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Sexual Harassment Suits and How to Avoid Them

Sexual harassment is a relevant problem that can significantly spoil the working environment in an organization. Such cases may occur in any company; thus, enterprises and organizations all around the world pay great attention to their prevention and punishment. In general, sexual harassment is an act of workplace discrimination, which is covered by both relevant laws and companies' corporate policies; avoiding such issues requires the establishment of an effective ethics-protective mechanism within organizations.

There is a wide range of definitions of sexual harassment; however, one of the most relevant ones is provided by the American Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. This institution defines sexual harassment as, "unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature that interferes with one's employment or work performance or creates a hostile or offensive work environment" (as qtd. in Hejase 108). The given problem can produce a severely negative effect on professional relationships, which in turn decreases the productivity of employees. The outcomes of sexual harassment may vary from a mere dejection experienced by specific employees to full-fledged professional conflicts which can ruin the working process.

Nowadays, lots of states have implemented policies and regulations aimed at the eradication of the problem of sexual harassment. For instance, in the U.S., it is considered to be a

violation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Hejase 109). Punishment for the observed issue can significantly vary, from mere disciplinary measures introduced within a company to a full-fledged legal process. From a legal perspective, sexual harassment is considered to be a form of discrimination. An employee who experiences such issues can file a lawsuit against the person who is responsible for the harassment. Nonetheless, before a lawsuit can be filed, the harassed person is required to file a formal charge of discrimination aimed at the state or federal agency that is responsible for the enforcement of anti-discrimination laws (Equal Rights Advocates 23). If the case of sexual harassment is confirmed, the punishment for the person who has conducted it will depend on the claims of a plaintiff. A plaintiff may ask for compensation for emotional distress damages, economic damages (fines) imposed on an accused worker, or punitive damages, which is money awarded to a person who has experienced discrimination (Equal Rights Advocates 26). Finally, a plaintiff can demand injunctive relief, which is based on making forward-looking changes in an organization aimed at changing its employee policies and introducing preventive measures against sexual harassment.

Surely, each company and organization has to pay great attention to the prevention of sexual harassment among its workers. It is important to understand that all employees are different personalities who may have distinctive views on this subject. In other words, the slightest flirt, which is normal for some employees, can be perceived as a completely unacceptable case of sexual harassment by others. Therefore, companies face a severe necessity to introduce well-developed mechanisms for the investigation of situations associated with potential and actual cases of sexual harassment. In general, both a proper procedure for reporting cases of sexual harassment and a mechanism for handling such incidents and maintaining

confidentiality are essential aspects of ensuring corporate ethics in companies (*Doing Our Duty* 9). A proper variant in terms of preventing the observed problem would be to introduce a code of professional ethics within an organization, the violation of which will be associated with significant fines. In addition, such companies can assign a specific person for the control and maintenance of the ethical climate among employees. Such professionals will focus on other employees' adherence to the company's code of ethics and report on its violations, including cases of sexual harassment.

Therefore, sexual harassment is a relevant issue that is based on the expression of discriminative sexual intentions. The observed problem goes against relevant laws; thus, it is punished by either state legal systems or organizations' internal regulations. At the same time, such cases negatively affect the professional environment within companies, which means that enterprises have to develop proper mechanisms of protecting corporate ethics in order to prevent cases of sexual harassment.

Works Cited

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