

The AD-roit Links

NEWSLETTER

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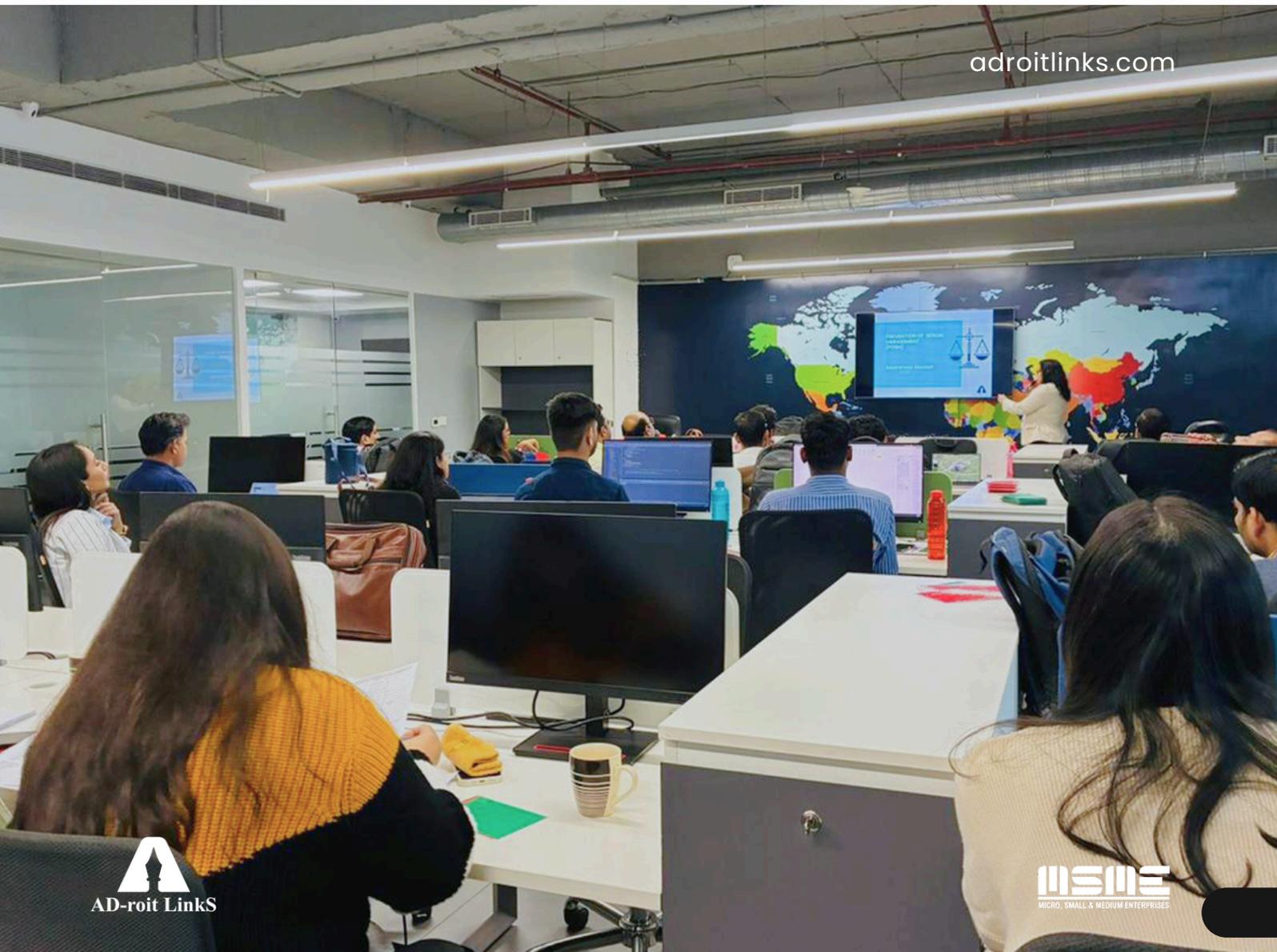
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Generational Mix & Harassment Perceptions

The diversity of age and experience in a workplace is a strength – but it also presents a challenge we must acknowledge with honesty and maturity. In this edition, we delve deeper into this challenge and its solutions.

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GUIDE TO A
SAFER
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From the **FOUNDER'S DESK**

Dear Readers,

*Generational Mix & Harassment Perceptions
– A Workplace Conversation We Can't Avoid*

This month at **AD-ROIT LinKS**, we turn our attention to a workplace reality that is quietly shaping organisational culture across industries – the generational mix and its impact on perceptions of harassment.

Today's workplace is more generationally diverse than ever. Baby Boomers, Gen X, Millennials, and Gen Z work side by side – bringing varied experiences, communication styles, and expectations. This diversity is a strength, but it also presents a reality organisations cannot ignore.

Each generation interprets hierarchy, humour, feedback, and professional boundaries differently. Behaviour once dismissed as casual banter may now be perceived as intrusive or inappropriate. Under workplace harassment principles, including those reflected in the PoSH framework, intent alone does not determine accountability – impact does.

In my experience as a DEI and PoSH-certified trainer, I have often observed how the same workplace scenario is interpreted very differently across age groups. What one employee views as informal engagement, another may experience as discomfort. These gaps are rarely about malice – but they can quickly become compliance risks.

The solution is not labelling one generation “too sensitive” or another “outdated.” It lies in dialogue, evolving policies, and training that moves beyond legal compliance to practical understanding. Leaders must model adaptive behaviour because culture is shaped daily through conduct and response.

The question is not whether generational differences exist. They do. The question is whether we are willing to talk about them.

Warmly,

Leeza Dutta Singh 

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



Generational Mix & Harassment Perceptions

Workplace Challenge That Needs Conversation

~ By Atryee Dutta

In today's workplace, where multiple generations are working side by side, from Baby Boomers to Gen Z, workplace dynamics are shifting.

This generational mix brings with it a range of expectations about behavior, communication, and what constitutes harassment. While Baby Boomers may be comfortable with a more formal, hierarchical work culture, Gen Z expects openness, transparency, and respect in all interactions—especially when it comes to harassment.

But here's the thing: what one generation sees as harmless banter might be perceived as hurtful or even harmful by another. This generational gap can create an atmosphere where misunderstandings about what constitutes harassment become more common—and more dangerous—if left unaddressed.

Have you ever laughed at something others didn't find funny?



Defining the Generations

Before diving into the complexities of generational differences, let's take a moment to define who's who in the generational mix:

Baby Boomers grew up during a time of social and economic growth. They tend to value hard work, loyalty, and hierarchy and are more accustomed to formal communication and clear authority structures.



Gen Xers were shaped by a time of economic uncertainty and growing independence. They are practical, adaptable, and more comfortable with informal communication than Boomers, yet still value professionalism.

Millennials are known for their tech-savviness and social consciousness. They are often vocal about social justice and expect organizations to uphold values of respect and equality.

Generation Z are the first generation to grow up fully immersed in digital culture, hyper-aware of issues around identity, mental health, and diversity.

Generational differences, in this case, can create confusion. What's considered friendly banter by one group may, in fact, be perceived as harassment by another. And that's where the problem starts—misunderstandings that, if not addressed, can fester and lead to formal complaints.

Why Sensitization is Key

Generational differences affect how we perceive and react to harassment is the first step. But just recognizing the gap isn't enough; it's about taking action to create an inclusive, respectful workplace where everyone feels safe to speak up.

1. Rewriting the Harassment Playbook

One of the most critical aspects of sensitizing teams across generations is ensuring that harassment policies don't just provide definitions and examples but also context. The legal framework is essential, but harassment doesn't always show up in textbook form.

It's in the tone of a joke, the timing of a comment, the power dynamics at play, and how digital interactions unfold. A harassment policy needs to acknowledge that humor can be subjective, especially when it's coming from people who may have different thresholds for what's appropriate.

A senior colleague might casually comment, "You youngsters are too sensitive these days"; it might feel dismissive and sometimes inappropriate from the perspective of a Gen Z employee.

2. Training That Brings Real Conversations to Life

This is where harassment training can make all the difference. Think about an instructor-led session, where employees from different generations come together to discuss real-world scenarios. Maybe a Gen Z employee asks,

What if I didn't mean to offend anyone, but my comment upset them?



That question rarely comes up in e-learning modules, yet it's one of the most important conversations that need to happen.

Younger employees may use emojis in formal settings as well while a senior might feel it makes the conversation too casual.

Why do some comments land differently depending on who is listening? Why is context so important? Why is it that what might seem harmless to one person could feel alienating to another?

3. Putting Leadership in the Room

One of the most effective ways to foster a culture of respect and inclusivity is by making sure that leaders are not just sending emails about harassment policies but are also actively participating in these conversations.

When leadership engages in discussions about harassment—especially from a generational perspective—it signals that respect and responsibility apply to everyone, regardless of age or position.

This isn't about checking a box for compliance; it's about shaping a culture where leaders model the behavior they expect from their teams. When employees see that their managers and senior leaders understand the nuances of generational differences and are committed to creating an inclusive environment, it builds trust.

And when trust exists, people feel safer speaking up when something doesn't sit right with them.

A younger employee prefers to address seniors by first name but the senior expects "Sir or Ma'am", it's not harassment but a cultural friction.

Or, a Gen X manager politely commenting on the dressing of a Gen Z might become an uncomfortable remark and can escalate into a PoSH complaint.

4. Empowering Employees: It's Not Just About Laws, It's About Culture

Every generation has a different experience of the workplace, and while policies and training are essential, real cultural change comes from a shift in how people think and act.

Take, for instance, a Millennial who overhears a comment they find inappropriate. In an organization where generational differences are acknowledged, this Millennial feels empowered to speak up, knowing their perspective will be respected. And when they do, it's not just about them being heard—it's about the entire organization reinforcing that harassment, in any form, won't be tolerated. When employees are constantly reminded of the importance of empathy, respect, and understanding, they become part of the solution, not just the audience.

5. Leveraging E-Learning, but Not Relying on it

While an e-learning module can cover the basics of sexual harassment, it's the in-person training session that lets employees voice their concerns, ask about gray areas, and reflect on the potential impact of their actions. It's the dialogue that makes the difference.

Mindful of Our Differences

Let's bring this all back to something practical. Imagine a Baby Boomer telling a "dad joke" at lunch—a harmless quip about a Millennial's "constant phone-checking." To a Baby Boomer, it's just playful teasing, maybe even an endearing comment.

But to a Millennial, this might feel dismissive or like an attack on their character. Worse, Gen Z might find this joke completely out of touch with their values, especially when it comes to being more digitally connected and aware of social issues.



Now picture a Gen Z employee making a comment about how "everything is so problematic nowadays" or how they wish people could just be more "woke." To a Baby Boomer, this might sound dismissive of their lived experience, or even feel like an overreaction. Meanwhile, Gen X might feel caught between these perspectives—understanding both the older school of thought and the newer focus on inclusivity, but unsure how to navigate both.



The point?

These kinds of comments, while not intended to harm, can easily make people from different generations feel uncomfortable.

Harassment isn't always about intention. Often, it's about perception shaped by experience. Let's keep the conversation going, be sensitive to generational differences, and strive to create a space where everyone feels respected, heard, and safe—no matter their age.

SafeStories: Valentine's Edition

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

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.

♥ **Roses are red, violets are blue,
Respect at work looks good on you.**



**FRIENDLINESS IS NOT FLIRTING.
A SMILE IS NOT A "SIGN".**



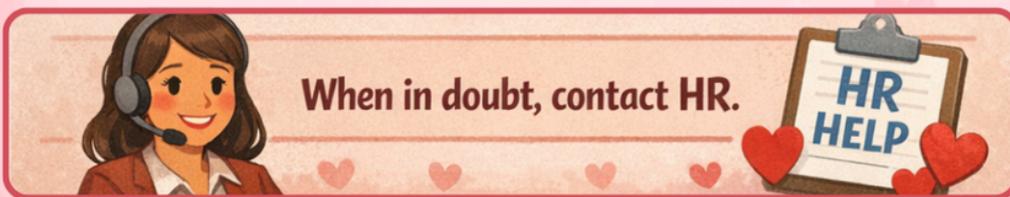
**ONE GESTURE IS SWEET.
REPEATED PRESSURE ISN'T.**



**SUPERIOR-SUBORDINATE
RELATIONSHIP IS A STRICT NO.**



**BEHAVE PROFESSIONALLY
IN AN OFFICE SPACE.**



When in doubt, contact HR.

**HR
HELP**

Ask the Legal Expert!

Your legal queries, addressed with expert insight.

Q What is considered harassment in a multigenerational workplace?

Harassment includes unwelcome comments, jokes, or actions that create a hostile work environment, often subjective to individual perception.

Q How do I report a harassment incident?

Report to your HR or concerned authority as per the company policy, providing details of the incident, including date, time, location, and parties involved. You may also attach relevant proof of the incident and names of witnesses if any.

Q Can I report harassment anonymously?

Yes, many organizations allow anonymous reporting. Check your company's Code of Conduct policy for details.

Q What if I unintentionally offend someone?

Apologize and clarify your intent. Use it as a learning opportunity to understand different perspectives.

Q Can comments about dress code or personal style be considered harassment?

Yes, if comments are unwelcome, excessive, or targeted, they can be seen as harassment.

Q How do I handle a situation where someone's joke offended me?

Communicate your discomfort clearly, and if needed, report the incident to HR or concerned members as per your company's policy.

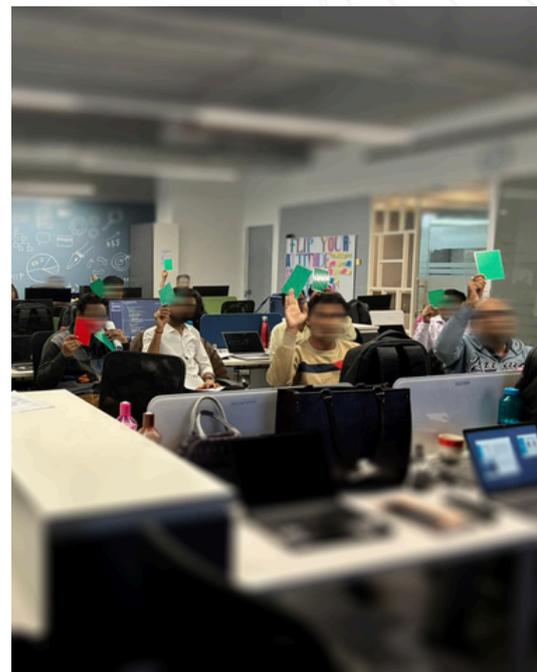
Q How are generational differences addressed in training?

Training covers how different generations perceive interactions, focusing on respect and clear communication.



Highlights in Frames

Some snapshots of the moments that shaped our month, from foundations to marketing firms.



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.



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