



ILLUSTRATION: ZARIF FAIAZ

Casual workplace harassment that we need to be wary of

SAMILA SOBHAN

In this generation and era, workplace harassment has been recognised and several companies exhibit strict intolerance towards certain behaviour, however to some extent. What we still consider normal banter and casual office humour can be an embodiment of harassment or discrimination in disguise. Here are some inadvertent workplace harassments that we need to be wary of.

Racial discrimination

Racial discrimination is by and large discrimination based on someone's race and ethnicity. Now and then we discern, primarily in Bangladesh, racial discrimination is tremendously directed towards native people. While this is derogatory in itself, encountering such sort of bullying in offices is completely unacceptable. Ridiculing an individual's attributes some of which are accents, clothes, beliefs etc. moulds the framework of racial discrimination that a lot of native people in Bangladesh, unfortunately, deal with daily.

Assuming women are not breadwinners

A cumbersome misconception that a lot of people, even to this very day, believe women are not liable for running a family and a man must put food on the table. Women's careers are surmised to be a mere passion and not reckoned with. Thus, when women ought to pursue success, evolve and prosper, they are constantly detrued. "You don't need this sale, since you will not need the commission" or "Oh, you must be spending all of your income on shopping since you don't need to worry about the bills" are a handful of the plethora of the things propelled towards women. Women are not given ample credit for their talent and performance and awarded with poor appraisals as a result. This is what gives rise to the dreaded gender-based wage gap. We need to put an end to trivialising women's careers because they put in an equal amount of effort as their male counterparts.

Normalised sexist jokes

"It is just a joke, take it easy." There is no estimate of how frequently women have to tolerate such travesty and aftermath

replies. Sexist jokes make the workplace unsafe and consequently hampers the productivity of workers. It instils distrust in the person and also affects their lives outside work. Tahmina (the name of the person has been changed due to privacy issues) who works at a foreign organisation shares her forlorn experience. "After office, I had an appointment with my dentist when my manager passed a loathsome remark about how I present myself might tempt my doctor into thinking he has an easy way with me, simply because I was applying perfume. In my opinion, people think it is ordinary to speak to me however they desire since I am a woman. No action was taken." She feels a lot of women feel uncomfortable registering such complaints which the society perceives as menial, as no action is usually taken against such sorts of harassments, rather the woman gets defamed in the process. Women proclaim countless times that they have to face malignant comments on their outfits, which is a severe kind of harassment that we must take into account.

Disregarding office hours

Deliberately making employees work way past office hours in an attempt to make their lives miserable is camouflaged harassment. While paid overtime is acceptable and often a means to earn extra, intentionally assigning work at the end of the day or shouldering demands that are impossible to meet within the given deadline account for workplace harassment. Employees, especially women, who commute to work face difficulties as the transportation system of our country is not amply efficient. A feeling of unsafety lingers in women who are compelled to work late and this drastically affects their performance. To avoid circumstances like these, HR should impose strict laws against working way past office schedule, protecting employee rights.

A safe workplace derives the maximum potential of the office personnel. Creating an inoffensive and secure work environment is not only the employer's responsibility. The contemporaries also have to play their part in making the workplace professional.

An advertisement for BSRM Xtreme B500 DWR steel. It features a photograph of a family (a man, a woman, and a child) smiling and embracing each other in front of a modern house. The text "BUILD YOUR HOME FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS WITH THE TOUGHEST STEEL" is prominently displayed in a yellow box. The BSRM logo and "building a safer nation" tagline are in the top right corner. The product name "BSRM Xtreme B500 DWR" and "the tough steel" are also visible.