



SEXUAL HARASSMENT AS A PREDICTOR OF ORGANISATIONAL OUTCOMES.

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ABSTRACT

The impact of sexual harassment on the performance of organisations may have taken its toll while remaining an open secret. Females have traditionally been on the receiving end of this harassment and the present study acknowledges this reality. To this end, this study explored the extent to which sexual harassment predicted organisational variables such as job satisfaction, turnover intentions and organisational commitment among a sample of female bank employees. Several theories indicate a link between sexual harassment and these organisational variables and they include attribution theory (Heider, 1958; Kelley, 1967; Weiner, 1985) as well as perspectives drawn from the sources of power (French & Raven, 1959). The study sample was composed of 103 women who responded to items in the following instruments: Sexual Harassment Scale (SHS), Intention to Turnover Scale (ITS) and Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire. It was discovered that most sexually harassed females were predominantly younger and of lower status in the organisation. Sexual harassment was also a strong predictor of turnover intentions among female employees. These findings were discussed in the light of prevailing studies and the appropriate theoretical backdrop.

INTRODUCTION

Sexual harassment is defined as unwanted sex-related behaviour at work that is appraised by the recipient as offensive or threatening (Fitzgerald, Swan, & Magley, 1997). It is a spectre that looms large on the career horizons of many women in many organisations. Sadly, this problem is grossly underreported due to power differentials between the harasser and the harassed. The average harassment scenario is one in which the sexually aggressive person is male, older than the victim and occupies a more powerful position in the organisational hierarchy. The victim is usually female, younger than the harasser and is relatively lower in position within the organisation. From several studies on sexual harassment, the consensus is that most cases of harassment tend to be perpetrated by men against women (Work Harassment, 2012). Fear of demotion, reprisal and job loss may be reasons while many harassed employees suffer in silence. Such concealment of harassment impairs proper measurement of the problem and creates obstacles in identifying the toll it takes on organisational effectiveness.

The banking sector has long been rumoured to experience a relatively high index of sexual harassment. Some research has identified the enormity of the problem which sexual harassment poses in the banking industry. For instance, Nouman and Abassi (2014) conducted a study which focused on banks in the city of Lahore, Pakistan. Their study treated the variable of sexual harassment as a dependent variable as they sought to identify antecedents of sexual harassment. This study was undertaken in the Pakistani banking sector using a sample of 250 females working in different branches of banks located in Lahore (Pakistan). After analysis of data it was found that attractive females tended to be more harassed, females with separate offices were able to forestall harassment while females who were aware of harassment policies and laws upholding respect for body integrity also reported more harassment. Furthermore, it was found that organisations with high ethical standards in business were even guiltier of harassment and the most common harassment observed by the researchers was hardly between supervisor and subordinate. Rather it was between colleagues and peers. From the above study, we observe the need for a focus on women while investigating harassment since they are the more heavily affected. The above study is also noteworthy because Pakistan like Nigeria, is a patriarchal society which allows the rights of men to ride roughshod over that of women. This informs one of the theoretical perspectives which will be considered subsequently.

The organisational outcomes which could be affected by sexual harassment include organisational commitment and this is the psychological state reflecting how engaged employees feel about their organisation (Newstrom, 2007). It entails a willingness to exert effort on behalf of the organisation, loyalty to the organisation, openness to imbibing the beliefs

and norms of the organisation, and a readiness to stay with the organisation (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Conceptually, organisational commitment should correlate negatively with turnover intentions which is another important organisational variable. Turnover intention refers to how willing employees are to quit the organisation at the slightest opportunity (Kelloway, Gottlieb & Barham, 1999). Tett and Meyer (1993) had defined turnover intentions as conscious wilfulness to seek for other alternatives in other organisation. This places the focus on the intention to leave rather than actual turnover because such intentions are a good predictor of eventual behaviour. Finally, job satisfaction is defined as “an individual’s reaction to the job experience” (Berry, 1997). This entails how the individual feels about their job based on job components such as pay, promotion, benefits, supervisor, co-workers, work conditions, communication, safety, productivity, and the work itself. Sexual harassment most readily affects the relational aspects of the job especially the supervisor-subordinate relationship and satisfaction could be hinged upon the subjective evaluation of this relationship by the subordinate. By the same token, affective organisational commitment should diminish while turnover intentions increase with prolonged exposure to sexual harassment.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

The experience of sexual harassment is likely to be degrading regardless of the identity of the perpetrator. However, the perpetrator’s relationship with the victim may evoke different responses from the victim towards his or her job and organisation. Three theoretical perspectives support the idea that there will be different outcomes of sexual harassment depending upon the source of the harassment: (1) attribution theory, (2) perspectives on power, and (3) role identity theory.

Attribution theory

Attribution theory is based on classic researches in Social Psychology as conducted by Heider (1958), Kelley (1967) and Weiner (1985). This theory focuses on the information with which people make inferences about causes of a behaviour. Studies have shown that people who experience an aversive event or who are on the receiving end of an unwelcome behaviour, are likely to analyse it in order to understand its cause (Martinko, Gundlach & Douglas, 2002). Weiner (1985) submitted three dimension of attribution which are controllability, stability and locus. Controllability is concerned with how likely it was for the perpetrator of the unwanted behaviour to have avoided performing it. Stability has to do with whether one can expect the behaviour to be repeated due to its being caused by a personality trait, or whether the behaviour was as a result of a temporary change in mood. Locus is a dimension which asks if the behaviour emanates from either internal factors within the perpetrator or external factors within the environment (Weiner, 1985). When the victim of an aversive behaviour perceives it to be controllable, stable and internal, then the perpetrator is considered to be fully responsible for all negative outcomes.

Sexual harassment has been extensively tied to the attribution theory based on the finding of some studies (Aquino, Tripp & Bies, 2001; Martinko et al, 2002). These studies point to the tendency of sexual harassment to motivate workplace aggression and revenge. For instance, when trying to understand the cause of an experience of sexual harassment, employees may ascribe an external or internal locus to the organisation when making attributions. External attributions do not have any bearing on the employees’ attitudes towards the organisation. If however, the employees make internal attributions, they hold the organisation responsible for their distasteful experiences. Sexual harassment by organisational insiders and officials such as Supervisors are even more damaging and the employer holds the organisation responsible for her ordeal (O’Leary – Kelly, Paetzold & Griffin, 2000). Sexual harassment was not implied in the employee’s psychological contract at inception and the employee expects the organisation to protect her interests and sense of well – being (Rousseau, 1995). When the psychological contract is breached repeatedly in this way, employees develop stable and negative attitudes towards the organisation since they believe that the situation could have been arrested by the organisation who chose to ignore it deliberately (O’Leary – Kelly, et al. 2000).

Power perspectives

The role of power in sexual harassment is seen when one considers the power gradient and the relationship at play especially to which the extent the victim can respond to the perpetrator. French & Raven (1959) described several sources of power which include: legitimate, expert, reward, coercive and referent sources of power. Most relevant to the issue of sexual harassment are legitimate, reward and coercive power. Legitimate power is as a result of one's role or position in the organisation. Coercive power is based on one's capacity to punish while reward power is hinged on a person's ability to reward (French & Raven, 1959). Supervisors have considerably greater power than employees and this power is derived from the above sources. For instance, supervisors can change or decide work – related outcomes and resources based on their legitimate power. They can also change employee's schedules unfavourably or terminate their appointments altogether (coercive power) and they can increase wages or accord promotions to employees (reward power).

This significant power differential between a supervisor and an employee can translate to any undesirable behaviour being readily labelled as harassment by the employee while such behaviours may be barely tolerated from colleagues (Gruber, Kauppinen–Toropainen & Smith, 1996). In such a situation, the victim is also less likely to report the perpetrator especially where they are in far lower status positions and are more vulnerable to any retribution from the supervisor.

Role Identity Theory

According to Tajfel and Turner (1986), role identity is composed of the categorisation of the self as an occupant of a role and the assimilation into the self of meanings and expectations associated with the role. Negative outcomes occur when there is a lack of congruence with meanings relevant to the self (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). If this state of affairs continues, the person becomes distressed and suffers a reduction in self-efficacy.

Sexual harassment has been known to undercut an employee's work role identity by overemphasising the person's lower status or gender (Collier, 1995). If allowed to persist, it reduces the perceived competence and efficiency of female employees who experience it. In male-dominated work environments, women are reminded that they are an unwelcome out-group (Stanko, 1988). As the stress emanating from the role incongruent situation increases, it leads to a desire to quit the organisation for good. The impact of sexual harassment is even more poignant when the source of the identity process interruption is a person highly regarded by and significant to the victim (Burke, 1991). Since Supervisors are considered significant within the work environment, any incidence of sexual harassment on their part is potentially more damaging and could culminate in greater distress for the employee (Stets, 2005)

SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN NIGERIA

Most of the literature on sexual harassment in Nigeria has included both the corporate and the academic environments. Due to the preponderance of anecdotal evidence which exaggerates the incidence of sexual harassment in universities across the globe, Ogbonnaya, Ogbonnaya and Emma-Echiegu (2011) investigated the incidence of this harassment among female students. Their sample which comprised 295 female students, was drawn from Ebonyi State University using cluster sampling. Participants were interviewed using the structured interview methods. The study revealed that almost 90% of respondents suffered from some form of psychological distress due to their experiences of harassment. This finding implies a tacit relationship between sexual harassment and stress or distress whether it be in the academic setting or organisational environment. The study also revealed that none of the victims reported their experiences to the authorities. Other studies (e.g. Olubayo-Fatiregun, 2007) also indicate a tendency of victims to hide their predicament and suffer in silence. This worsens the situation and may create a situation of learned helplessness (Seligman, 1975) where the victim does not see a way of escape from an unpleasant situation after previous attempts to escape have proven abortive. A reticence to reveal that one is being harassed is

linked to a victim's belief that the report will not help in changing the situation and may even worsen it (Olubayo-Fatiregun, 2007).

The stress which emanates from sexual harassment has been measured in studies of Nigerian organisations. Adeyemo and Afolabi (2007) studied the impact of sexual harassment on withdrawal cognition of female media practitioners in Oyo State, Nigeria. Withdrawal cognition results in job withdrawal and work withdrawal and was observed to be significantly related to sexual harassment. Work withdrawal involves avoiding work tasks and one's work situation, and is characterised by behaviours such as lateness, absenteeism, neglect, and even escapist drinking (Hanisch, Hulin, & Roznowski, 1998; Magley, Hulin, Fitzgerald, & DeNardo, 1999). Job withdrawal is indicative of a desire or intent to leave one's job and organisation, and often precedes quitting, retirement, or choosing to be laid off (Hanisch et al., 1998). Both types of withdrawal have been found to be significantly related to experiencing sexual harassment at work (Gruber, 2003; Magley et al., 1999).

Based on the foregoing, the following hypotheses were formulated:

1. Younger respondents will report more sexual harassment than older ones.
2. Respondents in lower status positions within the organisation will report more sexual harassment than those in higher status roles.
3. Sexual harassment will predict turnover intentions among respondents.
4. There will be a significant negative association between reported sexual harassment and both job satisfaction and organisational commitment.

METHOD

Research setting

A sample of organisations was drawn randomly from the top 10 leading banks in Nigeria. These banks aside from having the largest number of staff invariably have their head offices located in the commercial nerve centre of the nation which is Lagos. Most particularly, the location of these head offices is Victoria Island and this location was found to be a microcosm of the banking industry as a whole. Due to the sensitivity of the issue of sexual harassment, some employees were keen to shield the reputation of their banks even though they had been previously assured of anonymity. Eventually, two banks were selected from among these leading banks on the proviso that their identities will remain private. All the selected banks were located within commercial districts of Lagos such as Lagos Island, Marina and Victoria Island.

Participants and Sampling

Altogether, a total of two branches apiece were selected from each of the banks. One criterion which guided selection was the likelihood of having access to the staff. The chosen banks were also picked because the researcher had access to some of the staff who could assist in administration and collection of the instruments. Since the matter being investigated is quite sensitive, potential respondents would only be ready to complete self-report inventories presented by someone who could truly empathise with them.

Participants were selected using convenience sampling. This was done because commitment to completing the research instruments would entail some time investment on the part of the respondents. It was therefore necessary to solicit only those who showed interest in the study as research ethics would not permit any compulsory participation. Also, owing to the nature of the research, the tendency for full disclosure in spite of full assurances of anonymity was not high. Attempts to select equal numbers of respondents from each branch proved unsuccessful. Eventually, 103 female respondents participated in the study. Their ages ranged from 20 years to 45 years of age with a mean of 26.42 and their positions within their organisations cut across the low status roles to the more prestigious and powerful positions. Altogether, 180 questionnaires were distributed but 103 were retrieved with all the necessary information properly filled. This yielded a response rate of 57.2 %.



Research Design

The study adopted an ex-post facto survey design which was also cross sectional in nature. The independent variable was not manipulated by the researcher. Rather, respondents were included in the study and the independent variable was measured as it naturally occurred. Participants also cut across several age categories and demographic classifications. The independent variable was sexual harassment while the dependent variables were job satisfaction, turnover intentions and organisational commitment.

Instruments

Demographics questionnaire

This instrument was designed by the researcher to collect some relevant variables to the purpose of the study. These include age, job role, department, monthly remuneration, marital status, education, experience on the job, ethnicity and religion. The name of the organisation was not requested in order to allay any fears that the information collected may be used against the respondent in an intra-organisational witch hunt within the organisation. Higher status employees were defined as those who had been promoted at least twice in the organisation while lower status employees were defined as entry level and semiskilled staff.

Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment was measured by the Sexual Harassment Scale (SHS). This is a 23-item scale designed by G. A. Akinbode (2012) to assess the level and feeling of sexual harassment in the workplace. The scale is divided into five subscales measuring different aspects of sexual harassment. IPS (Intrusion into Private Life) has 5-items, ODL (Offensive Display of Sexual Advances) has 4-items, SCT (Sexual Coercion and Threats) 6-items, SOT (Subjective Objectification and Touching) 5-items and IPS (Invasion of Personal Space) 3-items. Response structure follows a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1= Never to 7= Extremely frequent. Akinbode (2012) reported internal consistency reliability of 0.87, 0.89, 0.83, 0.79 and 0.90 respectively and a significant criterion related validity of 0.29.

Turnover intention

The Intention to Turnover Scale (ITS) is a 4- item inventory scale originally developed by Kelloway, Gottlieb and Barham (1999). It was designed to measure the intention of workers (employee) to quit their present employment with the slightest opportunity. The responses range from strongly agree to strongly disagree on a 5-point Likert scale. The scale has an internal consistency coefficient alpha of 0.76.

Organisational commitment

Organisational commitment was measured using the OC (Organisational commitment) which is a 23-item inventory developed by Buchanan (1974). This scale is designed to assess the extent to which the worker is affectively attached to the achievement of the goals and values of the organisation with particular emphasis on the role the worker selflessly plays in the process of the achievement. The scale assesses three components of commitment which are Identification, Job Involvement and Loyalty. Buchanan reported coefficient alpha of 0.86, 0.84, 0.92 and 0.94 for Identification, Involvement, Loyalty and Overall test respectively. The scale has also been used in Nigeria by Mogaji (1997) who reported coefficient alpha > 0.70 for Nigerian samples.

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction was measured using the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire developed by Weiss, Dawis, England and Lofquist (1967). The 20-item version used in the study is the short form of the 100-item inventory earlier developed by the authors. According to the authors, MSQ is designed to measure job satisfactoriness and job satisfaction. By



correlating the general satisfaction scale of the MSQ with the overall score on the Job Description Index (JDI) by Smith et al. (1969), the concurrent validity coefficients obtained by Wanous (1974) for American samples was 0.71 and by Mogaji (1997) for Nigerian samples was 0.50.

Procedure

Complete sets of all the required instruments were made. These included single copies of the demographics questionnaire, Sexual Harassment Scale (SHS), Intention to Turnover Scale (ITS), Organisational Commitment Questionnaire (OC) and Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ). Participation was obtained by recruiting a member of the organisation to assist in the collection of data. It occurred that the interest of some female employees was piqued when they learnt what the study entailed. The respondents also reacted favourably to a fellow female colleague who they perceived as similar to themselves. This is based on the principle of interpersonal attraction known as similarity in which people perceive those who are just like themselves more favourably (Locke & Horowitz, 1990). Respondents were allowed to take their time completing the instruments as no time limits were given. It was then the duty of the researcher's recruit within the organisation to retrieve the completed scales. When all the scales were completed, the researcher went round all the organisations to retrieve them. No compensation was given to respondents for their participation, only the recruit within the organisation was given a token for her efforts. Afterwards, all properly completed questionnaires were then collated, scored and prepared for analysis. Altogether, 180 questionnaires were distributed but 103 were retrieved with all the necessary information properly filled. This yielded a response rate of 57.2 %.

Data analysis

The statistical software SPSS (Statistical Product and Service Solutions) version 20 was used to analyse the data. Descriptive statistics were computed for all relevant demographic variables. Hypotheses one and two were analysed using the independent samples t-test while hypothesis three was tested using multiple regression analysis. Hypothesis four required the Pearson's product moment correlation. The necessary interpretations and conclusions are contained in successive sections.

RESULTS

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

The descriptive statistics for the sample are hereby presented below.

Table 1: The Means and Standard Deviations of Participants Scores in all the Measures used in the Study by Age

MEASURES	DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS	BELOW MEAN AGE (N = 61)	ABOVE MEAN AGE (N = 42)	TOTAL (N = 103)
Sexual Harassment Scale (SHS)	Mean	92.43	85.68	89.67
	Standard deviation	4.51	7.24	5.62
Intention to Turnover Scale (ITS)	Mean	15.89	11.17	13.97
	Standard deviation	3.63	4.29	3.90
Organisational Commitment Questionnaire (OC)	Mean	92.06	99.48	95.08
	Standard deviation	4.62	6.08	5.22
Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ)	Mean	73.34	78.55	75.46
	Standard deviation	2.19	3.07	2.55

Table 1 shows the means and standard deviations of participants' scores by age. The age categories were created by grouping respondents according to how their age compared to the mean. Considerable differences between the means of both age categories in all measures used were observed. These would be later subject to statistical tests to decide whether relevant hypotheses would be accepted or rejected.

Table 2: The Means and Standard Deviations of Participants Scores in all the Measures used in the Study by Status in the Organisation

MEASURES	DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS	HIGHER STATUS (N = 29)	LOWER STATUS (N = 74)	TOTAL (N = 103)
Sexual Harassment Scale (SHS)	Mean	83.77	91.98	89.67
	Standard deviation	3.65	4.23	5.62
Intention to Turnover Scale (ITS)	Mean	10.53	15.32	13.97
	Standard deviation	3.63	4.29	3.90
Organisational Commitment Questionnaire (OC)	Mean	98.41	93.78	95.08
	Standard deviation	4.62	6.08	5.22
Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ)	Mean	77.37	74.71	75.46
	Standard deviation	2.19	3.07	2.55

Table 2 shows the means and standard deviations of participants' scores on all measures by organisational status. The status categories were created by grouping respondents according to their status within the organisation. Higher status employees were defined as those who had been promoted at least twice in the organisation while lower status employees were defined as entry level and semiskilled staff. Easily observable differences were found between both groups on all the measures.

Table 3 shows the means and standard deviations of participants' scores on all measures by marital status. The respondents were grouped based on only two marital statuses namely single and married. No hypotheses emerged from this categorisation since existing literature has indicated that the differences in sexual harassment experiences between single and married women were not statistically significant

Table 3: The Means and Standard Deviations of Participants Scores in all the Measures used in the Study by Marital Status

MEASURES	DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS	MARRIED (N = 37)	SINGLE (N = 66)	TOTAL (N = 103)
Sexual Harassment Scale (SHS)	Mean	88.62	90.43	89.67
	Standard deviation	4.07	6.49	5.62
Intention to Turnover Scale (ITS)	Mean	12.56	14.09	13.97
	Standard deviation	3.63	4.29	3.90
Organisational Commitment Questionnaire (OC)	Mean	94.23	96.15	95.08
	Standard deviation	4.62	6.08	5.22
Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ)	Mean	73.92	76.87	75.46
	Standard deviation	2.19	3.07	2.55

HYPOTHESES TESTING

Hypothesis 1

This hypothesis states that younger respondents will report more sexual harassment than older ones. It was tested using the t-independent test and the output is given below. Scores of respondents were compared by dividing them into two groups (above and below the mean age of 26.42 years).

Table 4: Mean, Standard Deviation and Independent T of Sexual Harassment between Older and Younger Employees

	N	M	σ	df	t-value	P-VALUE (1-tailed)
YOUNGER	61	92.43	4.51	60	5.83**	< 0.05
OLDER	42	85.68	7.42	41		
TOTAL	103			101		

Note. * Significant at .05 level, ** Significant at 0.01 level, df = 101, t-critical = 2.75

An examination of the means of both groups shows a marked difference in sexual harassment scores between them. Younger respondents reported having experienced more sexual harassment such that they had a mean score of 92.43 while older respondents had 85.68. Considering the output of the statistical test, we find that the differences were statistically significant (t = 5.83, p < 0.05). This hypothesis is therefore accepted.

Hypothesis 2

This hypothesis states that respondents in lower status positions within the organisation will report more sexual harassment than those in higher status roles. This hypothesis was tested using the t-test for independent samples. Higher status employees were defined as those who had been promoted at least twice in the organisation while lower status employees were defined as entry level and semiskilled staff. The results of the test are given below.

Table 5: Mean, Standard Deviation and Independent t of Sexual Harassment between Lower and Higher Status Employees

	N	M	σ	df	t-value	P-VALUE (1-tailed)
LOWER STATUS	74	83.77	3.65	73	9.191**	< 0.05
HIGHER STATUS	29	91.98	4.23	28		
TOTAL	103			101		

Note. * Significant at .05 level, ** Significant at 0.01 level, df = 101, t-critical = 2.75

A quick look at Table 5 shows the means of both lower and higher status employees on sexual harassment. This reveals that lower status employees report significantly more harassment than higher status employees ($t = 5.83$, $p < 0.05$). The hypothesis is therefore accepted.

Hypothesis 3

This hypothesis proposes that sexual harassment will predict turnover intentions among respondents. The statistical test employed to test it was the linear multiple regression test.

Table 6: Regression Analysis Summary

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.31	.132	.130	12.54

The result of regression analysis in Table 6 shows that sexual harassment accounted for 13% of the variance in turnover intention among employees.

In order to find out if the contribution of this variable is significant, analysis of variance was computed. The result is presented in Table 7.

Table 7: ANOVA Summary for the Multiple Regression Analysis

Model	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F
Regression	1282.3	1	641.15	9.74*
Residual	6648.9	101	65.83	
Total	7931.2	102		

Note. * Significant at .05 level; df = 1, 99; Critical F = 2.36

The result in Table 7 shows that the contributions of the predictors to the criterion are statistically significant [$F_{cal.} = 9.74$, $P < .05$].

Also, in order to determine the relative contribution of each of the predictor variables to the variance of turnover intentions, the Beta coefficients and the independent t were computed for all the variables

Table 8: Relative Contribution of the Predictor Variable to Variance in Turnover Intentions

Measures	Beta	t	Std. Error
SHS = Sexual harassment	.186	5.82*	.13

Note. * Significant at .05 level; df = 101; Critical t = 1.645

The results in Table 8 show that sexual harassment contributed significantly to turnover intentions by accounting for 18.6% of observed variance. Considering the t-values for sexual harassment, ($t = 5.82, p < 0.05$), we can make a decision on the hypothesis. Both values are significant and the hypothesis is therefore accepted.

Hypothesis 4

There will be a significant negative association between reported sexual harassment and both job satisfaction and organisational commitment. This hypothesis was tested using Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient. The output appears in Table 9 below.

Table 9: Correlation matrix showing the relationships among sexual harassment, job satisfaction and organisational commitment.

	SHS	MSQ	OC
SEXUAL HARASSMENT	1		
JOB SATISFACTION	-.240*	1	
ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT	-.297*	.558**	1

Note. * Significant at the .05 level, ** Significant at the .01 level, Critical r (at .05 level) = .19

As hypothesised, the relationships between sexual harassment and both job satisfaction and organisational commitment are negative and statistically significant ($r = -.240, p < .05$ & $r = -.297, p < .05$). As expected, there was a significant positive correlation between job satisfaction and organisational commitment ($r = .558, p < .05$). We therefore accept the hypothesis.

DISCUSSION

The study proposed differences in reported sexual harassment between older and younger respondents and this hypothesis was accepted with younger respondents reporting more harassment. This finding is in agreement with reviewed studies which underlined the role of attractiveness in sexual harassment because it is generally expected that younger participants will be more attractive (Nouman & Abassi, 2014).

It was also expected that respondents in lower status positions within the organisation will report more sexual harassment than those in higher status roles. This hypothesis was accepted in the current study as well. Younger people are generally less powerful and may occupy lower status positions. This could also lead to them being at the mercy of unscrupulous supervisors who could be inclined to take advantage of them. The relationship between sexual harassment and individual characteristics has a tendency of being unique to a particular sex, so also is the relationship between sexual harassment and organisational variables which are linked to male and female power differentials. This is due to the widespread acceptance that one of the central antecedents underlying sexual harassment, is power (Cleveland & Kerst, 1993).

The study also proposed that sexual harassment will predict turnover intentions among respondents. This hypothesis was also accepted in this study. A body of existing studies



corroborates this finding. Occurrences of sexual harassment have been associated with a tendency to withdraw from the organisation (Gruber, 2003; Magley et al., 1999). Withdrawal is usually measured by two different constructs, work withdrawal (being late, being neglectful and avoiding work tasks) and job withdrawal (turnover or intention to leave the organisation). All these dimensions are predicted by sexual harassment (Gruber, 2003).

It was also expected that there will be a significant negative association between reported sexual harassment and both job satisfaction and organisational commitment. This hypothesis was also accepted. Experiences of sexual harassment have been known to severely undermine the attachment and commitment of employees to their organization (Willness, Steele & Lee, 2007). Employees who suffer harassment blame their organisations to some extent for both the frequency of their harassment experiences and for the fact that the harassment occurs at all due to poor implementation of anti-harassment policies (Hogler, Frame & Thornton, 2002; Wilness et al., 2007). Such dissatisfaction culminates in anger towards the perpetrator and the organization (for failing to protect them or tolerating such behaviours), and ultimately increased withdrawal from the organisation (Willness et al., 2007).

Job satisfaction is one of the variables most frequently examined within the sexual harassment literature. Generally, sexual harassment at work has been found to reduce job satisfaction significantly (Lapierre, Spector & Leck, 2005). This job dissatisfaction cuts across several facets including dissatisfaction towards work, co-workers and/or supervisors (Schneider, Swan & Fitzgerald, 1997), while a converse direct pattern of increasing job satisfaction is linked with reduced perceptions of sexual harassment (Mueller, De Coster & Estes, 2001).

RECOMMENDATIONS

The incidences of sexual harassment have made it imperative for stricter policies to be put in place within the corporate world to increase the cost of sexual harassment for would-be perpetrators. Employees should also be educated on their rights to ensure that they know when a particular harassment situation is actionable thus enabling them to help management in rooting out offenders. The process of bringing offenders to book should be fast and easily understood and the organisation should be willing to make examples of offenders to serve as deterrents for any future offenders. When the organisation has a policy of inclusiveness and equality of opportunity for both sexes, it aids the cause of preventing sexual harassment since potential offenders know that it runs contrary to the corporate culture.

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