

The sexual harassment of Generation Z

January 24 2022, by David Bradley



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Workplace policy and training in addressing matters concerning sexual harassment need to ensure that the youngest members of the workforce are also protected from this kind of abuse, something that has not necessarily been dealt with comprehensively by many companies in the past. Research in this area published in the *International Journal of*

Human Resources Development and Management focuses specifically on members of the workforce in the demographic group commonly referred to as Generation Z.

Those people classed as being in Generation Z are considered to have been born any time from the mid to late 1990s into the early 2010s. They are thus the successors to the Millennial Generation (the Millennials) who would have reached adulthood at the turn of the century. They are commonly the children of Generation X who succeeded the Babyboomers. Generation Z people are often known as "digital natives" as they were born after the advent of the World Wide Web and the broad emergence and ubiquity of portable electronic communication devices, such as tablet computers and smartphones. They are the predecessors to Generation Alpha who are those people born from the mid-2010s onwards.

Susan M. Stewart of the School of Management and Marketing at Western Illinois University-Quad Cities in Moline, Illinois and H. Kristl Davison of the Department of Management at Appalachian State University in Boone, North Carolina, U.S., suggest that members of Generation Z are increasingly finding themselves victims of [sexual harassment](#) hence the importance of a new focus on this worrying issue from their perspective.

As such, the researchers consider the following points in some detail: the rights and responsibilities of Generation Z workers regarding [sexual harassment](#) and the legal issues and recent court cases involving Generation Z workers. They also suggest various ideas for how research in this area might pan out in the future and the organizational actions that might be instigated to address the problems. Certainly, they point out there may be more victims of sexual harassment among those of Generation Z in specific demographic groups and that should be a topic of future research too.

The team adds that it might also be time for human resources development and management to draw learning from other disciplines such as developmental psychology. This they suggest might lead to a better understanding of emotional, cognitive, moral, and sexual development in youngsters of this [generation](#), who are of working age and yet still teenagers.

"It is hoped that this article inspires more research ideas and discourse, as well as human resource [management](#) practices, on this important topic in an effort to better protect Generation Z workers," the team writes. Sexual harassment is abuse at any age, but protecting the younger members of the workforce who might suffer long-term consequences in a way that older adults might not simply because the youngsters are still developing psychologically, educationally, and physically is an important consideration in protecting all members of the workforce.

More information: Susan M. Stewart et al, Generation Z workers and sexual harassment, *International Journal of Human Resources Development and Management* (2022). [DOI: 10.1504/IJHRDM.2021.120302](#)

Provided by Inderscience

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