

**A Study on Working Environment, Victims Attitude and Power towards Sexual Harassment Experience amongst the Working Adults in Kuala Lumpur****Nishail Lilaram, Benjamin Chan Yin Fah, Jugindar Singh Kartar Singh**

Graduate School of Business, Universiti Tun Abdul Razak (UNIRAZAK), Malaysia

Asia Pacific University of Technology and Innovation, Malaysia

**ABSTRACT**

Sexual harassment has been recognised as a serious problem for the past 30 years. In this research, the forms of sexual harassment will be discussed. The main focus of this research will be the factors of sexual harassment to women working in the private sector in Malaysia. An overview on effects of sexual harassment and ways to overcome sexual harassment is also provided in this topic. Different theoretical perspectives and models of sexual harassment are also considered and reviewed. This research will help to better identify the factors causing sexual harassment. By identifying the factors of sexual harassment, appropriate ways can be planned to overcome the factors of sexual harassment.

**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Sexual harassment occurs in all occupations and industries, and organisational culture is key to understanding how and why it occurs in some places and not in others. Organisational violation is seen in terms of sexual harassment bullying and physical violence. The culture of the organisation is what causes individual employees to be treated abusively or with disrespect. Hierarchical and managerial powers are central to understanding how such a culture develops and continues. As the climate of disrespect within an organisation worsens, the more likely it is for certain inappropriate behaviour to be taken for granted, leading to the creation of an 'incivility spiral'. This is where discourteous behaviour becomes routine and regarded as normal by employees and employers. For the victims who have made their situation known, their complaints have typically been ignored, trivialised, or denied.

Sexual harassment has been found to be more prevalent in certain work situations, for example, in jobs where there are large power differentials between women and men, where there is an unequal sex ratio, when a new supervisor or manager is appointed or during periods of job insecurity. Two types of leadership style are particularly, although not exclusively, associated with harassment and bullying, an authoritarian style where there is limited consultation with staff and a laissez faire style where management fails to lead or intervene in workplace behaviour.

People who belong to a socially advantaged group, the 'in-group', tend to have a preference for members of their own group and are likely to be biased against members of any socially disadvantaged 'out-group'. What this means in terms of sexual harassment is that the greater the distinction between the in and out group in the workplace, for example in the power held by men and women, the more likely it is that sexual harassment will occur.

According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), sexual harassment is a clear form of gender discrimination based on sex, a manifestation of unequal power relations between men and women. The problem relates not so much to the actual biological differences between men and women – rather, it relates to the gender or social roles attributed to men and women in social and economic life, and perceptions about male and female sexuality in society that can lead to unbalanced male-female power relationships.

## **2.0 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY**

The purpose of this study is to gain a better insight of sexual harassment experienced by working adult at their workplace. This research has both practical and theoretical insight into the results. Through this research, the factors that cause sexual harassment will be highlighted. In addition, the type of sexual harassment that working adult go through at their workplace will also be addressed. The negative impacts of sexual harassment on working adult psychology will also be explored. This will contribute to reducing sexual harassment in the workplace by the recommendations given on how to prevent working adult from being sexually harassed at their workplace.

The objectives of the study will be:

- 1) To identify forms of sexual harassment problems faced by working adults in the workplace.
- 2) To identify factors that causes sexual harassment to working adults in the workplace.
- 3) To identify ways to prevent sexual harassment to working adults at the workplace.
- 4) To identify the negative impacts of sexual harassment on working adults.

## **3.0 RESEARCH METHOD**

This research aims to study the sexual harassment experience faced by working adults in KL. The reason this study focuses on the working adults in KL because they are the group that faces sexual harassment mostly based on statistical data from previous study. This study is focusing on the population of working adults in KL to collect more data on this issue.

Percentages and frequency count will be calculated to examine the factors that contribute to sexual harassment to women employees in the private sector in Malaysia. The probability sampling technique which is simple random sampling will be used in this research. The sample size was checked in terms of statistical power for model testing. The examination was made using an a priori power analysis performed with G\*Power application (Faul et al., 2009) which indicated N = 146, as minimum sample-size needed for detecting medium-size effects in a six-factor model, estimated with 0.05 error probability and 95 per cent power. Therefore, the sample size (N = 200) was found appropriate for approaching the proposed model.

This research study will be tested using a questionnaire-based data collection method. The questionnaire is developed based on the literature review. The questionnaire is an online google form which was distributed through social media like WhatsApp and Facebook. The selection criteria of the respondents were people who were 18 and above and worked in Kuala Lumpur.

The questionnaire used in this research is divided into three components consisting of Section A, Section B and Section C. All the variables and information are operationalised and measured for this research. Section A will contain questions designed to analyse the independent variable. Section B will contain questions designed to analyse the dependent variable. Section C will contain information regarding the demography of the respondents. Information such as age, rank, years of service, income and marital status will be included. Section A and Section B will be measured using the Likert Scale. Most previous research had used the five point Likert Scale. By using this scale, respondents will be able to decide to which extent they agree or disagree with a statement.

Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) is the software that will be used in this research. SPSS is one of the most common software used in this type of research. This software is useful for analysing large scale survey data. Previous research based on literature review also commonly used this software. By using the SPSS software, a more accurate data analysis will be obtained which in turn will be used to come out with a conclusion and recommendations.

#### 4.0 RESULTS

A total of 80 valid responses were received from this distribution. The background information of the survey would be best illustrated with a frequency distribution. Table 1 shows the demography data of the respondents of this research.

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Categories</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Gender	Male	28	35
	Female	52	65
	Total	80	100
Age	18 -19 years old	11	13.8
	20 - 29 years old	47	58.8
	30 - 39 years old	13	16.3
	40 - 49 years old	7	8.8
	50 & above	2	2.5
	Total	80	100
Marital Status	Single	61	76.3
	Married	18	22.5
	Divorce	1	1.3
	Total	80	100
Years of Employment	Less than 2 years	47	58.8
	2 - 5 years	14	17.5
	6 - 10 years	7	8.8
	More than 10 years	12	15.0
	Total	28	100.0

Table 1: Demography data of the respondents

Table 1 indicates that more than 50% of the respondents were females (65%) among the 80 respondents. In regards to age, the highest percentage of respondents are between 20 and 29 years of age (58.8%), followed by the age group between 30 and 39, which is (16.3%). The lowest percentage reported for age groups 50 and above, with only two respondents.

As can be seen from Table 1, the majority of respondents (76.3%) in the current study reported that they were single while they were (22.5%) of the respondents are married. On the other hand, a total of one respondent indicated that he/she is divorced (1.3%).

The demographic analysis shows (58.8%) or 47 of the respondents of this research with less than 2 years of working experience, while those with working experience of 2 to 5 years are only (17.5%), followed by 12 respondents (15%) with more than 10 years of working experience. Respondents with working experiences of 6 to 8 years, reported to have 7 respondents with the lowest percentage, which was (8.8%) compared to others.

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha
Working Environment	0.449
Victim's Attitude	0.719
Power	0.677
Sexual Harassment	0.887

Table 2: Correlating Sexual Harassment experience with Selected Variables

Table 2 shows the numerous variable results with the respective Cronbach's Alpha (r) value. Based on the result above shows sexual harassment variable scored the highest value  $r=0.887$ , followed by the victim's attitude  $r=0.885$  and power  $r=0.677$ . Meanwhile, the working environment variable scored at  $r=0.449$ . Therefore, the reliability is satisfactory for all the variables.

	Working Environment	Victim's Attitude	Power	Sexual Harassment
Working Environment	1	.382**	.251*	.447**
Victim Attitude	.382**	1	.526**	.182
Power	.251*	.526**	1	.201
Sexual Harassment	.447**	.182	.201	1
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).				
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).				

Table 8: Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient

Table 8 shows the relationship coefficient between independent variables and independent variable itself, including working environment, power and victim's attitude, and also these independent variables with dependent variable of sexual harassment. Among all of the variables tested showed a positive relationship. The strongest relationship of independent variable with dependent variable is between working environment with sexual harassment (0.447), followed by power with sexual harassment (0.201) and victim's attitude with sexual harassment (0.182).

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	-0.157	1.706		-0.092	0.927
Working Environment	0.476	0.121	0.436	3.941	0.000
Victim's Attitude	-0.037	0.102	-0.045	-0.360	0.720
Power	0.101	0.105	0.115	0.962	0.339

Table 9: Multivariate test

The F statistic for the overall goodness of fit of model is 6.728, which is significant at  $\alpha = 0.01$ . After excluding the non-significant variable, the final regression model produced by enters method for sexual harassment is:

$$\text{Sexual Harassment} = -0.157 + 0.476 (\text{working environment}) + 0.101 (\text{power})$$

$$R \text{ square} = 0.210, df = 3, F = 6.728 ; p = 0.000$$

This model explains 21% of the variance in sexual harassment. This indicates that 21% of the dependent variable (sexual harassment) was explained by the linear combination of the two-predictor variable. Among the two-predictor variable, working environment was found to contribute more significantly towards the sexual harassment experience.

Hypothesis	Statement	Findings	Result
H <sub>1</sub>	There is a significant relationship between the summed score of working environment and sexual harassment.	p = 0.000 p < 0.05	Hypothesis Accepted

H <sub>2</sub>	There is a significant relationship between the summed score of victim's attitude and sexual harassment.	p = 0.720 p > 0.05	Hypothesis Rejected
----------------	--	-----------------------	---------------------

H <sub>3</sub>	There is a significant relationship between the summed score of power and sexual harassment.	p = 0.339 p > 0.05	Hypothesis Rejected
----------------	--	-----------------------	---------------------

Table 10: Result of Hypothesis Testing

Table 10 shows the summary result of the hypothesis testing for this study. In the hypothesis testing, the p value of the hypothesis is significant, where p value < 0.05. For the entire above stated hypothesis, H1 was accepted while H2 and H3 were rejected. This indicated that working environment factor (p=0.000) is highly significant with the sexual harassment experience among working adults in KL. H2 and H3 were rejected because the sample size was too small. Moreover, the respondents were from a homogenous group which shared the same culture.

## 5.0 CONCLUSION

This research study aims to understand the factors that contribute towards sexual harassment experience amongst the working adults in Kuala Lumpur. Few studies had been conducted in Chapter Two: Literature Review had found the significant factors of sexual harassment experience towards the experience amongst the working adults in Kuala Lumpur. Furthermore, this research study also investigated how these determinants (working environment, victim's attitude, power) contributed towards the sexual harassment experience. In addition, despite looking into the determinants of the variable, demographic is also part of the research contents. Although, initially the respondents were included in the research framework and were removed in the later research on going. Due to the sampling methodology used, specific demographic profiles such as years of employment, gender, marital status and age need to be included as part of the research design.

Furthermore, numerous tests had been conducted to find out the relationship of each determinant toward the dependent variable. As in, Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient test, found all of the determinants had a significant relationship towards the sexual harassment experience. While Multiple Regression Test is also conducted, found that the working environment achieved the highest score and the strongest predictor of the sexual harassment experience, it then followed by power as the second predictor towards the sexual harassment experience. While victim's attitude remains as the variable that had significant value and relationship towards the sexual harassment experience.

## CITATION AND REFERENCES

- Allgeier, E. R., & McCormick, N. B. (1983). *Changing boundaries: Gender roles and sexual behaviour*. Palo Alto, CA: May field
- Buchanan, N. T., Settles, I. H., Hall, A. T., & O'Connor, R. C. (2014). A review of organizational strategies for reducing sexual harassment: Insights from the U.S. military. *Journal of Social Issues*, 70, 687-702.
- Challapalli, C., S., (n.d.), Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace, Retrieved from [https://www.academia.edu/10173222/SEXUAL\\_HARASSMENT\\_OF\\_WOMEN\\_A\\_T\\_WORKPLACE?](https://www.academia.edu/10173222/SEXUAL_HARASSMENT_OF_WOMEN_A_T_WORKPLACE?)
- Gruber, J. E., Smith, M., & Kauppinen-Toropainen, K. (1996). *Sexual harassment types and severity: Linking research and policy*. In M. S. Stockdale (Ed.), *Sexual harassment in the workplace: Perspectives, frontiers, and response strategies* (pp.151–173). ThousandOaks, CA: Sage.
- Howald, N., Walker, J., & Melick, S., (2018), Addressing sexual harassment in the workplace, 1-14, Retrieved from <http://www.infocoponline.es/pdf/ACOSOSEXUALLABORAL.pdf>
- McDonald, P. (2012). Workplace sexual harassment 30 years on: A review of the literature. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 14, 1-17.
- O'Hare, E., & O'Donohue, W. (1998). Sexual harassment: Identifying risk factors. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 27(6), 561-579.
- Pina, A., Saunders, B., & Gannon, T. A. (2009). An overview of the literature on sexual harassment: Perpetrator, theory, and treatment issues, *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 14(2), 126-138.
- Tangri, S., & Hayes, S. (1997). *Theories of sexual harassment*. In W. O'Donohue (Ed.), *Sexual harassment: Theory, research, and treatment* (pp. 112–128)
- Theories of Workplace Sexual Harassment, (2011). Retrieved from <https://www.endvawnow.org/en/articles/509-theories-of-workplace-sexual-harassment.html>