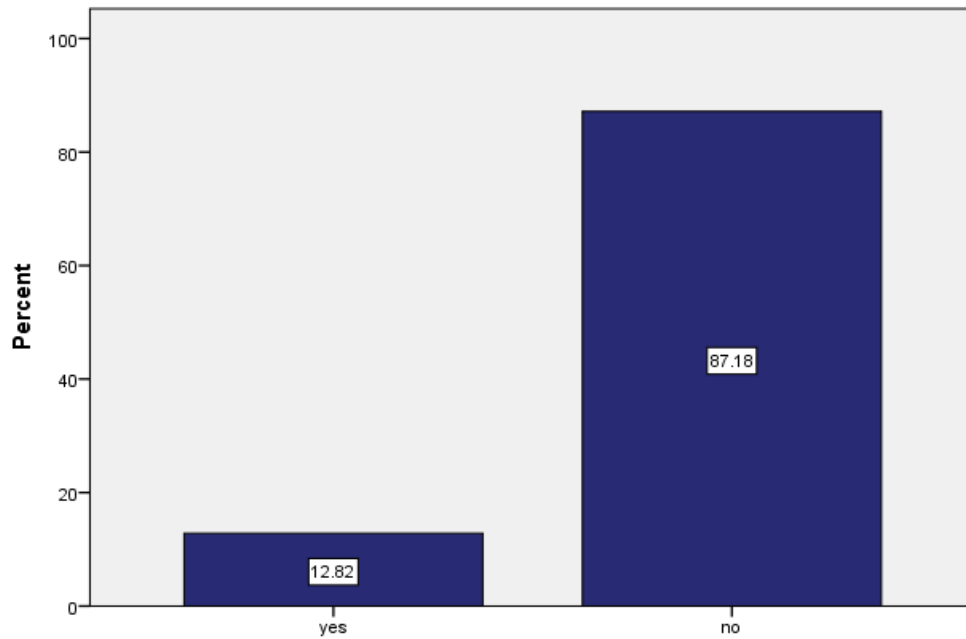
### The level of awareness among employees regarding legal provisions (such as the POSH Act)



**Table 5: The level of awareness of employee about the legal policies**

46.2% of the respondents had says that they are not aware of posh act and 33.3% of the respondents had stated that they aware of posh act. Whereas 20.5 % of respondents had stated that their workplace does not have a Internal Complaint Committee.

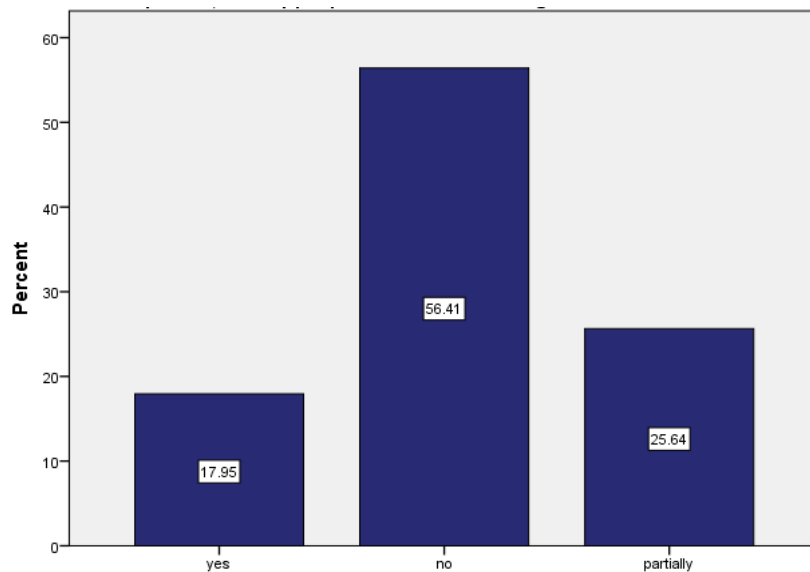
### The reporting behavior of harassment



**Table 6: Reporting behavior of harassment**

Out of 100%, The 87.18 % of the respondents had not reported the harassment to their higher authority and the 12.82% of the respondents had reported the harassment. Several reasons contribute to the underreporting. Victims are sometimes discouraged from reporting occurrences for fear of losing their jobs, getting demoted, or being shunned by coworkers. Furthermore, cultural norms and victim-blaming attitudes can instill shame and humiliation in victims, further silencing them.

### The effectiveness of the responses



**Table 7: effectiveness of the response**

Nearly half of the respondents (56%) were reported that the action was not taken. While, 25.64% of the respondents were reported the organization is partially reacted which is followed by 17.95% of the respondents were reported that the action was not taken.

## **V. DISCUSSION**

The finding of this study, which show that 87.18% of respondents did not report workplace harassment to higher authorities while just 12.82% did, highlights a severe underreporting issue in Chennai's IT sector. This tendency is consistent with wider patterns reported throughout India, where victims are discouraged from coming forward due to fears of reprisal, social shame, and a lack of faith in redressal institutions. According to 2017 Bar Association research, 70% of Indian women did not report sexual harassment.

Several factors contribute to the underreporting. Victims are sometimes discouraged from reporting occurrences for fear of losing their jobs, getting demoted, or being shunned by coworkers. Furthermore, cultural norms and victim-blaming attitudes can instill shame and humiliation in victims, further silencing them. A lack of understanding of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act, 2013 (POSH Act) and the processes for registering complaints is also a factor. Many employees are ignorant of their rights or the presence of Internal Complaints Committees (ICCs) at their workplaces.

Furthermore, doubts about the efficacy and impartiality of ICCs may discourage reporting. In rare situations, ICC members may lack sufficient training or have biases, resulting in ineffective investigations and resolutions. The worry of being labeled a troublemaker or experiencing subtle forms of punishment, such as poor performance reports or removal from initiatives, exacerbates the problem.

To overcome these issues, companies must establish a culture of transparency and support. Regular training sessions to teach employees about their rights and how to report harassment are required. Ensure that ICCs are well-trained, unbiased, and accessible to foster faith in the redressal process. Furthermore, creating anonymous reporting channels and ensuring anonymity may inspire more victims to come forward. By following these actions, businesses may foster a safer and more inclusive working climate in which workers feel empowered to report harassment without fear.

## **VI. RECOMMENDATION**

- As mandated by the POSH Act, make sure that each company with ten or more employees has an internal committee. In addition to one outside member from a non-governmental organization or association committed to women's rights, the committee will be composed of trained members, at least half of whom will be female.
- Organize frequent training sessions and workshops to inform staff members on their rights, what harassment is, and how to report instances. This promotes a culture in which harassment is not tolerated.
- Provide safe and private avenues, such internet platforms or suggestion boxes, so that workers may report harassment without worrying about reprisals.
- Clearly state the organization's position on harassment, the penalties for engaging in it, and the reporting process. Post this information on the workplace intranet and in public spaces. Throughout the course of the inquiry, keep the identities of witnesses and complainants private. Establish stringent anti-retaliation measures to promote reporting.
- Anti-harassment policies should be reviewed and updated often to comply with best practices and regulatory obligations. To find areas that need improvement, ask staff members for their opinions.
- Provide victims of harassment with assistance and counseling to help them deal with the psychological effects and to reaffirm the organization's dedication to their welfare.
- As part of the onboarding process for new hires, provide thorough training on harassment rules and reporting procedures.
- To constantly enhance the working environment, set up measures to evaluate the success of anti-harassment programs, such as the quantity of reports submitted, resolution timeframes, and employee feedback.

## **VII. CONCLUSION**

According to research on workplace harassment in Chennai's IT industry, harassment occurrences are rather common, and most of them go unreported. This underreporting emphasizes how urgently organizations must promote an environment of transparency and assistance. Addressing this issue requires putting in place strong Internal Committees (ICs), holding frequent awareness campaigns, and making sure that reporting

procedures are private. The organizational reaction may be strengthened even further by the leadership's dedication to zero tolerance and ongoing policy review. Employers may foster a more secure and welcoming work atmosphere by implementing these steps, which will encourage staff members to report problems without fear and guarantee timely and efficient resolution. Future studies might examine the long-term effects of these treatments and pinpoint other tactics for successfully preventing workplace harassment.

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