

27304 - Ruling on talking to women at work

the question

Sometimes I have to talk to some of the women [at work] and discuss with them some issues that have to do with work. Is there any sin on me for that? Is it permissible for me to work in this company or should I look for another job?.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

There can be no doubt that the fitnah (temptation) of women is great. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said, "I have not left behind me any fitnah that is more harmful to men than women." Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 4808; Muslim, 2704. Hence the Muslim has to be cautious of this fitnah and keep away from anything that may cause him to fall prey to it. Some of the greatest causes of this fitnah are looking at women and mixing with them.

Shaykh 'Abd al-'Azeez ibn Baz (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"Tell the believing men to lower their gaze (from looking at forbidden things), and protect their private parts (from illegal sexual acts). That is purer for them. Verily, Allah is All-Aware of what they do.

And tell the believing women to lower their gaze (from looking at forbidden things), and protect their private parts (from illegal sexual acts) and not to show off their adornment except only that which is apparent (like both eyes for necessity to see the way, or outer palms of hands or one eye

Islam Question & Answer

General Supervisor:

Shaykh Muhammad Saalih al-Munajjid

or dress like veil, gloves, headcover, apron), and to draw their veils all over Juyoobihinna (i.e. their bodies, faces, necks and bosoms) and not to reveal their adornment except to their husbands, or their fathers, or their husband's fathers, or their sons, or their husband's sons, or their brothers or their brother's sons, or their sister's sons, or their (Muslim) women (i.e. their sisters in Islam), or the (female) slaves whom their right hands possess, or old male servants who lack vigour, or small children who have no sense of feminine sex. And let them not stamp their feet so as to reveal what they hide of their adornment. And all of you beg Allah to forgive you all, O believers, that you may be successful" [al-Noor 24:30-31]

Here Allah commands His Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) to tell the believing men and women to lower their gaze and guard their chastity, then He explains that that is purer for them.

It is known that guarding one's chastity and avoiding immoral actions is achieved only by avoiding the means that lead to such actions. Undoubtedly letting one's gaze wander and mixing of men and women in the workplace and elsewhere are among the greatest means that lead to immorality.

These two things that are required of the believer cannot be fulfilled when he is working with non-mahram women as colleagues or partners at work.

Undoubtedly his working with her or her working with him in the work place is a situation in which it is impossible to lower one's gaze and guard one's chastity and attain purity of soul.

Hence Allah commanded the believing women to lower their gaze, guard their chastity and not show their adornment except only that which is apparent, and Allah commanded them to draw their veils all over Juyoobihinna (i.e. their bodies, faces, necks and bosoms), which implies covering the head and face, because the jayb (pl. juyoob) is the site of the head and face.

Islam Question & Answer

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So how can one lower one's gaze, guard one's chastity and avoid showing one's adornment when women go to men's workplaces and mix with them? Mixing will inevitably lead to falling into these haraam actions.

How can the Muslim woman lower her gaze when she is with a non-mahram man all the time, claiming that he is her work colleague and she is his equal with regard to work.

Khatr Mushaarikat al-Mar'ah li'l-Rajul fi Maydaan 'Amalihi.

Conclusion:

If your work involves continually looking at and mixing with women, we advise you to leave this job and look for another, or to move to another department in the same company where there are no women.

If your work does not involve continually looking at and mixing with women, rather it only happens sometimes in an area other than the place where you work, then there is nothing wrong with staying in the job, so long as you lower your gaze and do the parts of your job that involve contact with women in the shortest possible time, and keep away from the causes of fitnah as much as possible.

We ask Allah to help us to avoid fitnah (temptation, both obvious and hidden).

And Allah knows best.