

Sexual Harassment Prevention

Consider:

1. Do you feel this situation depicts sexual harassment?
What makes you believe this is/is not sexual harassment?
2. Does this scenario reflect a compliment or does it reflect a sexually hostile environment?
3. How do you help prevent these types of behaviors from occurring?



Discussion:

This situation depicts **physical sexual harassment**. The loafer inappropriately touched the high heel's back with its tassels. The action was unsolicited, deliberate, and unwanted, and the shock and embarrassment displayed by the recipient indicate they were offended and felt sexually harassed. The behavior created a hostile environment.

Physical sexual harassment refers to an individual making inappropriate physical contact with another individual, and may include: touching, patting, pinching, bumping, grabbing, grazing, cornering, blocking a passageway, kissing, etc.

When determining whether sexual harassment occurred, one must ask whether a reasonable person would perceive an individual's actions as so severe or pervasive as to be intimidating, hostile, or offensive. You must also consider the intent of the behavior versus the impact it has on others. In any case, keep your hands—or tassels—to yourself. Don't assume you have the right to touch anyone or that your touch doesn't mean anything.

The loafer's comment also contributes to the sexually harassing environment by the use of sexist language - the term "girl"- and in the way that it was said. Nothing should prohibit polite, respectful, or cordial comments and compliments. But the comment and the touch were out of bounds. And, the other shoes challenged the loafer and expressed that sentiment. Do not be afraid to compliment others; just make sure they are professional and respectful. Our environment must be a place where members are able to interact without being subjected to unwanted, unsolicited, or inappropriate comments or actions.

In some instances the line between sexual harassment and sexual assault is very narrow. How and where an individual was touched can also make a difference. Individuals should contact a SAPR Victim Advocate or Sexual Assault Response Coordinator if they are uncertain about whether or not a sexual assault occurred.

This poster, related animation, and discussion page are available for download at:

<https://www.deomi.org>, then select the Human Relations Toolkit tab, then Harassment Prevention.