



INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH SEMINAR



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Sexual Harassment and Women's Academic Careers

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Abstract

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We examine how sexual harassment contributes to women's career attrition in male-dominated professions. We conduct a countrywide survey of nine cohorts of Danish PhD students and study their career outcomes after graduation using administrative records. This analysis reveals two distinct patterns. Academic workplaces with higher levels of sexual harassment against women students have worse career outcomes for all women—victims or not—relative to men. Within these workplaces, women who experience sexual harassment have better career outcomes in the short term than other women. Survey responses suggest that this positive relationship arises because women's career-enhancing activities expose them to potential perpetrators among senior academics in social and professional settings. These results provide insights into how sexual harassment undermines meritocracy and offer guidance for prevention in academia and beyond.