

The AD-roit Links

NEWSLETTER

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#6

Digital Footprints & Workplace Boundaries

This month, our newsletter explores “Digital Footprints & Workplace Boundaries”—a theme that feels increasingly relevant in today’s interconnected world.

**YOUR NO. 1
GUIDE TO A
SAFER
WORKPLACE**

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From the **FOUNDER'S DESK**

Dear Readers,
Greetings!

This month, our newsletter explores *“Digital Footprints & Workplace Boundaries”*—a theme that feels increasingly relevant in today’s interconnected world.

The workplace is no longer confined to physical walls or office hours. Conversations continue on WhatsApp, ideas are exchanged on Teams, celebrations happen on Instagram, and professional updates find their way to LinkedIn. But as the lines blur between personal and professional spaces, so does accountability.

The Delhi High Court’s judgment in *Dr. Amit Kumar vs. University of Delhi* serves as a timely reminder that inappropriate conduct—no matter where it occurs—cannot be excused under the guise of being “outside the workplace.” Digital interactions, especially when they stem from professional relationships, carry the same responsibility for respect and restraint as in-person ones.

As organisations, leaders, and individuals, it’s time we consciously define what respectful engagement looks like in virtual spaces. Policies must evolve to reflect digital realities, and teams must feel empowered to draw healthy boundaries.

Because at its core, *a safe and inclusive workplace isn’t about where we connect—it’s about how we connect.*

Warm regards,

Leeza Dutta Singh 

**Founder & Managing Partner,
AD-roit Links**



Digital Footprints & Workplace Boundaries

~ By Atryee Dutta

Imagine you're back from the office, in your casual clothes, and a WhatsApp message pops up. It's your manager. "Hey, can you share the final draft of the project?", you share it. Next day, again, another message, same person, but this time the message is a bit different: "Hey, what are you doing? Can I call?" You don't feel comfortable and refuse. A few days later, another notification; this time it's not a message but a comment from your manager on your Instagram post, "You're looking hot in that dress." You wonder if this is professional, if this comes under harassment, and if you should report it, this has been answered by a Judgement by the Hon'ble Delhi High Court recently.

The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act, 2013 (PoSH Act), covers these kinds of situations. With professional connections and collaboration spreading to

platforms such as WhatsApp, Teams, and social media, seemingly casual messages can create uncomfortable settings, particularly in cases of power imbalances, such as in our example.

The Delhi High Court's judgment in Dr Amit Kumar vs. University of Delhi created a legal precedent, declaring that improper messages conveyed by an assistant professor to students via online platforms were subject to the PoSH Act. He argued that these interactions were personal, informal, and took place outside of the workplace. The Court disregarded his defence and held that professional digital interactions, including those on personal gadgets or after business hours, are protected by the PoSH Act of 2013. The Court held that purpose cannot prevail over impact; communications that are casual, funny, flirtatious, or entertaining do not excuse harassment if the recipient feels uncomfortable or threatened.



“Workplace” under PoSH Act isn’t just a building but...

The word “workplace” purposefully covers a wide range. Workplace isn’t limited to a single office or a factory floor but rather covers all government bodies and institutions that are funded or run by the state, as well as private companies, NGOs, trusts, educational and training centres, and any organisation that carries out commercial, professional, vocational, industrial, health or financial activities. Sports facilities, stadiums, and other locations utilised for practice or competition are specifically included, as are all hospitals and nursing homes.

The act also understands that work doesn’t always happen inside a formal building: any place an employee visits while performing

their job, including client sites, off-site meetings, and employer-provided transport, counts as part of the workplace, and the term can even extend to a dwelling if it is being used for work.

Importantly for today’s world, the Act applies to digital spaces too; exchanges over email, messaging apps, video calls or social media fall within the same protection. What matters under PoSH is the effect on the person who receives the behaviour, not the sender’s intention or the medium used – whether an insulting comment happens in a boardroom, a suggestive message arrives over WhatsApp after hours, or an uncomfortable remark is made during a video call. Practically, that means employers and organisations must treat all these places and channels as part of the workplace and take steps to prevent and address harassment wherever it occurs.

To illustrate this, consider the following scenarios:



Scenario 1

In a virtual team meeting, a coworker shares inappropriate GIFs, which are deemed harassment under PoSH law because the platform is intended for formal collaboration.

Scenario 2

An executive sends improper messages to a junior employee on LinkedIn, it would be considered a workplace issue owing to their work links.

Scenario 3

A project manager sends sexually explicit content to an intern via business email or task management systems, which is considered a workplace issue.

Scenario 4

These instances show the legal implications of digital footprints in professional settings, and harassment can occur in any work-related association or even on social media.

Boundaries of Digital Interaction

WhatsApp groups and other social media platforms like LinkedIn and Instagram can help in communication, but they can also be abused. Inappropriate and unwelcome behaviour, such as casual jokes or seductive messages, can make others feel uneasy, especially when there is a senior-junior designation difference. The PoSH Act prescribes organisations to adopt clear communication policies regarding social media conduct. *If you ever find yourself facing inappropriate or uncomfortable behaviour in a digital workspace, here are a few important things to keep in mind:*

- **Save all evidence:** Keep any inappropriate messages, images, emails, or social media posts exactly as they are. Don't delete or alter them in any way.
- **Take Full screenshots:** Make sure your screenshots show the sender's name, time, and full context of the conversation. For group chats, keep the entire thread, as it helps to show repeated behaviour or that others were aware.



- **Don't tamper with data:** Avoid deleting, forwarding, or modifying messages that could weaken their credibility. If needed, take help from the IT department or a technical expert to help preserve evidence safely.
- **Keep a Personal Record:** Note down each incident with the date, time, and nature of the message or comment. This log can help the Internal Committee (IC) or HR understand the pattern and gravity of the situation.
- **Report through Right Channels:** It's understandable to feel angry or want to confront the person, but sometimes that can make things worse. Instead, report it to your company's PoSH Internal Committee or HR as they're there to help you handle it safely and formally.

Organisational Responsibilities

Organisations must update professional codes of conduct regulations to cover digital interactions, such as WhatsApp, Teams, email, and LinkedIn. Their policies should address appropriate online communication, emphasise that workplace forums include all digital interfaces, and define processes for reporting wrongdoing and preserving digital evidence.

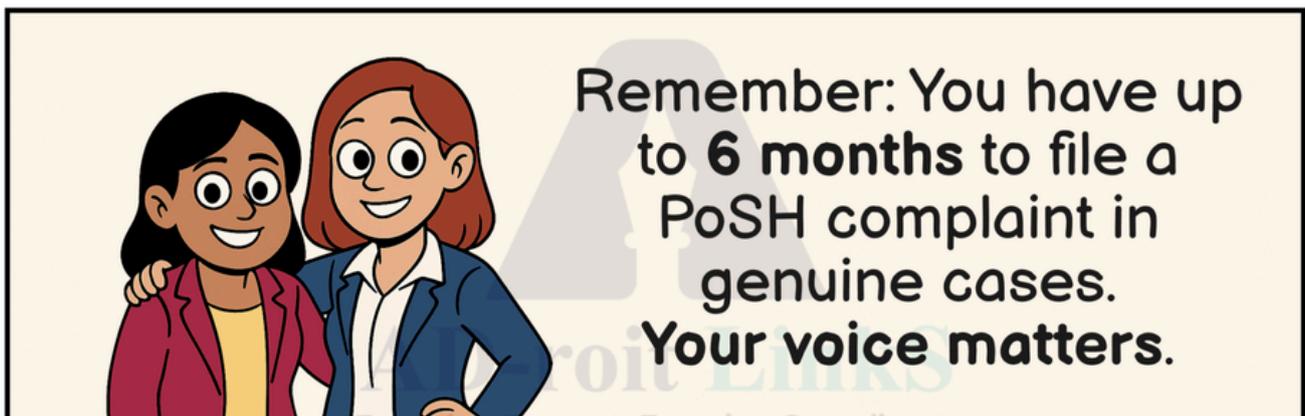
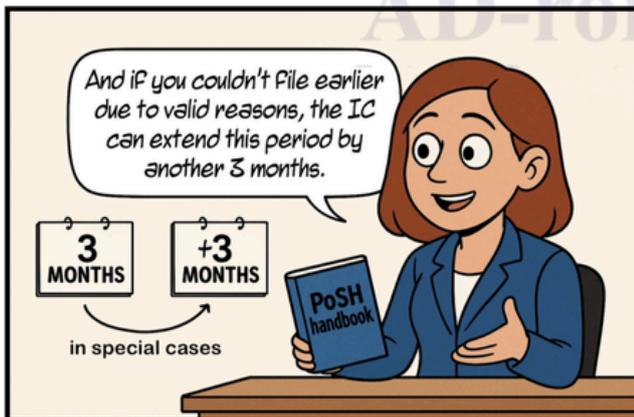
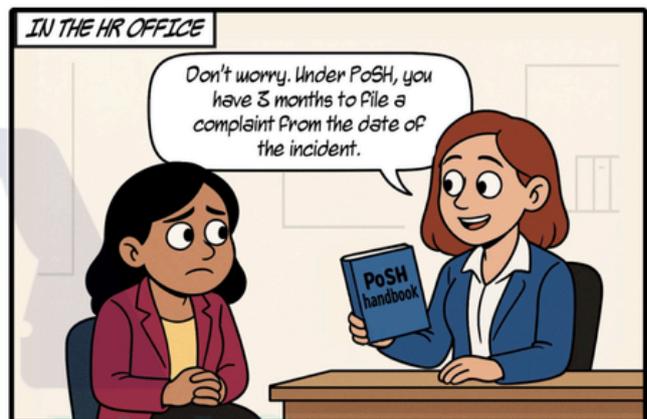
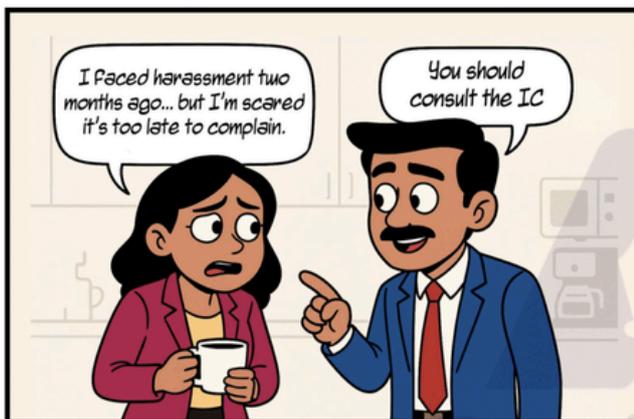
It is critical to train team members on how their tone, attitude, and circumstances may affect others in digital communications. To maintain a respectful digital work environment, organisations must reassure employees regarding security and non-retaliation when addressing incidents.

Corporations must also mention in their training materials that electronic communication is not intrinsically private when it is associated with professional connections or reputations. The Delhi High Court verdict in Dr. Amit Kumar vs. University of Delhi demonstrates that the digital domain is not a legal grey area anymore under PoSH; professional liability applies both online and offline. Organisations should promote safe and inclusive environments that follow legal and ethical standards by implementing these principles into their codes of conduct, instructional materials, and management.

SafeStories: Last Month's Comic

The SafeStories Comic Strip series is a creative initiative by AD-roit Links to spark meaningful conversations around workplace safety, dignity, and the Prevention of Sexual Harassment (PoSH). Every month, we bring you a relatable, thought-provoking comic to help spread awareness in a memorable and engaging way.

Follow us on [LinkedIn](#) to see every new SafeStory and join the conversation about building safer workplaces.



AD-roit LinkS at WIRe and H.E.L.M:

Networking events where learning meets real connection.

In the past weeks, members of the AD-roit LinkS community had the opportunity to attend two very different yet equally enriching events: the Women in Research (WIRe) session and the H.E.L.M. Networking Event, hosted by TeamVisory. While each gathering had its own flavour, both highlighted one simple truth: growth happens when we learn together and connect with intention.

WIRe and the Art of Leading with Purpose

The event, centred around the theme “Navigating the Entrepreneurial Journey: Resilience & Innovation”, encouraged participants to rethink how they lead and build.

One of the strongest takeaways was the importance of shifting focus from everyday tasks to long-term strategy. Leaders often feel the pressure to handle everything themselves, but true progress comes when tactical decisions are delegated to capable teams – allowing founders and entrepreneurs to concentrate on the bigger picture.

Another small but very impactful moment reflected the spirit of conscious leadership. At the end of the event, organisers requested everyone to return their name tags and lanyards for reuse. A simple act, but one that

quietly communicated their commitment to sustainability and leading by example.

The Joy of Genuine Connection at The H.E.L.M.

The H.E.L.M. event brought a completely different kind of learning, the one rooted in human connection. It was an evening of conversations, laughter, and genuine bonding.

Catching up with old friends, meeting new professionals, and exchanging stories over good food. And it truly served as a reminder that networking isn’t only about opportunities. It’s about being part of a community that supports, inspires, and grows with you.

The Common Thread

Although WIRe focused on strategy and H.E.L.M. focused on relationships, both pointed to the same foundation: community.

Whether it’s learning how to lead with clarity or taking the time to build meaningful connections, the people we surround ourselves with shape our professional journey in powerful ways.

At AD-roit LinkS, we believe in this balance of growing through knowledge and thriving through connection.



Ask the Legal Expert!

Your legal queries, addressed with expert insight.

Q Can online interactions like WhatsApp or Instagram messages really fall under the PoSH Act?

Yes. The PoSH Act, 2013, defines “workplace” broadly to include any digital or virtual environment where professional relationships exist.

Q Does the Internal Committee (IC) have jurisdiction over personal chats?

If those chats involve colleagues, students, clients, or anyone connected through professional capacity, yes. The IC can examine digital evidence such as WhatsApp, Teams, Facebook, or LinkedIn exchanges when there is a clear link to the workplace relationship.

Q What steps should an employee take if they receive inappropriate digital messages?

- Preserve evidence; take screenshots or save messages before blocking or deleting.
- Report promptly to the Internal Committee or HR.
- Avoid engaging or retaliating – the focus should be on documentation and formal reporting. Organisations must ensure confidentiality and protection against retaliation.

Q What if the messages were meant as jokes or friendly banter?

Intent does not override impact. The Delhi High Court in Dr. Amit Kumar vs. University of Delhi clarified that “casual” or “flirtatious” messages can still constitute harassment if they make the recipient uncomfortable or create a hostile environment.

Q How can organisations set boundaries for digital communication?

Employers should:

- Update PoSH and Code of Conduct policies to include digital interactions.
- Issue clear social media and messaging guidelines.
- Conduct training on respectful online communication and consent.
- Encourage the use of official channels for work discussions.

Q How can employees maintain healthy digital boundaries?

- Use separate groups or channels for work and personal conversations.
- Avoid late-night or overly personal messages.
- Think before sharing memes, jokes, or emojis that could be misinterpreted.
- Obtain explicit consent before connecting with colleagues on personal social media platforms.

Highlights in Frames

A snapshot of the moments that shaped our month – from networking forums to impactful training sessions.





Our Services



PoSH Compliance Training & Advisory

Building safer workplaces, one session at a time.



Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI)

Creating cultures where everyone feels a sense of belonging.



Ethics and Code of Business Conduct

Empowering decisions with ethics and integrity.



Simplifying Labour Law Compliance

Turning complex laws into crystal clear solutions.



POCSO Awareness & Support

Protecting children through awareness and action.



Policy Drafting & Review

Policies that work — for people and compliance.



+91 96500-24706



leeza.singh@adroitlinks.com



@adroitlinks



adroitlinks.com



TS -29, 7th Floor, Hope Tower,
Galaxy Blue Sapphire Plaza,
Plot No. C-03, Sector-4, Greater
Noida (W), UP-201009