

Student handout 2.2

Men and women: the story

Story 1

“It has happened to me many times. After dinner, my mother expects her children to take all the dishes and casseroles to the kitchen, to clean the table, do the dishes, make sure that everything is put in the kitchen cupboard and that the whole kitchen is neat and clean. Once again my two brothers, though they are older than me, told me that this wasn’t something for them, and that I had to do it, just because I’m a girl. I didn’t protest this time, because I was so upset. I complained to my father, but he told me that it was good to have some practice, that it was a good preparation for becoming a housewife.”

Questions

1. Can you imagine this happening in your family?
2. Imagine you are this girl: what would you want to say to your brothers? And to your father?
3. Do you agree with the text in Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights? How does this apply to the above-mentioned story?

“All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights”.

Story 2

“Six boys were standing around me in the school playground. They were all staring at me and teasing me. They said: ‘Hey guys, are you sure this is a girl? Shall we examine this a little further?’ Then one of them approached me, intending to touch me. But at that very moment the school principal entered the playground, and the boys left.”

Questions

1. Can you imagine that this happens in or around your school? Give examples.
2. Imagine that you are this girl – what would you want to say to these boys?
3. Imagine another boy saw what was happening from a distance. Should this boy have intervened? Why/why not? How could he have done so?
4. Do you consider what happened to be “sexual harassment” according to the following definition?

“Sexual harassment is any behaviour that in word, action or psychological effect of a sexual nature in intent or effect inflicts injury on the dignity of a person or gives rise to intimidation, hostility, or demeaning, threatening or similar situations and which is motivated by belonging to another sex or different sexual orientation and which to the victim represents inappropriate physical, verbal, suggestive or other behaviour.”

Story 3

“As a young engineer, I applied for the job of technical maintenance manager at a construction materials factory. I was invited to take part in general, technical, and psychological tests, along with 24 other people, all of them males except myself. After this phase, five people were selected for an interview with the general manager. Though I was ranked third after the tests, I wasn’t among them (I’ve got this information, on a very confidential basis, from a friend of mine working

in the staff administration office). Not mentioning this information, I tried to call the general manager. When I managed to talk to him, I asked if they took into account that I was female. He denied it, but said that it must be admitted that women often get pregnant after a few years, and that for certain jobs this creates problems of continuity. He also said that, especially for this job, it would be quite difficult for a woman, as all the workers in the technical team were men, and they behaved rather crudely. I should consider myself lucky not to have been selected.”

Questions

1. Can you imagine this happening in a company in your region?
2. Imagine you are this woman: what would you want to say to the general manager?
3. Do you think the general manager in this case is acting against the law in your country? If yes, how would you prove this?

“All forms of discrimination on the grounds of gender in the employment process, the advertisement of vacancies, selection procedures, employment and dismissal are contrary to the provisions of the law.”