Preventing Workplace Sexual Harassment and Productivity Loss during Crisis Periods: The Protective Role of Equitable Management

This study examines the role of equitable management in preventing sexual harassment in the workplace and a loss of productivity during periods of crisis due to natural or social disasters. A structured survey of 445 women from 76 companies in five regions of northern Peru and a structural equation analysis show that companies that implement equitable management can mitigate the adverse effects of social conflicts and natural disasters. These findings indicate that equitable management is inversely related to counterproductive behaviors ($\beta = -0.259$, $p < 0.001$), sexual harassment at work ($\beta = -0.349$, $p < 0.001$), and turnover intention ($\beta = -0.527$, $p < 0.001$) and is positively associated with organizational citizenship behaviors ($\beta = 0.204$, $p < 0.001$) and psychological empowerment ($\beta = 0.240$, $p < 0.001$). Social conflicts and natural disasters, on the other hand, increase workplace sexual harassment ($\beta = 0.244$, $p = 0.027$) and intention to quit ($\beta = 0.252$, $p < 0.001$) and have a considerable impact on the loss of work productivity ($\beta = 0.662$, $p < 0.001$). However, in companies with fairer and more equitable management, this impact is much smaller and mitigated by these good practices. This suggests that equitable management protects against and prevents sexual harassment at work. In addition, it acts as a mechanism that enhances organizational citizenship behaviors and attitudes in the workplace which remain even in adverse external environments. This is an effective tool and strategy for maintaining productivity and organizational resilience in difficult times.



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Preventing Workplace Sexual Harassment and Productivity Loss during Crisis Periods: The Protective Role of Equitable Management

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Abstract: This study examines the role of equitable management in preventing sexual harassment in the workplace and a loss of productivity during periods of crisis due to natural or social disasters. A structured survey of 649 women from 76 companies in five regions of northern Peru and a structural equation analysis show that companies that implement equitable management can mitigate the adverse effects of social conflicts and natural disasters. These findings indicate that equitable management is inversely related to counterproductive behaviors ($\beta = -0.270$, $p < 0.001$), sexual harassment ($\beta = -0.268$, $p < 0.001$), and intention to quit ($\beta = -0.258$, $p < 0.001$). It is also positively associated with organizational citizenship behaviors ($\beta = 0.284$, $p < 0.001$) and psychological empowerment ($\beta = 0.240$, $p < 0.001$). Social conflicts and natural disasters, on the other hand, increase workplace sexual harassment ($\beta = 0.298$, $p = 0.027$) and intention to quit ($\beta = 0.292$, $p = 0.001$) and have a considerable impact on the loss of work productivity ($\beta = 0.662$, $p < 0.001$). However, in congruence with fairer and more equitable management, this impact is much smaller and mitigated by these good practices. This suggests that equitable management protects against and prevents sexual harassment at work. In addition, it acts as a mechanism that enhances organizational citizenship behaviors and attitudes in the workplace which remain even in adverse external environments. This is an effective tool and strategy for maintaining productivity and organizational resilience in difficult times.

Keywords: equitable management; sexual harassment at work; labor productivity; social conflicts; and natural disasters; female workers

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1. Introduction

In the workplace, critical events such as health epidemics, social conflicts, and natural disasters present challenges that can be devastating to the survival of companies [1]. Among the most frequent problems are the loss of productivity, increased absenteeism and turnover intentions, and the emergence of disruptive behaviors, including workplace sexual harassment and other counterproductive behaviors. In response to these crises, many organizations may be tempted to scale back preventive measures against gender-based violence, focusing on the immediate survival of the business. While this strategy may seem pragmatic in the short term, evidence does not support its long-term effectiveness.

In November 2022, Peru began to experience a series of social conflicts that developed into a social crisis. Initially, a self-coup d'état was ordered by former President Pedro Castillo. Then, the population demanded changes in the political constitution, requested the resignation of President Dina Boluarte, and requested the release of Pedro Castillo (now imprisonment) [2]. Additionally, the arrival of Cyclone Yaku in March 2023 and

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