

Sexual harassment spillover: The impact of gender harassment on the parenting experiences of working mothers

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Background / Rationale:

Important questions remain unanswered with regards to gender harassment's extra-organizational effects. Our goal in this study was to expand our understanding of how gender harassment impacts the parental functioning of working mothers. We investigate how workplace gender harassment spillover into the family domain, negatively impacting females' parent-specific well-being and behaviors.

Methods:

Data were collected online, from 146 working mothers and their spouses. Mothers reported on their workplace gender harassment experiences, feelings of parenting stress, and relevant demographics. To combat potential issues associated with mono-method bias, the spouses of these mothers rated their positive (authoritative) and negative (authoritarian) parenting behaviours.

Results:

Using Hayes's PROCESS model to estimate mediation, we show workplace gender harassment is negatively and indirectly related to authoritative parenting and positively and indirectly related to authoritarian parenting, via parenting stress. Results remain after controlling for other stressors (spousal conflict) and factors that contribute to parenting style (number of children).

Conclusions:

These findings reveal some previously undocumented ways that women in particular suffer as a result of workplace gender harassment. Moreover, in uncovering how this mistreatment interferes with positive mother-child interactions, this research also speaks to a previously unacknowledged group of indirect gender harassment victims, namely children.

Action / Impact:

This study is important for theory and practice. More about the nature and scope of workplace gender harassment is revealed through its detrimental impact on mothering well-being and behaviour. The vicarious impact of gender harassment on children should also inform choices about where (and to whom) to direct organizational interventions.