The Perception, Incidence and Management of Sexual Harassment at Workplace: A Malaysian Case

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on perception and management of sexual harassment (SH) at the workplace. The study was carried out in Northern Malaysia among 586 public sector administrators. Results showed that 43% of the total male respondents and 47% of the female respondents have faced some kind of sexual harassment. Findings showed that the internal whistleblowing mechanism is also inadequate, though the respondents are quite confident with the management in reporting SH cases. Finally, the article outline strategies that could ameliorate the occurrence of SH at the workplace as it is important to the organization and the priceless workers in the organization.

ABSTRAK

Kertas ini memfokus pada persepsi dan pengurusan gangguan seksual di tempat kerja. Kajian ini telah di jalankan di utara Malaysia di kalangan 586 pentadbir awam. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa 43% dari keseluruhan responden lelaki dan 47% dari keseluruhan responden wanita pernah mengalami gangguan seksual sepertimana yang digariskan dalam soal selidik USHPQ. Hasil kajian juga menunjukkan bahawa mekanisme aduan tidak mencukupi, namun responden berasa agak yakin untuk untuk melaporkan kes gangguan seksual pada pihak pengurusan. Akhir sekali artikel ini menggariskan strategi-strategi yang boleh mengurangkan kejadian gangguan seksual di tempat kerja, kerana ia penting untuk organisasi dan pekerjanya yang tidak ternilai.

INTRODUCTION

What is Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment impacts people and it impacts the organisation's bottom line. Thus when dealing with such issues a working definition is an important prerequisite to both the construction of a policy, and the investigative process. For sexual harassment to cease, some changes must take place. Before any changes can take place, however, a consistency of perceptions of sexual harassment needs to be attained. Thus, this establishes the need for a clear distinction to be drawn between a relation based on consent, and one where behaviour of a sexual nature is unwanted, unwelcome and unsolicited. Based on this formula four types of harassing behaviour can be identified (Fenley, 1988), those of physical nature (e.g. rape assault, touching grabbing, brushing), those of both verbal (e.g. persistent un-

welcome sexual advances, request for sexual favors, and remarks, innuendoes, repeated request for unwanted dates, propositions, intrusive questions about private life), and non-verbal nature (e.g. whistling, rude gestures, leering, exposure) and those that are visual (e.g. displaying or circulating offensive literature, materials, or items).

The different types of behaviour discussed above need to be placed in context, especially with regard to the creation, continuation, and termination of the employment relationship. In Malaysia sexual harassment is also seen in accordance with the two main legal criteria that have been developed in the United States (Fenley, 1988). The first looks at harassing behavior in purely contractual terms sometimes called *quid pro quo* harassment. It means that in order to obtain a job, win promotion, or gain access to training opportunities or other benefits the granting of sexual favors becomes a contractual term, either explicitly or implicitly. Failure to comply may lead to non-employment, denial of training and promotional opportunities, demotion, poor work assignments or dismissal.

The second relates to the creation of a hostile working environment, where there may be no direct contractual dimensions involved. It is where there may be no clear contractual gain or penalty, but where a pattern of behaviour based on sex develops and creates an uncomfortable and hostile work situation for the victim. Such behaviour has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with a person's performance on the job or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment.

As to why it happens, to date, there are three possible explanations offered by Tangri, Burt and Johnson (1982). The first possibility is that sexual harassment occurs because of a innate biological drive for men to be sexually aggressive. The second explanation has to do with organisational hierarchies where men hold ordinate positions. Last but not least is due to the 'sociocultural model' concludes that sexual harassment is a manifestation of a larger society in which men use harassment as a means to intimidate women (Pryor et al., 1993).

Why it is a Serious Problem

Sexual harassment is a serious problem in the workplace (Sheffey & Tindale, 1992). Not only is it a problem that has an impact on individuals (Bingham & Schere,1993), it also is a problem that can affect organizations both directly and indirectly (Fitzgerald & Shullman, 1993). Legal costs incurred can be large when sexual harassment is not dealt with effectively (Bennet-Alexander & Pincus, 1995). Furthermore, unwanted publicity may accompany sexual harassment charges, having an immeasurable impact on an organisation's ability to attract and retain valued employees. Other indirect costs may include lower productivity, lower quality, increased absenteeism, and increased sick leave costs (Gutek et al., 1990; Koss, 1990). Thus sexual harassment must be addressed and eliminate not only because it is a violation of the rights of an individual, but because it also affects the morale and image of the workplace.

The Malaysian Scenario

Sexual behavior in the workplace is not a recent phenomenon. While evidence of this type of behavior could be traced throughout the history of the nation, sexual harassment remain a silent or hidden social issue until the mid 1990's. Today, as a response to women's movements and also the government's effort, the issue of sexual harassment has found its place in the Sixth and Seventh Malaysia Plan. Under the Ministry of National Unity and Social Development, a National Action Plan has been drawn up to conduct training and awareness programmes to help women understand the issue of sexual harassment. Thus the concept of sexual harassment in Malaysia is of recent origin.

Badriyah (1988) who studies sexual harassment in 'large organisations' in Penang revealed that approximately 80% of the women are sexually threatened at work. Meanwhile according to the Human Resources Ministry there are only 110 known cases of sexual harassment reported by the victims between 1997-1999. These cases reported to the ministry involved male superiors as the offenders.

The Malaysian Trade Union Congress (MTUC) has conducted a survey with public sector employees on sexual harassment but unfortunately has not been able to sustain follow up actions on the issue. This is partly because in Malaysian organizational settings, sexual harassment issues are seldom discussed in the open. Though sexual harassment occurs at many levels of organization, many of the incidents have been pushed aside due to differences in definitions and understandings.

Although in other countries studies show that sexual harassment is a common phenomenon in the workplace, data from the Women Crisis Center (WCC) shows otherwise, (Table 1). The reported cases might only reflect the 'tip of the iceberg'. Most of the cases were either solved internally or the victim quits her job. Among the reasons is that while rape and other domestic violence are recognized as blatant and outright forms of violence against women, sexual harassment has yet to be acknowledged as a violation because of its more insidious nature. What makes it harder to address is that, it is considered to be 'acceptable' or that it is normal for men to sexually harass and it is taboo for women to confront it. The fear of being blamed for sexual harassment and that they somehow are deemed to have 'asked' to be harassed, prevents many women from speaking up and speaking out against it.

Table 1

Sexual Harassment Cases at the Workplace

Year	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
Sexual Harassment	2	1	1	4	0	2	0	1	2	1	1

Source: *Jelita*, August, 1997

Policy making and guidelines regarding proper behaviour at work, are still quite ambiguously put in the Malaysian General Order. The General Order only briefly states that no public officers should conduct himself in such a manner as to bring the civil service into disrepute or to bring discredit thereto (Peraturan-peraturan Pegawai Awam, 1993). Since the code of conduct was enacted in 1993 only one public employee has been taken to task.

According to AWAM (Malay Mail, 5 December, 1995: 4) the closest thing to legal protection is found under section 509 of the Penal Code which states that anyone who insults the modesty of any woman by word, through sound, gesture or object, intentionally if convicted, is liable to a jail term up to one year and/or be fined. And when it involves assault or use of criminal force, the aggressor may be charged under section 354 of the Penal Code carrying a maximum jail term of up to two years or whipping or a fine or any two of such punishment.

The irony is that, generally according to Mansor[1], the Head of Sexual Assault of Bukit Aman Police Headquarters, they do not act on cases of this nature unless physical injuries have been inflicted. Although such laws exist, it is difficult to prove sexual harassment in court as they often take place in close and private settings and few are willing to testify as witnesses (interview). The victims are often traumatized by their experience and end up in suffering. Victims who are mainly women seemed to be reluctant to make complaints as they are afraid that they will labeled as trouble maker instead. Apart from this, there are also victims who are not aware that they have been sexually harassed.

Thus this creates a need for employees to go beyond the guidelines to fine tune policy procedures as to reflect specific circumstances within the organisation. This is due to the fact that the courts have stated that the policy must be explicit and it must define and give various examples of behaviours that constitute sexual harassment. Explicitness is particularly important for the hostile work environment form of harassment. For example, many employees are probably aware that making promotional decisions contingent on the granting of sexual favors is harassment but they may not recognise that jokes, postures, gesture or computer pornography are also forms of sexual harassment.

The sexual harassment issue in Malaysia started to catch public attention in 1997. A great deal of the new found interest in sexual harassment can be attributed to the uproar created in January, 1997, when Lillian Threra de Costa alleged Jennico Associates Sdn. Bhd. that she was constructively dismissed or forced to resign from her company, due to sexual harassment. The Industrial Court's decision in Jennico Associates Sdn. Bhd. Vs. Lillian was regarded sexual harassment in the workplace as an offence for the first time in Malaysia. In doing so, it affirmed convictions long held by proponents of gender equality that sexual harassment needs to be taken seriously. It was an occasion of much joy for women's groups and those engaged in the fight for social justice in Malaysia. This case was considered a landmark decision in Malaysia's legal history.

A year after the De Costa case in 1998, the Minister of Unity and Social Development emphasised that there should be guidelines on how individuals in organisations should carry out themselves in the workplace, and this sparked efforts to take action on the issue. The Minister said that although sexual harassment was not given due thought in the country, it was time to address the problem because it was present in offices, colleges, universities and public places. The severity of sexual harassment was also not known because of the lack of awareness. Until now only the courts have decided on what sexual harassment is. She appointed members from the government and private agencies, NGOs and higher learning institutions, to study the definition of sexual harassment, how often it occurs and the number of victims subject to it. Fortunately the media played a major role by giving great coverage on this issue.

Later, on the 17th of August 1999, the Ministry of Human Resource launched the Code of Practice on the Prevention and Eradication of Sexual harassment in the Workplace for adoption and implementation by employers of the private sector to deal with the issue. The meaning of sexual harassment according to the code of practice by the Ministry of Human Resource is any unwanted conduct of sexual nature having the effect of verbal, non-verbal, visual, psychological or physical harassment: i) that might, on reasonable grounds, be perceived by the recipient as placing a condition of a sexual nature on her/his employment or ii) that might, on reasonable grounds, be perceived by the recipient as an offence or humiliation, or a threat to her/his well-being, but has no direct link to her/his employment. With the presence of the code of practice, it is hoped that it will begin to give some hope and 'life' to the past and present victims of sexual harassment.

Purpose of the Study

The objective of the study is to see the perception and incidence pattern of SH among administrators at the workplace. The study also intends to ascertain how SH is being handled within the organisation.

With these sets of objectives, the study can provide information regarding which behaviors most administrators consider to be sexual harassment, thus establishing areas of consensus in the perception of potentially harassing behaviors. These can pave the way for management to come up with proper whistle blowing (complain mechanisms) and policies towards sexual harassment at work since the definition and legal guidelines are still being developed.

Why Study Administrators

Administrators are made the focus of this study because normally they are the ones who are advised to be approached first if there is any form of personnel related problems in the organization. Under the Malaysian Employment Law the employer is responsible for providing a conducive environment or they can be charged in court for not doing so. The prompt investigation of a sexual harassment complaint followed by appropriate action will usually prevent a finding of liability against the employer. Thus the existence of an effective grievance procedure and the enforcement of a sexual harassment policy can help employers avoid liability.

Administrators can influence the social work norm at workplace. Past study (Pryor et al., 1993) has suggested that local social norms are important influence of sexual harassment. Sexual harassment may be more likely to occur in situations where it is perceived as socially permissible (Gutek, 1990; Haavio-Mannila, Kaupinen-Toraopaonen & Kandolin, 1988). To some extent, the reactions of work group leaders (e.g. management in organizational settings) to sexual harassment may define local social norms. Potential harassers may perceive that they are free to harass if management tolerates or condones such behavior. So, the perceived attitudes of local work group leaders may provide an important index of local norms (Larwood, Szwajkwoski & Rose, 1988) in the organisation.

In this study sexual harassment is conceptualized as a social behavior some people do some time. For example three studies demonstrated that high "Likelihood to Sexually Harass" (LSH) men behave in a sexually harassing way in certain social situations (Pryor, 1985, Pryor, La Vite & Stoller,1993; Pryor, Giedd & Williams, 1995).These studies demonstrated the importance of situational factors in predicting sexual harassment. High LSH men only seemed to act upon their proclivities for sexual harassment when the local social norms condoned or permitted such behavior (Pryor et al., 1995). Their research showed that social norms permitting sexual harassment can also develop in co-

hesive groups of peers as well as emanating from authority figures. Thus people's perceptions of social norms are known to be important determinants of a wide variety of social behaviors (Azjen & Fishbein, 1980).

Hence it is assumed that exposure to a harassing model could influence organizational norms – "everybody's doing it and it's okay to do it". This assumption has theoretical roots in Lewin's (1951) analysis that behavior is a function of the social environment and the person. Hence this study will help Malaysians to gather information on how administrators perceive, experience and handle sexual harassment which in turn will give insights on the norms of the public sector administrators towards sexual harassment in the Malaysian context.

Another problem in trying to confront an issue like sexual harassment lies in the difficulty of establishing a comprehensive definition (Arvey & Cavanaugh, 1995). As harassment would seem to some as a matter of interpretation, there is an inclination to individualize incidents and to blame the victim. By defining sexual harassment and differentiating it from other sorts of workplace behavior, the paranoia of being wrongly accused of the crime can dissipate. Thus a key question in overcoming sexual harassment concerns what particular behaviours are considered to be harassing. Hence if information on perception and how sexual harassment is handled in the organisation is obtained then the guidelines can be adjusted to fit both the employers' and the employees' needs towards curbing sexual harassment in the workplace.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This is an exploratory research which seeks to understand the perception and incidence pattern of SH by administrators within the Malaysian context. The instrument used in this study is Utara Sexual Harassment Questionnaire (USHPQ) which was initially formulated from a review of the relevant literature and

adaptation of previous appropriate questionnaires from the west (Soutar *et al.,* 1987; Reese& Lindenberg, 1997). The items in USHPQ were reviewed and formulated in accordance with the Malaysian context with the help of focus-group-discussions (FGD). These FGDs were made up of public administrators and members from women's organizations.

The USHPQ instrument consists of 44 questions that described the four types of sexual harassment. It consisted of physical, visual, verbal and non-verbal forms of sexual harassment. The types of sexual harassment referred to in this study are based on *quid pro quo* — this occurs when a perpetrator requests sexual activity from the victim in exchange for work benefits; and hostile environment — one that occurs when a perpetrator creates an offensive or intimidating environment for the victim.

Respondents were given a "yes" and "no" choice to decide which items are perceived as sexual harassment. They are also to mark similar items that they have faced in the workplace. The study also stated that it only takes into account sexual harassment that occurred within the workplace and which was perpetrated by employees of the opposite sex in the organisation concerned. The number of "yes" choice, identified by respondents on the 44 items will show their perception towards SH.

In deciding what constitutes as sexual harassment behaviour in the questionnaire the study used 2 possible tests as outlined by Fenley (1988). They are i) Would I like someone to behave in this way towards my spouse, sweetheart, or parent? And ii) Would I be embarrassed to see my remarks or behaviour described to my family or reported in the newspaper? These questions act as a benchmark in attaining the working definition of sexual harassment for this study.

There were a total of 545 government departments in Kedah, Kelantan, Perlis and Terengganu. Sixty departments (about 10% of the total population) were randomly selected from the list of departments furnished by the State Secretary Administration Office from four states. Every administrator from each of the selected departments was taken as sample for this study.

Formal approval from all the heads of department from each of the selected department was obtained before the questionnaires were mailed to them. Some of the departments that did not permit the study to be carried out, were taken out from the sample list, and replaced with other departments through random sampling from the total population. Approximately 1100 questionnaires were mailed to all the public administrators in the 60 departments. A total of 586 administrators responded, for a response rate of approximately 53%.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Background of the Respondents
About 72% of the total sample were male and 28% were female respondents. The female are a minority as administrative jobs are considered traditionally male jobs. 92.7% of the population comprised of Malays, 5.5% Chinese, 1.2% Indian and other races 0.3%. From the sample 88.9% of the respondent are married, 9.0% are still single and 2.0% are widows or widowers. Meanwhile the education level of the administrators varies from High School Certificate holders to University graduates. The sample is made up of 23.5% administrators with High School Certificates (became administrators through rank and file), 21.0% has Diplomas and 41.6% are undergraduates, and 12.8% are graduates and Ph.D. holders.

Perception Towards Sexual Harassment
The first objective is to investigate the perception of SH among administrators. This study showed that an act is perceived as harassment by 83.1% of the respondents when men harass women, and 66% perceives an act as a harassment if it was done by women to men, and the score was lower when a man does it to a man (30.4%) or between women (29.4%).

Specifically, the perception of sexual harassment among administrators varied according to the different categories of the SH. Table 2 contains the percentage of agreement (those who answered "yes" to the question) that a particular item is perceived as sexually harassing. Touching, kissing, hugs are acts which are perceived by 97% of respondents as sexually harassing (physical category).

Table 2

Perception on Harassment Items and who Faced Harassment

(Ranked high to low)

Item	Item Description	The percentage of agreement (yes) that this item is perceived as sexually harassing
1	Touching of the intimate parts of the body	99
4	Kisses	97.1
5	Hugs	96.6
21	Demands for favours with threats or mistreatments	96.6
29	Tried to force you physically into having sexual intercourse	95.9
30	Tried to force you verbally into having sexual intercourse	95.6
7	Brushing up against another employee's body	95.2
15	Leering/ogling/cornering	95.1
23	Sexual letters	94.5
24	Sexual telephone calls	94.5
22	Implied reward or better treatment for sexual co-op operation	93.9
34	Making sexually suggestive gestures	92.5
20	Sexual remarks about sexual practices	92
17	Pinups, displays, circulation, pictures, cartoons, stories or pornography of sexually suggestive materials	91
19	Sexual remarks about the body	91
14	Staring or excessive eye contact or suggestive looks	98.6
16	Sexual jokes, stories or language	88.2
26	Sexually suggestive displays of pictures, break time games in the computer	88.1
37	Offensive sexual remarks about self to others	87.4
40	Target of sexual innuendos	85.7
38	Co-worker spreading sexual rumors about yourself to others	85
28	Making reference to your sex life and personal life	83.8
18	Sexual remarks about cloth	83.4
39	Making it necessary to respond positively to sexual or social invitations in order to be well-treated	83.4
8	Standing close to you in a way that makes you uncomfortable	82.9
25	Whistling and making cat calls (making sounds)	82.3
6	Pinching	81.2

Item	Item Description	The percentage of agreement (yes) that this item is perceived as sexually harassing
27	Not dressed according to the normal dress code as stated by the organization or out of the norm	79.2
12	Asking to stay late and working late with him/her when there is no work to do	79.0
13	Giving intimate gifts for example perfume, lingerie and the like.	76.5
2	Touching of the non-intimate parts of the body or hand, etc.	75.9
41	Using words in a patronizing way, for example, "sexy", "sweetie", "darling"	75.9
3	Patting	73.5
35	Telling jokes or having conversations about women which you found offensive to women	72.2
36	Telling jokes or having conversations about men which you found offensive to women	68.3
9	Acting in over familiar behavior	67.9
31	Treating differently because you are a woman/man, mistreating, slighting or ignoring.	66.7
11	Pressuring for dates for example drinks, dinners etc.	63.8
42	One employee alleging another employee got a raise, promotion or better job assignment because the other woman/man and the boss were intimate	61.6
32	Sexist remarks or putting you down because of your sex, e.g., suggesting that women or men are too emotional or chauvinist	59.9
33	Subjecting someone to insults or ridicule because of their sex	56.7
44	An employee commenting on her moral	51.9
10	Commenting on appearances	48.3
43	Male co-worker refusing to listen to her work-related ideas or suggestions seriously	47.1

N=586, KR-20=0.9441

The difference of perception between male and female respondents were also investigated and the results are as depicted in Table 3. Sexual bribery, explicit propositions, and physical sexual advances were perceived by almost everyone as sexual harassment. On the other hand, behaviors such as sexist comments, undue attention, coarse language, and jokes were much less likely perceived as harassment. For example 99% of the subjects viewed touching of private parts as sexual harassment, whereas coarse language and jokes scored lower as harassment items. Fewer individuals (62%-47%) defined stereotyped or gender focussed items (refer to Table 2, and items 33, 43 and, 44 in USHPQ questionnaire) as harassment. Indeed, Fitzgerald & Hesson–McInnis (1989) concluded from their multidimensional-scaling analysis that gender harassment may be conceptually different from sexual harassment, and Tata's (1993) experiment highlighted the ambiguity in interpreting gender harassment. Stockdale and Vaux (1993) have offered the possible explanation that gender harassment may not be perceived as sexual harassment because it involves behaviors that are socially acceptable and widely displayed.

Table 3

Difference in Perception between Men and Women who have Faced Harassment

Item	Item Description	Men	Women
Item 1	Body Private	98.9	98.7
Item 2	Body N. Private	82.5	92.2
Item 3	Patting	82	90.9
Item 4	Kisses	97.8	98.7
Item 5	Hugs	97.8	98.7
Item 6	Pinching	83.1	89.6
Item 7	Brushing	96.2	97.4
Item 8	Standing Close	88.5	90.9
Item 9	Over Familiar	78.7	83.1
Item 10	Comments on Appearance	65.6	68.8
Item 11	Dates	71.6	77.9
Item 12	Staying Late	79.2	90.9
Item 13	Intimate	79.2	84.4
Item 14	Suggestive Looks	90.7	94.8
Item 15	Ogling	95.1	93.5
Item 16	Sexual Jokes	91.8	93.5
Item 17	Pinups	94	93.5
Item 18	Cloth	88	93.5
Item 19	Body	92.9	94.8
Item 20	Sexual Practices	93.4	96.1
Item 21	Demands	62.3	70.1
Item 22	Sexual Co-op	95.1	96.1
Item 23	Letters	94.5	97.4
Item 24	Telephone	95.6	97.4
Item 25	Whistling	81.4	93.5
Item 26	Computer	89.1	94.8
Item 27	Dress Code	88	87.0
Item 28	Sex Life	85.2	89.6
Item 29	Sexual Intercourse	95.1	92.2
Item 30	Sexual Intercourse-verbally	94.5	93.5
Item 31	Treated Differently	69.9	76.2
Item 32	Put Down	66.7	79.2
Item 33	Ridicule	63.4	76.6
Item 34	Sex. Gestures	91.3	93.5
Item 35	Offensive to Women	78.1	87.0
Item 36	Conversations about Men	73.2	84.4
Item 37	Sex. Remarks	90.7	90.9
Item 38	Sexual Rumours	84.2	94.8
Item 39	Sexual Invitations	83.6	89.6
Item 40	Sexual Innuendoes	86.9	93.5
Item 41	Sex Words	83.6	81.8
Item 42	Promotion Intimate	68.3	77.9
Item 43	Work-related Ideas	57.4	68.8
Item 44	Moral	65.6	74.0

Figure 2

Incidence of Sexual Harassment According to Race
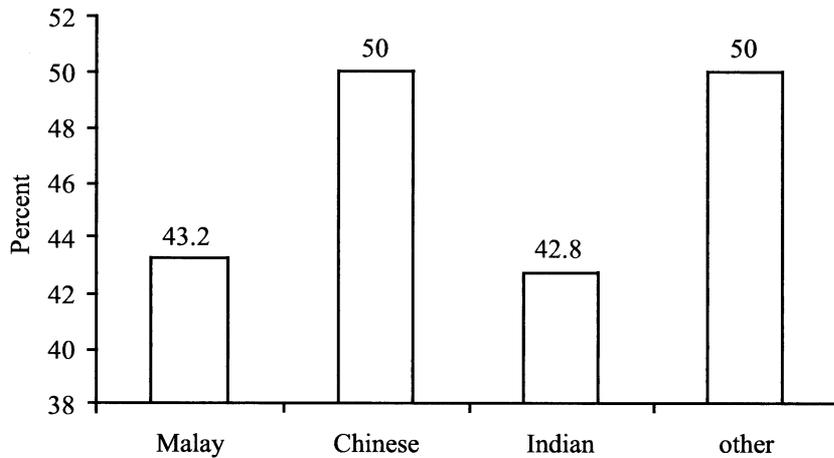
Table 4

SH Items By Victims in Descending Order

Item	Item Description	Respondents admitted being harassed by this act	
		%	**Frequency**
41	Sex words	83.1	216
12	Staying late	82.7	215
8	Standing close	42.3	110
2	Body (private)	42.3	110
3	Patting	34.6	90
10	Comment on appearances	33.5	87
16	Sexual jokes	31.2	81
9	Over familiar	31.2	81
11	Date	29.6	77
44	Moral	23.5	61
35	Offensive to women	23.1	60
14	Suggestive looks	22.3	58
36	Conversation about men	21.9	57
6	Pinching	20.0	52
43	Work-related ideas	18.5	48
19	Body verbal	18.1	47
32	Put down	16.5	43
18	Cloth verbal	16.2	42
31	Treated differently	15.0	39
17	Pinups	14.6	38
13	Intimate gifts	14.2	37
27	Dress code	13.5	35
33	Ridicule	11.5	30
24	Telephone	11.2	29
7	Brushing	10.8	28

Item	Item Description	Respondents admitted being harassed by this act	
		%	Frequency
20	Sexual practices verbal	10.4	27
15	Ogling	10.0	26
21	Demands	9.2	24
25	Whistling	8.1	21
40	Sexual innuendoes	7.7	20
38	Sexual Rumours	7.7	20
42	Promotion intimate	7.7	20
34	Sexual gestures	6.9	18
37	Sex. Remarks	6.5	17
5	Hugs	6.2	16
28	Sex life	6.2	16
26	Computer	5.4	14
1	Body Private	3.8	10
23	Letters	3.5	9
22	Sexual Co-op	2.3	6
4	Kisses	1.9	5
30	Sexual intercourse-verbal	1.9	5
39	Sexual invitations	1.5	4
29	Sexual intercourse	1.2	3

How Sexual Harassment Is Managed

The final objective of the study is to ascertain how SH is managed in the organization. Interestingly, it was found that almost 90% of the administrators in this study agreed that it is important to have an anti-harassment act in their organisation. On the other hand, almost 90% of respondents in the study either do not know or were not sure whether there were procedures in their organisation to manage sexual harassment complaints. Almost 90% of the administrators admitted that they themselves were not sure of the reporting procedures even if it happened to them. When it happened they frequently confronted the harassers in a nice way (59.4%), followed by lodging a complaint (30.5%) and the last resort was to ignore the incidence (10.1%). Studies in the past showed that target of sexual harassment use avoidance/denial, low intervention strategies more frequently than other strategies and that these strategies are the least effective in ending sexual harassment behavior (Knapp, Faley & Dubois, 1997).

This study also showed that 64.2% of the administrators have little or no confidence at all that they would be safe or be protected by the organisation when lodging a complaint. The administrators faced several consequences if they reported the incidents. Among them were that the reprisal was still pending (69.2%), it would got them into more trouble (46.2%), no action was taken (38.5%), top management was not happy for making such report, so were the supervisors (30.8%) and co-workers (61.5%). These results showed that it created a very uncomfortable atmosphere for the individuals who made complaints reaagarding sexual harassment. Other studies (Fitzgerald & Shullman, 1993; Spann, 1990) also showed that a victim's reluctance to report sexual harassment may be exacerbated by the attitudes and behaviors of executives and managers. If sexual harassment is tolerated by management and if reports are not taken seriously, targets may believe that the risks of reporting are too great.

The findings of the study also showed that although the respondents have been harassed, yet 15.8% said that SH does not happen in their organisation. This is an important finding given that other studies have also found that victims who reported experiencing various behaviours did not feel that they have been harassed (Fitzgerald et al., 1988). Their lack of awareness of what constitutes, as sexual harassment behaviour at workplace is the main reason that SH is seldom discussed in the work settings. This might pose a problem to victim who approaches such administrators that have little awareness on the issue (Brooks & , 1991). As Knapp et al., (1997) concluded in her study that the perceived attitude of those at the top of the organizational hierarchy may influence the organizational climate regarding sexual harassment. If sexual harassment is viewed as a legitimate workplace issue by members of top management, the risks of confrontation may be less (Spann, 1990).

Other research (Savery, et al., 1985;) also pointed out that many human relation managers did not see harassment as a problem in their companies because it was not reported. Accordingly in this study, there are administrators (7.8%) who still consider that it is not important to have an anti-sexual harassment Act in their organization. This might add problems to organizations in trying to ameliorate SH cases at the organizational level. This view is similar to findings in Knapp's study (1997) which demonstrated that as individuals become informed about the policy, they are more likely to use it. On the other hand, if individuals are uncertain about the reporting process, they may be less likely to employ it as a coping action.

CONCLUSION

In general, the study finds that out of the 44 items listed in the USHPQ, items which are related to the physical and verbal categories are most often perceived as sexually harassing. There are small differences between gender in terms of perception. Further, administrators

that have been victimized before tend to perceive a behavior as harassment compared to non victims. And women victims had a higher tendency to perceive an act as sexual harassment compared to men who have been victimized. In terms of occurrence administrators face behaviors that is related to hostile work environment and less of the *quid pro quo* type. Results also showed that it is an irony that although a majority of them favour anti-sexual harassment act in their organization, 90% of them are not sure or do not know if such procedures exist in their organisation. In fact some of those who reported faced retaliation and many of them did not lodge report because they were afraid of such consequences.

RECOMMENDATION

These recommendations were outlined with specific reference made to the high level of perception towards SH amongst administrators and the present practice in public organizations to curb the incidence of SH at the work place. The first role to be taken by management is that of role model; demonstrating recognition of the value of the employee's dignity, the importance of his/her professional contribution to the company, leading by example. Management should demonstrate an attitude of respect towards other men and women within the organization, where opinions of both are valued, and where opportunities for advancement are equally available and determined solely on professional merit. In this way, the administrators can model expected behavior to his/her subordinates and this modeling can in turn be disseminated throughout the ranks.

The second role for management lies on the establishment and enforcement of a sexual harassment policy. This is because 90% of the respondents are not sure how their organizations manage SH complaints. This policy should be a vehicle for educating all company members, regardless of position or gender, of company expectations regarding the sexual harassment issue. It can also be a tool in helping to foster an environment

of respect between all employees. The policy should outline complaint procedure including the assurance that management will take serious action investigating complaints, and disciplinary procedures for those found guilty of sexual harassment. This sexual harassment policy will also serve as a means of defense for companies who are faced with a lawsuit over sexual harassment charges. With any sexual harassment policy that is formulated within an organization, emphasis should be placed on prevention whereby the costs to an organization are much less if an environment of sexual harassment can be avoided.

Since the study found that the incidence of sexual harassment on some categories is quite significant, it is therefore necessary for employers and unions to take proactive measures to deal with the problem and ensure a safe and healthy working environment for all. The code of practice on the preventing and handling of sexual harassment should aim to provide the in house preventive and redress mechanisms for dealing with the problems at the company level without having to seek redress through other channels such as the Industrial Court, to save costs, time, and to avoid embarrassment.

Last but not least employees cannot rely on the societal consciousness of individual managers, faced with conflicting priorities, to meet their needs for a safe and respectful work environment. For management, sexual harassment must remain an issue enmeshed with employee effectiveness, and seen as threat not only to the individuals who suffer most personally from it but also to the most fundamental resource of the company - the personnel resource.

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