

Workplace harassment of women in Port Moresby: results of a survey



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by Kingtau Mambon and David Poka

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In a recent survey of 96 employed women conducted by academics from the University of Papua New Guinea's (UPNG) School of Business and Public Policy, 71% of respondents in Port Moresby **reported encountering** "discrimination and harassment" (hereafter referred to as workplace harassment) at their workplace. The survey used the word "harassment" in a general sense, not specifying types of harassment such as sexual harassment. In this blog, we analyse the same dataset to estimate the likelihood that women will experience workplace harassment based on their education level, marital status, leadership position, and sector affiliation (public or private sector).

Staff at UPNG and postgraduate and former students were surveyed to give a balanced representation of government, private sector and university employees. Students also helped to distribute the questionnaires among women employees in their workplaces. Of the 96 respondents, 64 worked in the public sector (including 32 UPNG staff) and 32 in the private sector.

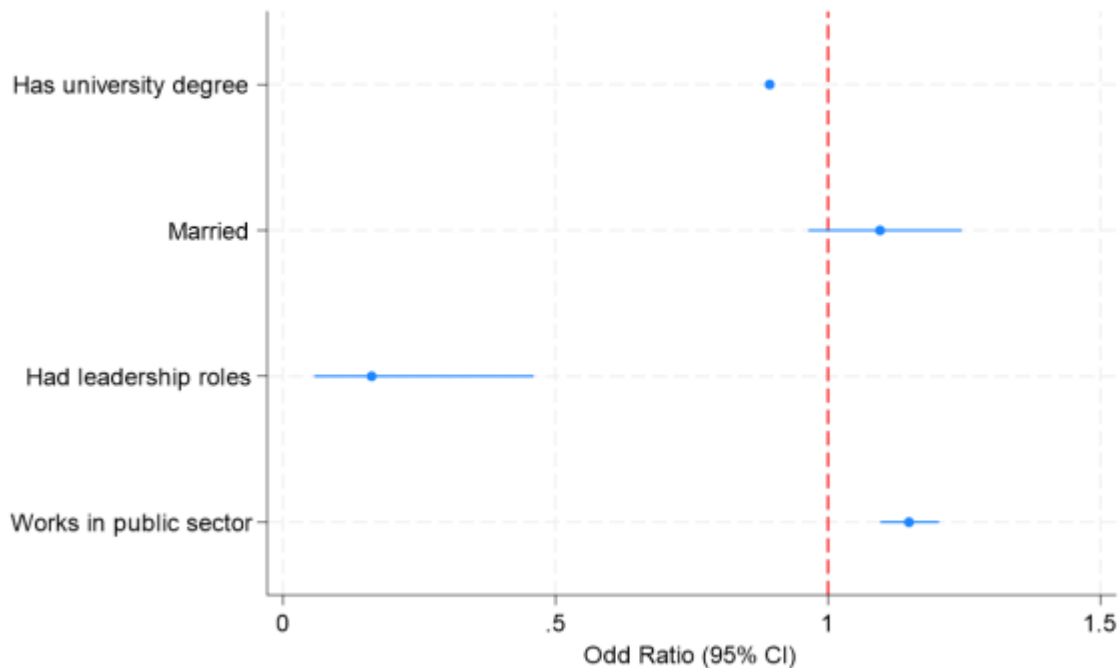
The ages of the respondents ranged between 20 and 55. Most (75%) were university degree holders while others had completed secondary school or been to college. 56% of the respondents were married women while 44% had no male partner at the time of interview; the latter category includes single women, widows and divorcees. The survey considered women who held or had ever held leadership roles, but it did not specify whether such roles were at the executive, middle management or junior level. 67% of the respondents held or had held leadership roles in their career.

To estimate the likelihood of experiencing workplace harassment, we ran logistic regressions that **calculate odds ratios**. These show how likely it is that an event will occur given a particular characteristic of the respondents, compared to its likelihood without that characteristic. An odds ratio of one means that having a characteristic does not affect the likelihood of the event. A value above one indicates a higher

chance of an event occurring, while a value below one indicates a lower chance.

Figure 1 shows the estimated odds ratios for workplace harassment of our respondents associated with various characteristics. The [descriptive statistics and estimation results](#) can also be downloaded.

Figure 1: Odds ratios for experiencing workplace harassment



Educ

ation level, holding a leadership role and sector affiliation have a real effect on the odds of experiencing workplace harassment. These three were statistically significant at a 99% confidence level. Marital status was statistically insignificant.

Figure 1 illustrates two potentially protective factors with respect to workplace harassment. The first is women’s university education. Respondents holding a university degree have an 11% lower likelihood of experiencing workplace harassment compared to those without such education.

Second, women who held or had ever held a leadership role had significantly lower odds of experiencing workplace harassment. Women who held leadership roles were 182% less likely to experience workplace harassment compared to those without such opportunities. Holding a leadership position means having more power in the organisation, thereby earning more respect from colleagues. This finding is consistent with our finding above, regarding women with higher education.

On the other hand, the public sector seems to be a comparatively hostile environment for employed women. Compared to women working in the private sector, those working in the public sector have a 14% higher chance of experiencing workplace harassment. This result fits well with the literature. A [study conducted](#)

elsewhere found the public sector to have a higher prevalence of workplace harassment than the private sector. So, PNG is no different.

It should be noted that we can only explain a small amount of the total variation in harassment, as we lack data on age, ethnicity and socio-economic status. This is a limitation of our research. Nevertheless, our results are informative.

In summary, a woman's likelihood of facing workplace harassment in Port Moresby is significantly associated with her sector affiliation (public or private sector), leadership role, and level of education. Marital status, however, does not appear to have a significant correlation with the incidence of workplace harassment. The most vulnerable group comprises women without university degrees, not holding leadership positions, and working in the public sector.

The PNG public sector has started to take action to ensure its workplace is more respectful for women. The **Gender Equity and Social Inclusion Policy** was launched in 2013, and more recently, the law and justice sector has **increased its efforts** in addressing workplace harassment.

In addition to providing support for all employed women, identification of the most vulnerable groups and tailoring workable solutions are important for reducing workplace harassment. Empowering women through further education and creating an equal playing field for them to become leaders are also plausible ways to reduce workplace harassment.

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Link:

<https://devpolicy.org/workplace-harassment-of-women-in-port-moresby-results-of-a-survey-20231204/>