

The Daily Star DHAKA, FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 2019 KARTIK 16, 1426 BS e-mail: nextstep@thedailystar.net

SEXISM IN THE WORKPLACE

How and why we should fight it



ILLUSTRATION: EHSANUR RAZA RONNY

Gone are the days when sexism in the workplace was normalised, leading to a huge wage disparity along with all sorts of discrimination against women. Bangladesh is currently the country with the lowest gender pay gap among the lower middle income countries, according to ILO Global Wage Report 2018. But women, even till this day, are subject to a lot of sexist practices in their workplaces, which stem from the patriarchal thoughts and views that have been deeply rooted in our society for many years.

While many people find it unnecessary to address casual sexism in their organisations and workplaces, allowing such practices have serious repercussions. These practices can lead to injustice and discrimination against capable women working in the organisation. Many women working at reputed banks and financial organisations of the country have reported to be victims of sexism in their workplaces. They say that they have been casually and brutally shamed for their clothes, marital status and other things, but have shied away from complaining to the authority because they feared that the harassment would get worse. These have had serious upshots on their working environment and mental wellbeing.

This is what results from years of not protesting; in such organisations, women are reportedly not promoted after a certain level, although their male counterparts ease their way through promotions. Women are also deprived of adequate training facilities because of the archaic belief that providing training for women will not be beneficial to the company as

these women are perceived to be inept at delivering results in these organisations. Not addressing sexism in the workplaces has deteriorated the situation for years with women still being deprived, maybe not so much in terms of wage, but in terms of proper recognition and development of their capabilities and other benefits such as equitable maternity leave, etc. In extreme cases, these can lead to incidents of sexual harassment as well, as it is way too easy to shift the blame on the victim due to the already existing sexist thoughts and views.

Company policies and the authority's goodwill to carry them out properly can lead to the eradication of a sexist working environment to a great extent. Neruz Afreen, who is currently working at BRAC as a programme co-ordinator, discussed some of the safeguarding policies taken by BRAC in order to ensure a sexism-free and woman-friendly working environment. "In every department, there is a safeguarding focal team that addresses the issues related to sexism, no matter how 'trivial' it is. Every floor has a feedback box, where anonymous complaints of sexist remarks and any form of sexual harassment can be submitted; these complaints are evaluated on a weekly basis. If the accused is found to be guilty after a thorough investigation, that person is surely to be sacked in a day's notice, even if it is the director," she said. She also mentioned that BRAC has been carrying out special programmes to enhance the capabilities of women employees, one of which is the women leader-

ship programme. Under this programme, every six months, three women from each department are selected for a special capacity development training. The company has truly set an example when it comes to ensuring a better working environment for women.

The authorities might not be as supportive in many companies. Many organisations take such issues lightly as they do not understand the gravity of the problem. It is important to collectively take a strong stance against such practices in these companies. The authorities need to be pressurised into taking these issues seriously, as these practices will eventually lead to undermining a woman employee's self-worth and capabilities, consequently hindering the progress of her career. This has to stop. Casual sexist remarks, no matter how trivially perceived, should not be neglected. It should not go unreported, and if the authority seems unwilling to do anything to change the situation, collective pressure has to be created. Support from colleagues under such circumstances is crucial for the wellbeing of a victim of sexist subjugation. Every person in the workplace has to take up a zero tolerance policy from their own accord in this fight against sexism.

NAHALY NAFISA KHAN

Nahaly Nafisa Khan is an Economics major currently studying in DU. She procrastinates a lot, yet is obsessed with meeting deadlines. You can reach her at nahalynafisa@gmail.com.

THE BOSSMAN



I'M WIZARD OF LIGHT BULB MOMENTS. I USED TO BE A MARKETING EXECUTIVE. THIS IS MASTER HANDSHAKER AND COLOUR DISTRIBUTOR SUPREME. HE OPERATES THE FRONT DESK AND SHE PAINTS WALLS



IT'S CALLED "THE ONCE REASONABLY EMPLOYED NOW WITH GLORIOUS TITLES TO MASK NEVER INCREASING PAY." SHORT FORM IS "THE LEFTOVERS."



PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL AND HOW TO ACE IT

Performance appraisals are regular reviews of an employee's job performance and overall contribution to a company with the aim of evaluating their skills, achievements and growth. Companies use these appraisals to understand employees' strengths and weaknesses, provide feedback and development plans, and justify any promotion or termination decisions. Company policy decides how often they are conducted but they tend to be annual, semi-annual or quarterly. Here are a few steps to ace your next

KNOWING WHAT TO EXPECT

Do some preliminary research on how your organisation conducts performance reviews. Understand company values & job expectations so that you can calibrate your behaviour; know what they value more & understand what metrics they use to judge your performance.

DOCUMENT & SELF-ASSESS

Note all the KPIs and achievements you've had from the beginning of the time period, but instead of just listing all the activities you completed, try to talk about the values you added, what you learned and how you can grow with the outcomes and impacts. This gives managers an idea of how your skills have improved throughout the reporting period. Don't just say - 'I completed two projects'; instead, say - 'My two projects helped bring in new clients, and also developed my quick-thinking abilities because I had to take a lot of instantaneous decisions'.

According to Dyuty Auronee, HR business partner at Unilever Bangladesh, "To have a constructive discussion with your line manager, you must be well prepared during your performance evaluation. Take



note of everything that went well for you during the year and identify the things that could have been better. Also, do note down how and what support you expect from your boss to overcome those challenges." On that point, it's very important to retrospectively look at things that didn't quite go right, and understand what could have been done to improve on those things. Have the right attitude and mind-set while working. It's okay even if things don't always go your way. Zarine Anan Khondoker, HR Management Trainee at Unilever Bangladesh says, "These evaluations are not 100% determined by the targets you meet. It's about your attitude and the standards of behaviour you exhibit in the process. So even if you don't meet your target or KPI that year for a reason that is beyond your control, you will be assessed on how you dealt with the situation and

what you learned from it."

GIVE AND RECEIVE FEEDBACK

It's important to take note of the

feedback you receive from your manager, but what's also important is to talk about what help and support you expect from their end to improve your performance in the future. For example, 'Your feedback when I was starting out with X project really helped me find the right direction; more regular feedback like this will be really helpful for me' is a feedback you can give to them. PRACTICE

Rushing and being ill-prepared for your performance review will really affect your ability to be compelling and to stand out from your peers. Practice beforehand so you have a concrete idea of what to say with substantial information to back your answers.

TASHFIA MAMUN

Tashfia Mamun is a final year business student from IBA, University of Dhaka and an avid dog lover. Reach her at tashfia.mamun@gmail.com.

Making a DIFFERENCE

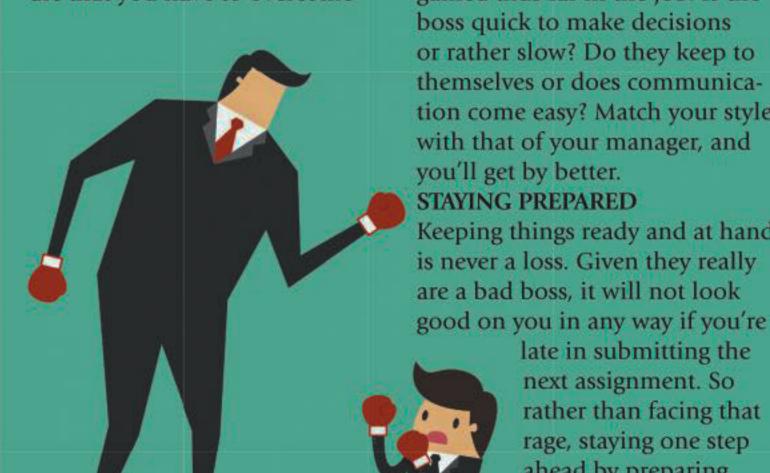
Bangladesh is rapidly moving towards middle income status by 2021. Our businesses definitely offer immense opportunities for the growing economy and this diversity needs a stage for the stories untold. See Bangladesh make its mark on the global map as Making a Difference brings you our proudest success stories from across the country.

How to deal with a bad boss

Rather than sulking each day before and after going to office or jumping ship altogether, know if you've tried using the following tips in the face of a bad boss that you have been assigned under.

ADAPTING TO THEIR **PREFERENCES**

Consider your boss to be just another assessment test or hurdle that you have to overcome



in your job and see if meeting their choices or preferences can be foreseen with the amount of knowledge or insight you've gained thus far in the job. Is the boss quick to make decisions or rather slow? Do they keep to themselves or does communication come easy? Match your style with that of your manager, and you'll get by better. STAYING PREPARED

Keeping things ready and at hand is never a loss. Given they really are a bad boss, it will not look

> late in submitting the next assignment. So rather than facing that rage, staying one step ahead by preparing yourself for all kinds of scenarios or finishing before the deadline might do the trick.

PROTECTING YOUR **PROFESSIONALISM**

It will be a terrible mistake to let your own work go down the drain because of the pressure you're facing with your boss on a personal or official level. You're well acquainted with the role you've been assigned with, despite your manager not being the best. Get work done, and get that done well so that no finger can be pointed in your direction for substandard performance. If your work is closely entwined with your boss's, seek help from someone who will protect your interests while providing you with an effective way out of the situation.

ESHANEE SADHUKHAN

Eshanee is currently completing her BBA from IBA, DU. Reach her at eshanee333@gmail.com.