

POSH complaints edge higher; major under-reporting feared

Sindhu Hariharan
Chennai

A year-on-year rise in complaints under the Prevention of Sexual Harassment (POSH) regime across India's top listed companies suggests improved reporting awareness but also points to the existence of persistent systemic issues in the corporate world.

DATA FOCUS.

A *businessline* analysis of data sourced from primeinfobase.com shows that POSH cases in Nifty500 companies were up 13 per cent year-on-year in FY25 at 2,583 complaints compared to 2,276 complaints in FY24. The figure was at 1,779 in FY23.

Further, across the three fiscal years (FY23, FY24 and FY25), the percentage of complaints upheld out of the total complaints was in the range of 66-69 per cent.

TCS (125), Wipro (125), ICICI Bank (117), Indigo (79) and HDFC Bank (75) are companies with the maximum number of absolute POSH complaints in FY25. Sectorally, financial services, information technology (IT) and consumer companies led in the share of complaints.

However, 212 of the Nifty500 companies, all of whom have significantly high workforce levels, reported zero POSH complaints in FY25, and 147 companies reported less than five POSH complaints in the fiscal.

WORKPLACE CULTURE

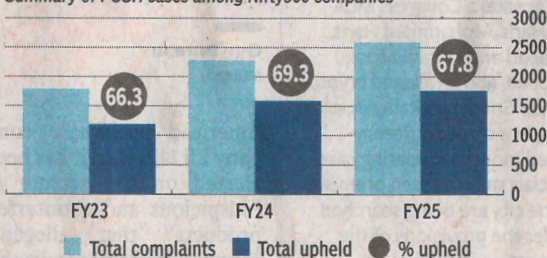
HR and legal experts told *businessline* that while the increase in complaints point to stronger implementation of POSH policies and greater employee sensitisation, the relatively low number of reported cases across India's top 500 companies suggests significant under-reporting due to stigma and workplace culture issues.

Preetha Soman, Partner, JSA Advocates & Solicitors, said there had been a significant improvement in reporting under POSH, especially in larger companies, but it is not uniformly robust across companies. "Many employees still weigh the emotional, professional and social cost of reporting, before coming forward. That hesitation is particularly visible in cases involving senior respondents, influential business leaders, rainmakers or close-knit team environments, where the complainant may fear isolation or subtle retaliation," she said.

Vasanthi Srinivasan, Pro-

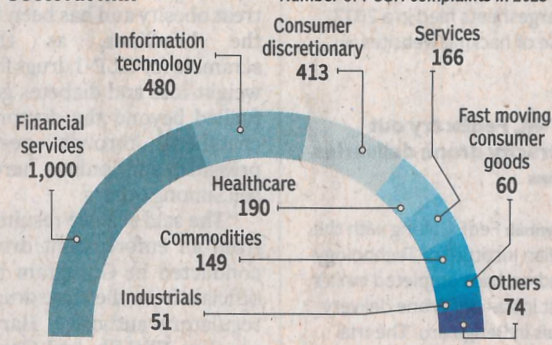
Awareness drive paying off

Summary of POSH cases among Nifty500 companies

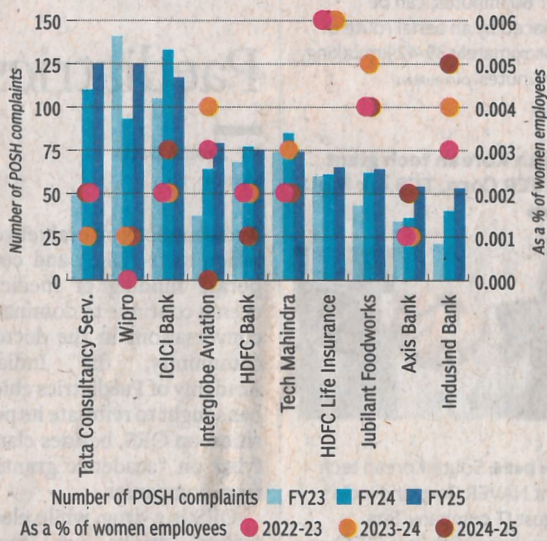


Sectoral mix

Number of POSH complaints in 2025



Top 10 companies as per FY25 POSH cases



Source: primeinfobase.com

fessor, Organizational Behaviour & Human Resources Management, said that despite rising numbers being indicative of more robust reporting mechanisms than in the past, 2,500+ complaints across 500 companies is "a bad story".

"For 2,500 complaints that have been disclosed, I would expect that another 10,000 complaints were not filed. Fifty-eight companies with greater than 5,000 employees have zero cases," Srinivasan said.

STRUCTURAL BARRIER

As per Srinivasan, the first structural barrier is that POSH is treated as a "checkbox", making the setting up of the Internal Committee, training of members, policy formulation and hiring of an external expert all a "perfunctory" exercise. "Many companies believe that zero or low complaints means that the organization is do-

ing well," she said.

JSA's Soman urged employers to use the POSH data far more intelligently.

ISOLATED CASES

"Particularly in large organisations, POSH complaints should not be looked at only as isolated cases to be closed. They should be analysed for trends, for example, repeated concerns in certain teams, complaints linked to specific managers, patterns during travel or offsites, functions with low reporting and high attrition, etc.," she added.

As per Aditya Narayan Mishra, MD and CEO, CIEL HR Services Limited, POSH is a good first step to make Indian workplaces better for women but victims still fear retaliation and are many a time also confused if their experience even counts as a harassment, depending on its normalisation across certain company cultures.