

## Uncovering Sexual Harassment Issues in the Workplace: A Study on Hotels in Egypt

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to uncover issues related to sexual harassment in the Egyptian hotels and investigate the managerial policies, practices, and procedures against it. The study depended on two data collection methods (questionnaire and interview). A total of 150 questionnaires were distributed to female students who confronted sexual harassment (SH) incidents during their summer training in hotels. Of this, 120 were deemed fit for analysis. SPSS was used to analyze the collected data and answer the research questions. The study held interviews with human resource managers in hotels to understand the issue from a managerial perspective. The qualitative data was analyzed based on a content analysis approach. The findings show that the food and beverage department is the most commonplace in the hotel where the victim is sexually harassed. Verbal harassment is the most type of SH that occurs in hotels. The cause of SH is men's power over the victim. Only 20% of victims reported the incident, and approximately half of them were physically harassed. The most frequent effects of SH on victims are low confidence, loss of desire to work, and low job performance. The analysis of the interviews declared that hotels perform some practices against SH. They organize training programs to educate employees about SH issues, and facilitate reporting incidents. However, they have some shortages in their practices and procedures. The study highlights several implications for the hotels' management in Egypt, enriches knowledge, and fills a gap in previous research studies by investigating SH in the Egyptian hospitality setting.

### 1. Introduction

In the workplace, sexual harassment (SH) is defined as unwelcome sexual advances (verbal or non-verbal, or physical) (Farris et al., 2014). SH is the undesirable sex-related behavior at work that the victim considers as abusive and menacing his/her well-being (Li et al., 2016; Aina-Pelemo et al., 2020). SH is also explained as conditions where an employee receives unwanted sexual conduct from a perpetrator (co-worker, supervisor/manager, or customer) and affects his/her ability to work

(Mkono 2010). Despite SH incidents occurring in streets, public places, transportation, or anywhere, workplace SH has become a significant problem that is gaining gradual recognition as a form of discrimination against women at the workplace (Maghraby et al., 2020).

The consequences of SH on victims (especially females in junior positions) affect negatively employees' performance, productivity, ability to work with others (Mkono 2010), job satisfaction (Long et al., 2016), job withdrawal (Li et al., 2016), and feelings of helplessness and isolations (Long et al., 2016). Moreover, SH leads to high turnover rates, absenteeism, low profitability (Morgan & Pritchard 2019; Teo et al., 2020), poor working relationships, low morale (Mkono 2010), low self-esteem, insufficient organizational commitment (Long et al., 2016). Also, SH impacts psychological and physical health as evidenced in their higher levels of symptoms such as anxiety, depression, and even post-traumatic stress disorder (Willness et al., 2007; Long et al., 2016).

In hospitality, SH is identified as a critical problem (Mkono 2010) and a prevalent issue which is more common than elsewhere (Poulston 2008; Kensbock et al., 2015). Employees in the service industry, especially women (Poulston 2008), experience more SH than laborers in society at large (Gilbert et al., 1998; Pernecky et al., 2019). Several reasons lead to SH in hotels, such as extraordinary working hours while delivering service, informal environment, and close communication between employees and customers (Poulston 2008). Further, the need of the employees to look attractive (Ali et al., 2015) and the high rate of recurrence of employees' contact with customers (jung & Yoon 2019) are also motives of SH. In 2015, about 33% of SH complaints reported in the United States were from hospitality employees (Teo et al., 2020). Dashper's (2020) study confirmed that around 89% of employees in hospitality sector faced one or more SH incidents at their workplace. In the United Kingdom, more than half of hospitality students had been sexually harassed during their supervised work experience (Poulston 2008).

In Egypt, SH against women is a severe problem that has impacted women at all levels of society (Mohamed and Stanek 2020). The 2013 UN Women's survey found that 99% of Egyptian women have been experienced various forms of SH (Verbal abuse, touching women's bodies, dirty looks at the woman's body, using obscene language, and stalking/pursuing) (Sepulveda 2015). In 2014, the Egyptian government issued a decree which defined SH as "accosting others in a private, public, or frequented place with acts, gestures, or suggestions that are sexual or obscene, verbally, physically, or through other non-verbal means or actions, including modern means of communication." (Sepulveda 2015, P. 35). In 2017, a significant number of women have faced SH incidents in different places in Egypt such as workplace (14,000 women), education institutions (16,000 girls who are 18 or older), public transportation (1.7 million women) (Jica 2018). The Egyptian government formulated the National Strategy for Combating Violence against Women 2015–2020 (see Section 2.3.3 (3)), which defines violence against women as "any act of violence based on gender that leads or may lead to physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering

for women or girls, including threat to commit such act, suppression or arbitrary deprivation from freedom, whether in public or private life" (Jica 2018, P. 19).

Even Though research on SH has improved in western countries, mainly in the US and to a lesser extent in Europe and Australia, there is a noticeable lack of research on SH in the Arab world in general (Amin and Darrag 2011; Mohamed 2019). Moreover, in Egypt, no academic studies have been published on this phenomenon before 2011 based on a review of EBSCO and Emerald electronic database, which shows that no single study has been published on SH in Egypt (Amin and Darrag 2011). After 2011, some published articles discovered the issue in public places and streets in Egypt; however, there is insufficient research on the workplace SH (Mohamed 2019). By reviewing the few previous studies that explored SH in Egypt, the authors of the current study found that these studies are focused mainly on SH in the street, transportation, and public places (i.e., Amar 2011; Abdelmonem 2015; Joseph 2015; Kirolos 2016; Sadek 2016; Abdelmonem & Galán 2017; Hammad 2017; Sadler 2018; Cochrane et al., 2019). Other studies that explored SH in the workplace in Egypt are very few. They mainly focused on settings such as nursing and hospitals, and none of them studied the issue in the hospitality industry.

After reviewing the studies that focused on SH in the workplace in Egypt, the authors summarized them as follows. Amin and Darrag (2011) presented a review article for the published literature on SH in the workplace in Egypt. Abbas and Selim (2011) implemented an empirical study to explore the risk of workplace violence in Ismailia governorate hospitals, Egypt. The authors collected data from radiographers' members and studied SH as a part of workplace violence that the frontline employee could face. The results of their research indicated that SH represented only 1.3% of workplace violence. In the same line, Abou-ElWafa et al.'s (2015) manuscript entitled "workplace violence against emergency versus non-emergency nurses in Mansoura University Hospitals, Egypt" studied SH as one of the workplace violence types. The data were collected through the self-administered questionnaire, and the results confirmed that the hospital was the most commonplace for physical, verbal violence, and bullying. At the same time, 52.7% of persons reported that it occurred outside the hospital for SH. Ali and Saied et al. (2015) focused on SH against nursing staff in Tanta University Hospitals, Egypt. The cross-sectional study, which collected data through a questionnaire survey from 430 nurses, insisted that 70.2% of the studied nurses were exposed to SH at the workplace.

Maghraby et al. (2020) conducted an empirical study and collected data from 296 nurses in Egypt, Sohag University Hospital. The results confirmed that more than half of the nurses (58.1%) were exposed to at least one form of SH in their workplace. Mohamad (2019) developed a conceptual model that includes relationships between workplace SH and counterproductive work behaviors with the moderating effect of coping strategies on these relationships. The author tested the model based on data collected from 260 working women from different work settings in Cairo. The results confirmed the direct relationships supported the connections between workplace SH and counterproductive work behaviors; however, the moderating role of coping strategies is not supported. According to that review, there is a lack of previous

literature exploring SH against working women in the Egyptian workplace, such as hotels. Hotels' employees are working in a particular workplace with irregular working hours and are more likely to face SH incidents than employees elsewhere. Accordingly, SH directed at hospitality women employees needs to be explored in Egypt, and the actual size of the issue in the hospitality setting requires more research.

Based on the above, the SH phenomenon is a problem in the workplace. It is sparse in latent literature investigating the issue in the workplace in Egypt, especially the hotels. Hence, the current study aims to identify the research gap about SH in the Egyptian workplace in general and the hospitality sector. The objectives of this study are to: explore the causes of SH in the Egyptian hotels; identify the victims' reactions during and after SH incidents; determine the consequences of SH; discover the policies and practices that the managements are following to educate employees on how to deal with such incidents; recognize the managerial procedures, and policies to handle SH. The present study intends to provide both academics and practitioners with recommendations about how to deal with the issues of SH. The aim of this study is to answer the following questions:

- What are the causes of SH in the Egyptian hotels?
- What are the victims' reactions during and after SH incidents?
- What are the consequences of SH?
- What are the policies and practices that the hotels' managements in Egypt are following to educate their employees on how to deal with such incident?
- What are the managerial procedures and policies to handle SH?

## **2. Background**

### **2.1. Workplace Sexual Harassment**

Workplace SH is unwanted sex-related behavior that takes place in the work setting. It is undesirable and offensive actions and a form of violent conduct from a perpetrator (co-worker, supervisor/manager, or customer) and considered by the employee victim as abusive (Cantisano et al., 2008; Mkono 2010; Ali et al., 2015). In the workplace, SH is still generally perceived as behavior directed at women by men (McCabe & Hardam 2005). SH can be verbal, nonverbal, or physical behaviors (Crowley et al., 2019) that are unwelcome and observed negatively by the target (Zapata-Calvente et al., 2019). SH behaviors are such as unwanted sexual comments or jokes; unwelcome touches in a sexual way; and undesirable sexual rumors being spread about someone; repeated requests for dates, whistles, staring, and various types of unwelcome physical contact of a sexual nature (McCabe & Hardam 2005; Crowley et al., 2019). Hence, SH ranges from unwanted verbal comments to actions including touching, coercive attempts to establish a sexual interaction, and rape (Kensbock et al., 2015).

### **2.2. Causes and Impacts of Sexual Harassment in the Hospitality Industry**

SH is a significant problem and more common in hotels than elsewhere (Poulston 2008; Kensbock et al., 2015). Employees in the hospitality industry experience more SH incidents than laborers in general due to several causes (Gilbert et al., 1998;

Poulston 2008; Pernecky et al., 2019). Gilbert et al. (1998) declared that SH in hospitality is the unusual working hours, the contact of people in the delivery of service, and the uniform style (very short skirts). Kensbock et al. (2015) insisted that the causes of hotels room attendants being harassed by customers are: the attendants' uniform style; attendants' main working spaces in the guest bedrooms or suites of customers; and they are mainly working alone. In the same vein, Poulston (2008) declared that most hospitality managements do not allow female staff to wear trousers, which is one of the critical reasons for SH. In the same meaning, Pernecky et al. (2019) declared that societies return the reason to woman's clothing, as it is believed that if a woman's clothing was "revealing or sexy," she was partially to blame or to blame for the incident because of the way she was dressed.

Poulston (2008), Mohamed (2019), and Jung and Yoon (2019) agreed that the reason for SH in the workplace is the men's power which facilitates them to sexually abuse female employees, especially in the lower class and those whose position or authority is weaker than the perpetrator. They added that the man who has the power could be a manager/supervisor or a customer. Perpetrators misuse their power and ask victims (especially females in junior positions) for sexual favors, which, if refused, may lead to revenge actions influencing their working conditions (Mkono 2010; Morgan & Pritchard 2019).

The negative consequences of SH for working women in hospitality operations differ from victim to victim, and depending on the severity of the harassment (Poulston 2008; Morgan & Pritchard 2019). Hence, SH incredibly physical conduct (Long et al., 2016) affect negatively on employees' performance, productivity, ability to work with others (Mkono 2010), job satisfaction, and feelings of helplessness and isolation (Long et al., 2016). SH affects the victim's ability to work, health, career and creates an unpleasant or threatening working environment (Li et al., 2016; Pernecky et al., 2019; Aina-Pelemo et al., 2020). Additionally, SH leads to high turnover intentions and organizational withdrawal, which raises the cost of hiring and training new staff (Ali et al., 2015; Li et al., 2016).

The impacts of SH on women employees in the service sector generally and hotels specifically include increased absenteeism, poor customer service, and low profitability (Sims et al., 2005; Kensbock et al., 2015; Morgan & Pritchard 2019; Teo et al., 2020), poor working relationships, low morale (Mkono 2010), low self-esteem, insufficient organizational commitment (Long et al., 2016) negative corporate reputation from the public (Ali et al., 2015). Also, SH has an impact on mental, psychological, and physical health as evidenced in their higher levels of symptoms such as loss of confidence, stress, anxiety, lack of security, bad dreams, and difficulty sleeping, a sense of fear, shame, confusion, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, headaches and gastric problem (Gilbert et al., 1998; Murdoch & McGovern 1998; Gettman et al., 2007; Willness et al., 2007; Ali et al., 2015; Sepulveda 2015; Long et al., 2016; Zapata-Calvente et al., 2019; Jung & Yoon 2019).

### **2.3.The Organizational Efforts Against Sexual Harassment in the Workplace**

The organizational efforts that limit the negative consequences of SH on employees are explained as follows. Encourage victims to report and complain about SH incidents in hotels, induce victims not to be afraid, and feel safe reporting SH incidents, especially when the harasser is a manager or supervisor (Law 2011; Inson et al., 2013). Establish complaints processes to encourage employees to report incidents (Kensbock et al., 2015). Create policies that deal with SH incidents seriously and sensitively (Gilbert et al., 1998; Law 2011). Assure confidentiality and prohibit retaliation (Li et al., 2016), provide anonymous SH hotlines, anonymous letterboxes (Law 2011). Furthermore, the hotel should have a specific office or a trusted counselor with authority and clear appropriate investigation procedures to investigate SH complaints (Li et al., 2016) and to create an environment helps victims challenge SH (Law 2011).

### **3. Methods**

The current study adopted both quantitative and qualitative research strategies. For collecting quantitative data, a questionnaire survey was distributed. Among the several questionnaire survey methods, a paper-based survey has competence in offering different advantages, such as its ability to generate much higher response rates than web questionnaires. Additionally, most respondents often believe that printed surveys are more anonymous than online surveys, which benefits in collecting high-quality data (Bryman 2012; Saunders et al., 2016). To collect qualitative data, the researchers performed interviews that helped researchers explain, understand, and explore respondents' opinions, behaviors, and experiences. Further, interview questions are usually open-ended to collect in-depth information (Creswell, 2014; Neuman 2014). The integration of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods provides a better understanding of the phenomenon (SH in hotels), ensure the constraints of one type of data are balanced by the strong points of the other (Mertens 2010; Saunders et al., 2016). This integration of data types is a pragmatic decision that allows the researchers to take advantage of the strengths and enrich more in-depth exploration of the research questions (Creswell & Clark 2017; Groves 2019). The current study adopted both quantitative and qualitative research strategies to achieve its aim. The aim of this study is to answer the following questions:

- What are the causes of SH in the Egyptian hotels?
- What are the victims' reactions during and after SH incidents?
- What are the consequences of SH?
- What are the policies and practices that the hotels' managements in Egypt are following to educate their employees on how to deal with such incident?
- What are the managerial procedures and policies to handle SH?

### **3.1.Sampling**

The study performed several data collection procedures and sample attributes into consideration. On the one hand, as the study focused on exploring SH incidents in the hospitality industry, the appropriate respondents could be females who are working or training at hotels. Specifically, females are most SH victims, whereas males are most likely to be harassers (Li et al., 2016). Furthermore, according to reasons such as the

sensitive nature of the research area, which may result in potential inhabitation in answering the questionnaire or giving accurate information, the researchers collected data from female students (trained or worked at hotels during the summer vacation) who are familiar with the researchers. On the other hand, the data collected from human resource managers in hotels because they are best knowledgeable about SH incidents, hotels' policies, and practices to handle such situations.

### **3.2.Data collection procedures (Accessibility)**

On the one hand, the researchers distributed 150 questionnaire surveys to students in the hotel management department at Minia University who had undertaken their industrial attachment in the hotel industry. The researchers taught all the respondents one or more courses. At the end of one of the classes, the researchers asked female students who had taken their training in the hotel industry to remain in the classroom. The researchers explained the aim of the research, confirmed the anonymity of respondents and confidentiality of the collected data, clarified the procedures of answering the questionnaire, and gave them the questionnaire sheet. The questionnaire took around 15 minutes to be answered by the respondents. The researchers collected the questionnaire and found that 120 were usable and able to be statistically analyzed. The questionnaire survey included close and open-ended questions. The questions asked about victim's response adopted from Abou-ElWafa et al. (2014), the questions asked about victim's reactions during and after the incident adopted from Ali et al. (2015); the effects of SH incidents adopted from Maghraby et al. (2020); the open-ended questions in the questionnaire adapted from Mkonon (2010). Hence, the questionnaire contained the following:

- Victim profile (age and marital status);
- Perpetrator profile (age, gender, type, educational level and marital status);
- SH incident details (type and place);
- The victim's reaction during the harassment situation;
- The victim's reaction after the harassment situation;
- The reason(s) of SH incidents in hotels in Egypt;
- Effects of SH incidents on the victims;
- Organizational policies and practices to handle SH incidents;
- Managerial procedures to handle SH incidents.

On the other hand, the researchers performed eight semi-structured interviews with human resource managers in hotels. According to Patton (2012) and Denscombe (2015), the interviewer will have a list of topics and areas to be covered in semi-structured interviews, and there may be some standardized questions. Still, the interviewer may omit or add to questions, depending on the situation and the flow of the conversation. The interviews included questions asked about the policies and practices adopted by the management to face SH, training programs they organize and the procedures they perform to educate employees how to deal with SH incidents.

### **3.3. Data analysis**

The researchers analyzed quantitative and qualitative data to answer the research questions and meet the study's aim and objectives. Quantitative data was analyzed

using SPSS v. 25 (frequencies, percentage, Chi-square). At the same time, qualitative data is examined depending on content analysis. According to Yin (2009) and Marvarst (2014), there are two fundamental reasons for adopting content analysis to analyze qualitative data first; this approach enhances the generalizability of the research. Second, content analysis enables the researcher to deepen the understanding and explanation of the findings.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Respondents Profiling

As declared, the researchers targeted female students who had experienced SH incidents during their training or working at hotels in their summer vacation. The respondents' demographic characteristics are explained as follows. The age of all respondents (100%) ranged between 19 and 30 years; most of them (92.5 %) were single, while only 7.5 % were married. Regarding the department where the victim experienced the SH incident, the results showed that around half of them happened (45%) in the food and beverage department (restaurant), 30% housekeeping department (during their working in cleaning guest rooms), 20% in the front office, and 5 % in other places in the hotel.

### 4.2. Perpetrators Profiling

Regarding perpetrator demographic characteristics, results showed that 30% of perpetrators were co-workers, 35% were managers/supervisors, and 35% were customers. Most of the perpetrators (70%) were between 19 and 40 years old. Regarding the perpetrators' education level, 35% had their high school or bachelor's degree. However, 65% of perpetrators were unknown. Regarding marital status, most of the perpetrators, 42.5%, were single, while 40% were unknown, and 17.5 % were married.

### 4.3. The results of close-ended questions in the questionnaire survey:

**Table 1**

What is the type of SH incidents that the respondent experienced was?

Type of SH	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Verbal	66	55
Non-verbal	36	30
Physical	18	15

As shown in table 1, most of the respondents, 55%, confirmed that they had experienced verbal harassment. In comparison, 40% of them have experience with non-verbal harassment, and 15% have experienced physical harassment.

**Table 2**

What are the causes of SH incidents?

The causes of the SH incident	Freq	%	The causes of the SH incident	freq	%
Unusual working hours	18	15	Attendants' main working spaces in the guest bedrooms or suites	Zero	Zero

Continued



The close contact of people in the delivery of service	30	25	working alone in the guest bedrooms or suites	3	2.5
The uniform style (very short skirts)	15	12.5	The men's power (managers/supervisors, or a customer)	54	45

As declared in table 2, the most common cause of SH incidents was the men's power (managers/supervisors, or a customer) over the victim (45 %). At the same time, the lowest two causes of SH incidents were working alone in the guest bedrooms or suites (3%) and attendants' main working spaces in guest rooms (0%).

**Table 3**

What are the victim's reactions during and after the SH incident?

The victim's reaction during SH incident	Freq	%	The victim's reaction after SH incident	Freq	%
Astonished and shocked	27	22.5	Ignore	27	22.5
Shout and cry	30	25	Shame and embarrassment feeling	18	15
Self-defense against the perpetrator	51	42.5	Fear and insecurity feeling	9	7.5
Call for help	12	10	Leave workplace	6	5
Leave place immediately	Zero	Zero	Anger feeling	34	45
			Notified the relevant authority	6	5

As shown in table 3, the most common reaction of the victim during the SH incident was self-defense against the perpetrator (42.5 %). In comparison, no one of the victims was able to leave the place immediately during the incident (0 %). In the previous table, the most common reaction of the victims after the SH incident was anger (45%). In comparison, the lowest response of the victim after the incident was notified by the relevant authority (5%).

**Table 4**

What are the effects of the SH incident?

The effects of a harassment incident	Freq	%	The effects of a harassment incident	freq	%
No effect	12	10	Workplace relationship effect	6	5
Low job satisfaction	6	5	Low job performance	12	10
Frustration	18	15	Physical effects as fatigue and headache	6	5
Loss of desire to work	18	15	Effect on the private life	9	7.5
Loss of self-confidence	9	7.5	Loss of confidence in others	24	20

As shown in table 4, there are several adverse effects and feedbacks of SH on the female victims, and the percentages of these effects are so close to each other. The results declared that SH incidents' most common adverse effect was losing confidence in others (20%). In comparison, the rare effects (5%) were three: (workplace relationship effect, low job satisfaction, and physical effect as fatigue and headache).

**Table 5**

Did the victim report the incident to management?

Did the victim report the incident to management?	Yes		No	
	Freq	%	Freq	%
Total	24	20	96	80

As indicated in table 5, most SH victims (80%) do not report the incident to the management, whereas only 20% report it.

**Table 6**

What is the type of SH and the department in which the incident occurred of the victims who reported SH incidents?

Type of SH	freq	%	Department	freq	%
Non-verbal	9	37.5	Food and beverages	9	37.5
Physical	9	37.5	Front office	9	37.5
Verbal	6	25	Housekeeping	6	25
Total	24	100	Total	24	100

According to table 6, the most common type of harassment that occurred to the respondents who reported the incident was non-verbal and physical, with a percentage of 37.5. While the least verbal with a percentage of 25 %. Additionally, most of the incidents occurred in the food and beverages and front office (37.5% each), while the minor incidents happened in the housekeeping (25%).

**Table 7**

What are the reactions of the victims who reported the SH incident (during and after)?

The victim reaction during the incident	freq	%	The victim reaction after the incident	freq	%
Astonished and shocked	6	25	Notify the relevant authority	3	12.5
Shout and cry	9	37.5	Shame and embarrassment feeling	3	12.5
Self-defense against the harasser	9	37.5	Fear and insecurity feeling	3	12.5
			Leave workplace	3	12.5
			Anger feeling	12	50
Total	24	100		24	100

As illustrated in table 7, the victims' reactions who reported the incident were both shout and cry and self-defense against the perpetrator with the same percentage (37.5%). Furthermore, the most common reaction after the incident was anger feeling (50%), while the most negligible reactions were four with the same percentage (12.5%) (leave the workplace, fear and insecurity feeling, shame and embarrassment sense and notify the relevant authority).

**Table 8**

What are the effects and causes of SH for victims who reported the incident?

The effects of SH	Freq	%	The causes of SH	freq	%
Low job satisfaction	3	12.5	Unusual working hours	3	12.5
Frustration	3	12.5	The close contact of people in the delivery of service	6	25
Low job performance	9	37.5	The uniform style (very short skirts)	9	37.5
Loss of self confidence	3	12.5	The men power as manager, customer	6	25
Loss confidence in others	3	12.5			
Work relationship effects	3	12.5			
Total	24	100		24	100

As shown in table 8, the most common effect of SH on the respondents who reported the incident was low job performance (37.55%). Still, the minor results were (low job satisfaction, frustration, loss of self-confidence, loss of confidence in others, and work relationship effect) with 12.5%. The results indicated that the most common cause of SH was the uniform styles (very short skirts) (37.5%), whereas the slightest reason is unusual working hours with a percentage of 12.5.

**Table 9**

what is the relationship between type of SH and (the department, reaction of the victim during and after the incident, and the effect of SH)?

Variables		The types of SH		
		Verbal	Non-verbal	Physical
Department	Housekeeping	18 (27.3)	6 (16.7)	3 (16.7)
	Front office	12 (18.2)	9 (25)	9 (50)
	Food and beverages	33 (50)	12 (33.3)	6 (33.3)
	Other	3 (4.5)	9 (25)	-
The victim's reaction during SH incident	Astonished and shocked	18 (27.3)	6 (16.7)	3 (16.7)
	Shout and cry	12 (18.2)	9 (25)	9 (50)
	Self-defense against the perpetrator	33 (50)	12 (33.3)	6 (33.3)
	Call for help	3 (4.5)	9 (25)	-
	Leave place immediately	-	-	-
After the harassment situation	Ignore	12 (18.2)	9 (25)	6 (33.3)
	Shame and embarrassment feeling	15 (22.7)	3 (8.3)	-
	Fear and insecurity feeling	27 (40.9)	15 (41.7)	12 (66.7)
	Anger feeling	6 (9.1)	3 (8.3)	-
	Left workplace	3 (4.5)	3 (4.5)	-
	Notified the relevant authorities	3 (4.5)	3 (4.5)	-
The effect of a sexual	No effect	6 (9.1)	-	-
	Low job satisfaction	6 (9.1)	-	-

Continued

harassment incident	Frustration	12 (18.2)	3 (8.3)	3 (16.7)
	Loss of desire to work	9 (13.6)	9 (25)	6 (33.3)
	Loss confidence in others	18 (27.3)	3 (8.3)	3 (16.7)
	Loss of self confidence	3 (4.5)	3 (8.3)	3 (16.7)
	Workplace relationship effect	-	6 (16.7)	-
	Low job performance	3 (4.5)	9 (25)	-
	Physical effects (e.g., headaches and fatigue)	6 (9.1)	-	-
	Effect on the private life	3 (4.5)	3 (8.3)	3 (16.7)
Total		66 (55)	36 (30)	18 (15)

As illustrated in table 9, the relationship between the types of SH and (department, the reaction of victims during and after incident, and effects of SH) are explained as follows. Concerning the relationship between the types of SH and the department in which the incident occurred, the table declared that most verbal SH incidents happened in the food and beverages department (50%). The table illustrated that most non-verbal SH incidents also occurred in the food and beverages department, while the least of these incidents occurred in housekeeping. The results confirmed that most incidents of physical SH happened in the front office department (50%). Regarding the relationship between the types of SH and the victims' reactions during the SH incident, verbal SH's most common reaction was self-defense against the perpetrator (50%). The findings declared that amongst non-verbal SH reactions, self-defense against the perpetrator is the most popular one (33.3%). The results revealed that the most reaction of physical SH was shout and cry with a percentage of 50%.

Regarding the relationship between the SH and the victims' reactions after the SH incident, the most common reactions of verbal, non-verbal and physical harassment were fear and insecurity feeling with percentages of 40.9 %, 41.7 %, and 66.7%; respectively. While the most negligible common verbal and non-verbal harassment reactions were both notifying the relevant authorities and leaving the workplace with a percentage of 4.5% each. About the relationship between the types of SH and its effects on victims, the results confirmed that the most common impact of verbal SH was losing confidence in others (27.3%). The most frequent consequence of non-verbal SH was losing the desire to work and low performance (25%). The table also declared that the most conventional result of physical SH was the loss of appetite to work (33.3%).

#### **4.4.The results of the open-ended question in the questionnaire survey:**

##### **4.4.1. What happened to the victim by the perpetrator? (The details of SH incidents)**

Several SH incidents had happened for female trainees in their training in hotels during the summer vacation. Few of the respondents explained in detail the SH incident they faced. One of the respondents highlighted that the front office manager had called her to his office under the claim that there was a phone call for her. after entering the office, the manager had perpetrated her physically. Another female trainee mentioned that a customer complimented her on her physical attractiveness,

describing how he wanted to "have fun" with her and invited her to drink in his room. One other respondent declared that the perpetrator was her colleague. He had put a camera in the females' staff fitting room to record videos while they were changing their clothes and humiliating them. But she reported the manager who investigated the situation, and the employee perpetrator was fired after being found guilty.

Another trainee victim mentioned that the perpetrator guest left on his bed for her a flower and a note contains his number and a request for a date. A female respondent declared that the SH incident she faced was non-verbal as her colleague always steals at her, her clothes, and her body suspiciously. One of the victims explained that her manager often requested tasks from her after the usual working hours to be alone with her after colleagues leave. At the same time, most of the respondents answered short answers explaining the SH situation that they had experienced, such as shameful sexual remarks and comments, asking sexual questions, telling sexual jokes, urgency in meeting requests, inappropriate looks, gestures, and trying to touch or kiss.

#### **4.5. The analysis of the interview with human resource managers in the hotels**

##### **4.5.1. What are the hotels' policies and practices against SH?**

The researchers conducted 8 interviews and then reached saturation. All interviewees (I1 to I8) declared that after hiring, they give the employees an orientation workshop, which explains the concept of SH, its types, how to prevent themselves against SH, and to deal with an incident if it happens. I4, I6, and I7 highlighted that their hotels provided a supportive work environment to resist the SH issues. They also revealed that their hotels decreased SH incidents through facilitate reporting SH procedures in the workplace. I3 and I6 confirmed that their hotels teach employees to be aware of SH issues and potential hazards and help them avoid them in advance. They assured that their hotels guide victims and witnesses to report such incidents. Concerning hotel practices against SH issues, I1 and I8 explained that they applied practices in the workplace to decrease SH incidents, including assigning male and female room attendants to clean guestrooms together and not allowing a female worker to enter a guestroom alone. While I5 declared that his/her hotel promotes the concept of SH free workplace to both customers and staff through pamphlets and posters.

I2 confirmed that they educate their employees to follow specific actions to prevent themselves from SH and handle the situation if they are exposed to SH incidents. To avoid SH, the employee should stay away from closed or isolated places in the hotel, evade people who are expected to conduct such behaviors, and avoid long conversations with managers/supervisors, colleagues, or customers. The female victim should confront the harasser, either with a firm look or with a deterrent and short word. They should threaten and warn the perpetrator directly, or by asking for help from those around her, or by hitting him sometimes. Nevertheless, these actions require intelligence and suitable judgment from the victim, and there is no single scenario that works for all situations, the scenario is formed according to the victim's personality, the type of SH, the perpetrator manner, and the place where the incident occurred inside the hotel.

#### **4.5.2. What are the organizational procedures against SH in the workplace?**

Regarding the procedures against SH incidents, there are some differences between procedures against SH in the workplace whether the perpetrator is a manager, a colleague, or a customer. I8 highlighted that when the victim reports the incident and the perpetrator is a manager or a colleague, they open an investigation immediately, ask the witnesses if the incident occurred in public, and check the employee history. I2, I3, I4, and I6 revealed that their organizations-imposed penalties on the perpetrator from 1 to 3 days to punish him for his mistake.

When the perpetrator is a customer, I1, I3, I4, I5, and I7 declared that they inform the tourism police to investigate the incident. They highlighted that after confirming the customer is guilty, their hotels kick out the customer perpetrator from the hotel and write notes about him in his profile to prohibit dealing with him in the future. I6 assured that the reporting procedure had been announced to all employees to know who to approach and how. I2 added that his/her hotel creates a victim-friendly environment by conducting awareness workshops and focus groups that educate employees about SH incidents. In general, all the interviewees insisted that their hotels motivate employees to report incidents whenever they occur.

### **5. Discussion and Recommendations**

#### **5.1. Discussion**

Despite the seriousness of SH as a significant problem in the workplace; especially in hotels due to the unusual working hours, the uniform style (very short skirts), and the contact with guests in the service delivery (Poulston 2008; Kensbock et al., 2015), there is a gap in previous literature in investigating the issue in the Arab world in general (Amin and Darrag 2011; Mohamed 2019). Further, in Egypt, all published papers focused on SH in public places and streets; and very few studies considered the issue in the workplace, such as hospitals. However, no previous literature explored SH in the hospitality industry. Hence, the current study is one of the first attempts to examine SH issues in Egyptian hotels.

The researchers in this study explored SH from two perspectives; the victims and the management. As known, there is a difference between both of them in dealing with such problems. The female victims focus on their rights, reporting systems, causes, and effects of the incidents. However, the management is concerned with policies, strategies, and practices on preventing SH incidents and how to handle and report the problem after the occurrence. The study revealed significant findings about SH in the Egyptian hospitality industry, as follows. First, regarding the perpetrators' profiling, the results indicated no considerable difference between perpetrators in their relation and position to the victim, as they could be a customer, manager/supervisor, or a colleague with very close percentages. Hence, the hotel management should include clear steps to prevent and handle SH incidents for every type of perpetrator (customer, manager/supervisor, colleague). Moreover, they should educate the employees about the best actions when facing SH incidents from every type of them.

Second, the findings declared that most victims had experienced verbal, non-verbal, and physical harassment, respectively. The critical concept in understanding SH is the

unwelcome and unacceptability and observed negatively by the target. A common form of SH is verbal, which includes: offensive jokes, unwelcome requests for sexual favors or dates, unwelcome compliments of a sexual nature. Non-verbal harassment ranks second in its prevalence and includes: looking a person up and down, following or stalking someone, using sexually suggestive visuals, making sexual gestures. Finally, physical harassment includes: touching another person's clothing, hair, or body, hugging, kissing, patting, touching, or rubbing oneself sexually against another person.

Third, according to the reaction of victims during and after the SH incident in the workplace, the study found that the most common response of victims during SH incident was self-defense against the perpetrator, and after the incident was anger feeling. On the one hand, there is an excellent argument about the effectiveness of self-defense and whether it is a positive or negative reaction from the victim towards the perpetrator during SH incidents. Some researchers have concerns that it is ineffective, encourages victim-blaming, neglects acquaintance assault. Some others found that self-defense is a positive action that helps the female victim prevent herself from SH in the workplace. However, empowerment-based self-defense training helps to change the root conditions that allow violence against women to flourish. Hence, women's empowerment-based self-defense training should be part of any sexual violence prevention effort. Empowerment-based self-defense is a comprehensive approach to violence prevention and resistance education that emphasizes awareness and assertiveness skills in addition to verbal and physical strategies. On the other hand, anger at work can negatively influence job performance and satisfaction and leave the job. Furthermore, workplace anger is possibly harmful to hotel management. Still, it can also cause serious health problems, including chronic anxiety, depression, high blood pressure, and heart disease.

Fourth, as declared, SH incidents have several adverse effects and consequences on employee victims who suffer emotional and psychological harm. These effects include low job performance, low job satisfaction, frustration, low desire to work, loss of confidence in others, physical fatigue, and affect private life. However, the results showed that the most common impact of SH incidents is losing confidence in others. Loss of confidence in others is a critical issue as having healthy confidence in others at the workplace leads to feeling optimistic about others. When confidence in others is low, the victim sees life in a more negative and critical light. Further, this can harm her mental health and lead to problems such as depression and anxiety.

Fifth, in terms of causes of SH incidents in the workplace, the findings revealed that, on the one hand, the men's power over the victim is the most common cause of SH. The perpetrator, who could be a manager/supervisor, co-worker, or customer and have power over a female victim, exploit his power to abuse and intimidate women sexually. Female lower class and junior employees were frequently exposed to SH from their co-workers and managers/supervisors (Jung and Yoon 2019). They misuse their power and ask victims for sexual favors, which, if refused, may lead to revenge actions influencing their working conditions (Mkono 2010; Morgan & Pritchard 2019). Another facet of power that may elucidate workplace SH is when customers

have power over an employee because of the customer is the king philosophy (Mohamed 2019). On the other hand, the lowest cause of harassment was attendant main working spaces in guestrooms. This is normal finding because, today's, hotels' practices include assigning male and female room attendants to clean guestrooms together and not allowing a female worker to enter a guestroom alone.

Sixth, the results showed that most of the victims did not report SH incidents, and only 20% reported (approximately half of them are physically harassed). Sometimes, when the victim faces physical SH, they feel that she should report the incident; however, in the cases of verbal or non-verbal SH, they don't take reporting action and ignore the occurrence of the incident. The suggested reasons for this finding include fear of ridicule, concern for not being believed, fear of losing the job, and fear that their complaint will not be dealt with the consideration they merit. Additionally, they may refuse to report the incident due to fear of being labeled a troublemaker, fear of dismissal or loss of job promotion opportunities, fear of being transferred to a dead-end or mundane job. However, the situation will be changed if they feel safe and be sure that their complaints will be dealt with thoughtfully and sensitively. This result is consistent with Mkonon (2010) and Long et al. (2016).

Seventh, according to the reported SH incidents, the findings declared that the most common consequence of SH was low job performance. Low job performance is the incapability of getting a job done or done to the employer's expectations. There is a variety of poor performance behaviors in the workplace. These include lateness, absenteeism, time-wasting, low standard of work. The low job performance of employees has a damaging effect on the hotel, resulting in a widespread loss of motivation, productivity and a decrease in customer satisfaction. Other employees may become disengaged, leading to staff turnover. The results also showed that the most common cause of SH from the employees' who reported the incidents point of view was the uniform styles (very short skirts). As most of the reported incidents occurred in the food and beverage department (restaurant) where service staff females wear short skirts. This result is consistent with Morgan and Pritchard (2019), who confirmed that dress codes and uniforms in restaurants, casinos and nightclubs are often designed to enhance women's sexual attractiveness. That uniform encourages SH, especially by customers.

Eighth, regarding the relationship between the types of SH and (the department, the reaction of victims during and after the incident, and the effects of SH). The least of these incidents occurred in housekeeping. This finding is expected due to new rules obtained by hotels' managements, explained as follows. Greater flexibility in the uniform design for room maids (wearing trousers), do not allow room attendants to work alone in cleaning rooms or suites, and instead work in pairs, more surveillance and 'walking the floors' by hotel security (Kensbock et al., 2015). The results declared that the reaction during verbal and non-verbal harassment is self-defense against the perpetrator, while the response of physical SH is "shout and cry". Regarding the association between the SH and the victims' reactions after the SH incident, the most common reactions of verbal, non-verbal and physical harassment were the same fear and insecurity feeling. Fear and insecurity lead to anxiety and



negative thoughts about the employees' ability to fit in with peers, reach goals, or find acceptance and support. Insecurity is a tendency to lack confidence; as an employee with high levels of insecurity may often experience a lack of confidence regarding many aspects of life. It may be difficult for that employee to form lasting relationships or attend to daily tasks, due to a self-perception of helplessness or inadequacy.

Ninth, it is evident from the explanation of SH incidents in detail that the hospitality industry's female employees face several SH situations (verbal, non-verbal, and physical). The perpetrator could be her manager/supervisor, customer and colleague, in different places and departments. Some of them have dared to report the incident, while most have not.

Tenth, the present study also presents an in-depth analysis of SH issues by investigating SH practices and policies applied in the hospitality industry. The study findings revealed that SH's policies and procedures are adopted in hotels to handle SH issues. These policies and practices included SH training programs, inducing staff of the SH concept and its impacts and causes, and guiding them to avoid such incidents in the workplace. Further, they are trying to facilitate reporting procedures of SH incidents and establish a supportive work environment for employees. The study found a difference between reporting procedures in the Egyptian hotels, whether a perpetrator is a manager, colleague, or customer. Suppose a perpetrator is a manager or colleague. Their organizations open an investigation of the incident immediately and ask the witnesses if it occurred in public while checking the employee history and if it happened in a secure place. When a perpetrator is a customer, most hotels notify the tourism police to investigate the incident.

Despite the abovementioned procedures and practices, the hotels in Egypt are implementing several shortages they should consider in dealing with SH in the workplace. Hotels are unique settings, and certifying a safe, harassment-free workplace can be challenging. SH claims are expensive and can harm hiring and retention, morale, loyalty programs, brand reputation, and the bottom line. Implementing a hotel-specific SH training program is a critical step in educating employees on how to recognize, report, and prevent harassment while also maintaining a safe and inviting environment for all employees. Furthermore, treating and avoiding workplace SH necessitates a comprehensive approach that finds the correct blend of regulations, procedures, industry-specific training, leadership commitment, accountability, and culture.

Accordingly, hotel management must: 1) ensure that all staff is aware of what constitutes SH. Effective anti-harassment initiatives should clear up any misunderstandings among employees regarding what constitutes SH which obstructs a person's ability to do their job and produces an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment. 2) Assure staff that reporting harassment would not result in reprisal. Many employees are afraid of reprisal if they report SH instances, despite the law shielding them from retaliation if they file a good-faith complaint of harassment or participate in an investigation. 3) Provide bystander intervention training to employees. Since the #MeToo movement, more businesses are looking for innovative

ways to overhaul and expand anti-harassment training programs to include topics like bystander intervention. Bystander intervention training may promote a feeling of collective responsibility by empowering employees to be involved bystanders in preventing harassment by teaching them several strategies to properly interfere, either directly or indirectly, when they notice a coworker being harassed.

## **5.2. Recommendations**

The results of the study suggest several recommendations to managers for preventing from and dealing with SH issues in hotels in Egypt:

- Adopt reporting procedures of SH in the workplace to create a safe climate.
- Motivate employees to report SH incidents whenever they occur.
- Create a victim-friendly environment.
- Conduct awareness workshops, training programs, and focus groups that specifically educate employees on issues of SH.
- Set clear and specific disciplinary measures that apply to all staff members, without exception, to encourage victims to report SH cases.
- Pay much attention to SH prevention programs.
- Teach employees to be aware of the possible existence of SH and its potential hazards and guide them to avoid it in advance.
- Create policies to prohibit SH and criminalize such behaviors, and when the company has a consistency of the SH policy, it may act as obstacles for the perpetrator.
- Make employees aware of their statutory legal rights and demand training to refuse and effectively cope with diverse sexual advances professionally.
- Take all reports seriously and ensure that immediate corrective action is taken against the perpetrator.
- Have greater flexibility in uniform design (i.e., wearing trousers).
- Encourage witnesses to report such incidents.
- Apply strict standards at the company level by forbidding such behaviors.
- Discourage behaviors and appearances associated with customer SH such as the use of sexuality in employee-customer relationships.
- Define anti-sexual policies with well-displayed information on ways of confidential reporting, take all reports seriously, and ensure applying that immediate corrective action against the perpetrator.
- Implement consistent grievance procedures to help employees cope with SH.
- React timely to prevent further occurrence of SH incidents.
- Take measures to improve employees' job engagement.
- Maintain a safe distance of privacy with managers/supervisors, colleagues, and customers.
- Inform employees about the hotel's complaint policy, and the procedures followed for investigation.
- Make sure that the employees know the hotel's safety procedures and how to be assertive.

### 5.3.Limitations and Future Research Suggestions

The current paper has a few limitations, which also provide some suggestions for future research. First, this study collected data from female students during their summer training in hotels. Training is a short time attachment with the industry. Hence, future research could include female employees of different ages, marital statuses, and several job positions. Second, this study had a small sample size and collected data from 120 female victims because of fear and shame issues. Future research could collect data from a more significant number of respondents. Third, the current study adopted a questionnaire survey distributed to the victims. Future research can adopt interviews with female employees to know in details what happened with them and the actions taken by the management. Fourth, the current study investigated SH in the hospitality industry and focused only on hotels. Future research could uncover SH issues in restaurants, as most of hotel's SH incidents happen in the food and beverage department and the restaurant in particular.

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## إستكشاف مشكلات التحرش الجنسي في بيئة العمل: دراسة على الفنادق في مصر

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### المخلص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى إستكشاف مشكلات التحرش الجنسي في الفنادق المصرية والتعرف على السياسات التي تتبعها الإدارات للتصدى لمثل هذه الحوادث. وفيما يتعلق بجمع البيانات أتمدت الدراسة على طريقتين وهما (إستمارات الإستقصاء والمقابلات الشخصية). حيث تم توزيع 150 إستمارة إستقصاء على الطالبات اللاتي تعرضن لحوادث تحرش جنسي أثناء تدريبهن الصيفي في الفنادق. ومن بين هؤلاء، تم إعتبار 120 إستمارة صالحة للتحليل. تم إستخدام برنامج SPSS لتحليل البيانات المتحصل عليها عن طريق هذه الإستمارات. وتم إجراء مقابلات مع مديري الموارد البشرية في الفنادق لفهم المشكلة من منظور إداري. تم تحليل هذه البيانات النوعية من خلال منهج تحليل المحتوى. وفيما يتعلق بنتائج الإستبيانات أتضح أن قسم المأكولات والمشروبات هو الأكثر تعرضاً لحوادث التحرش. ويعتبر التحرش اللفظي هو أكثر أنواع التحرش الجنسي التي تحدث في الفنادق. كما أن أكثر أسباب التحرش الجنسي هو إستغلال الرجل لسلطته لإخضاع الضحية. وتصل نسبة الذين أبلغوا ممن تعرضوا لحوادث 20% فقط من إجمالي الضحايا ، كما أن نصفهم تقريباً تعرض للتحرش الجسدي. أما بالنسبة للأثار الأكثر شيوعاً للتحرش الجنسي هي إنخفاض الثقة وفقدان الرغبة في العمل وتدني الأداء الوظيفي. أما فيما يتعلق بنتائج المقابلات أتضح أن الفنادق تمارس بعض الممارسات ضد التحرش الجنسي. حيث ينظمون برامج تدريبية لتتقيف الموظفين حول قضايا التحرش ، ويقومون بتسهيل إجراءات الإبلاغ عن الحوادث. ومع ذلك ، لديهم بعض النقص في ممارساتهم وإجراءاتهم. كما تركز الدراسة أيضاً على تحديد الأثار المترتبة على إدارة الفنادق في مصر ، وتثري المعرفة ، وتسد الفجوة في الدراسات البحثية السابقة من خلال التحقيق في التحرش الجنسي في بيئة الضيافة المصرية.

### معلومات المقالة

#### الكلمات المفتاحية

التحرش الجنسي؛ بيئة العمل؛ الفنادق؛ مصر؛ أسباب.

### (JAAUTH)

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