

Empowering Voices IIM Jammu Fostering a Safe and Inclusive Environment by Conductive POSH Workshop

Jammu, March 19, 2024: The Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Jammu marked a significant stride in its dedication to creating a safe and inclusive environment by hosting the Prevention Of Sexual Harassment (POSH) workshop. The workshop, tailored for the faculty members, staff, officers, and students of the institute, was inaugurated on 18th March, 2024. The second half of this essential session is scheduled to continue on the following day, the 19th of March 2024, further reinforcing the institute's commitment to fostering a culture of respect and awareness.

The workshop sessions were expertly conducted by Ms. Mahalakshmi Rajagopal, a Holistic Wellness Professional with over 30+ years of experience dedicated to the mental health and wellness of children, adolescents, and adults. The initial session was held in the morning and was attended by the esteemed faculty members, officers, and staff of IIM Jammu. Following its success, the workshop reconvened in the afternoon, where it was actively participated in by the vibrant student body of the institute.

The morning session of the workshop began with a warm welcome address by Dr. Yashoda Devi, Chairperson of the Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) at IIM Jammu. She extended a gracious welcome to the esteemed faculty members, staff, and officers gathered for this vital event. She also extended a special welcome to Ms. Mahalakshmi Rajagopal, acknowledging her expertise and the importance of her presence. On the occasion, she said, *"Today, we take a crucial step towards fostering a culture of respect and safety within our institute. I invite you all to engage in open, enlightening discussions, because it is through understanding and awareness that we can create a truly inclusive community."*

During her session, Ms. Mahalakshmi Rajagopal shed light on the critical need for organizations and higher education institutions to have robust Prevention of Sexual Harassment (POSH) guidelines in place. She emphasized that such measures are essential to prevent any form of harassment from occurring within the workplace or academic environment. Ms. Rajagopal also underlined the importance of creating a supportive atmosphere where both male and female members feel empowered to speak up and report incidents of harassment. On this issue, she spoke, *"Even when no one speaks up, sexual harassment could still be happening quietly. It's up to us to be the voices in our circles, standing up against it and supporting those who need us."* Her insights resonated strongly with the audience, reinforcing the significance of proactive measures in ensuring the safety and well-being of all individuals within the institute.

The workshop witnessed enthusiastic participation and engaging discussions among the faculty members, staff, and officers, alongside Ms. Mahalakshmi Rajagopal. The success of the initial session paved the way for an equally impactful second leg, which unfolded within the newly inaugurated Auditorium of IIM Jammu, Mandapam. The second session of the workshop began with a student at the institute warmly welcoming Ms. Mahalakshmi Rajagopal onto the stage. The Auditorium of IIM Jammu, Mandapam was filled with the students from MBA Batch 07, Batch 08, and PhD scholars, who greeted her with resounding applause. This enthusiastic reception set a positive tone for an insightful and impactful continuation of the workshop, highlighting the institute's commitment to fostering a culture of respect and awareness among its student community.

Taking to the stage, Ms. Mahalakshmi Rajagopal said, *"I extend my sincere appreciation to the esteemed Director sir and the administration of IIM Jammu for organizing this crucial session. It holds immense importance for each of us, especially all the students present here, as each of you are going to be stepping into the corporate world in the near future."*

She highlighted that POSH compliance is mandatory for organizations with 10 or more employees as per the Government of India mandate, with penalties and license cancellation for non-compliance. The discussion differentiated POSH implementation in organizations and higher education institutions, emphasizing the various possible relationships between complainants and respondents. The session also covered key terms such as body language, boundaries, unequal opportunities, gender-based harassment, and creating hostile environments. Additionally, it outlined the supportive measures necessary, including the role and composition of the Internal Committee, ensuring a safe and supportive environment for all.

During the workshop, Prof. B.S. Sahay, Director of IIM Jammu, took the opportunity to express his sincere gratitude and appreciation to Ms. Mahalakshmi Rajagopal for her invaluable insights and guidance. He highlighted the significance of her visit to the institute and the impact of the seminar on fostering a culture of awareness and respect. Prof. Sahay further emphasized the importance of creating an environment where students feel empowered to freely ask questions, express their thoughts, and contribute ideas on how to effectively address and prevent sexual harassment. In his words, *"We are grateful to Ms. Mahalakshmi Rajagopal for her enlightening session today. It is vital that our students feel empowered to voice their questions, thoughts, and ideas, as we collectively work towards curbing sexual harassment and fostering a safe and inclusive environment and I feel immensely happy to see that the students are taking part in this discussion without any inhibitions."*

Throughout the session, the students actively participated in the workshop by posing thoughtful questions and seeking clarification on various aspects of sexual harassment in both workplace and educational settings.

The event also saw the presence of Cmdr Kesavan Baskaran, CAO of IIM Jammu, and Dr. Yashoda Devi, Chairperson of the ICC. As the workshop drew to a close, Prof. B.S. Sahay extended heartfelt gratitude to Ms. Mahalakshmi Rajagopal and presented her with a token of appreciation. The culmination of the session was not the end, as counselling sessions between the students and Ms. Rajagopal were arranged, further fostering a platform for open dialogue and support.

On the 19th of March 2024, students at the Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Jammu's Canal Road Transit Campus had the privilege of engaging with Ms. Mahalakshmi Rajagopal in a dynamic interaction session. This event was attended by students from various academic programs, including the MBA (HA&HM) batch, IPM batch, and Executive MBA batch (online mode). Additionally, a counselling session was held at both the campuses to address the concerns and queries of the students.

This event showcases IIM Jammu's unwavering commitment to creating a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment for all its members. Through initiatives like these, the institute continues to empower its community with knowledge, awareness, and resources to combat problems like sexual harassment.

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Glimpses from the IIM Jammu's POSH Workshop

For Faculty and Staff Members- IIM Jammu Jagti Campus



For Students of IIM Jammu-POSH Workshop





