Do observers perceive a dissolved romance-harassment case from a cupid contract?

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ABSTRACT
Workplace romance often involves two employees who are required to interact with each other frequently during daily work routines. Such repeated exposure may be particularly characteristic of a direct report supervisor and subordinate dyad. Literature on hierarchical workplace romances often describes sexual harassment, where the romances end up in an unrequited situation. This study provides three scenarios that portray different motives for a subordinate dating a superior in the first stage, and uses another three scenarios to depict so-called cupid contracts in which an employer allows or prohibits a hierarchical workplace romance to escalate to the second phase. For this study, 387 participants received one of nine different scenarios. Each person first read a love or job-related motive scenario and then answered what they felt the likelihood of a sexual harassment complaint would be from the dissolution of that scenario's hierarchical workplace romance. Two weeks later, each observer was asked to read another scenario involving a cupid contract, after which they answered how they felt about sexual harassment in the context of that contract. The purpose of this study was to test experimentally the impact of the different cupid contracts we presented on the observers' perceptions of sexual harassment in a soured hierarchical workplace romance. The study further examined the relational implications of hierarchical workplace romances and sexual harassment, and compared our results with the implied intent for workplace romances policies, such as are delineated in a cupid contract.

Keywords: Hierarchical workplace romance, Cupid contract, Soured romance, Sexual harassment.

REFERENCES
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