Phenomenological Study on Sexual Harassment of Women at the Workplace in the Karawang Region

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Abstract. A comfortable and safe work environment is one of the factors that can increase the productivity and mental health of every employee, however, there are still many cases found related to an unsafe and comfortable environment that experienced by women employee, especially sexual harassment. This study aims to understand the experiences of victims of sexual harassment, especially related to the psychological impact felt by the victim. The approach used in this research is Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), determining the theme using Nvivo 12 software. The data collection technique uses semi-structured interviews. The sampling technique used is purposive sampling. The research subjects were four employees who experienced sexual harassment at work. Based on the results of the research conducted, the themes that emerged were: (1) Factors supporting the occurrence of sexual harassment; (2) forms of sexual harassment; (3) psychological impact; (4) Coping. This research is expected to be a scientific contribution to industrial and organizational psychology, as well as a basis for stakeholders in making policies related to sexual harassment of women in the workplace, so the organization can provide safe, healthy, and wellbeing for woman at work..

Keywords: Sexual Harassment, Women Employee, Unsafe Environment.

1   Introduction

A comfortable and safe work environment is one of the factors that may increase employee productivity and mental health. Besides, feeling comfort at the workplace will form good industrial relations [1]. Based on this fact, all employees, both male and female, have the same rights to get protection at the workplace. These protections at the workplace have been regulated by laws and regulations in Indonesia [1]. Nevertheless, there are still found many cases related to unsafe and uncomfortable work environments, especially for women employees, and one of the cases related to sexual harassment in the workplace.

Sexual harassment defines as any sexual act, sexual behavior, verbal action, physical action, or show of sexual cues or any behavior related to sexual, which makes others feel offended, humiliated, intimidated, and all such behaviors unwanted [2]. The victim's reaction of being offended, humiliated, and intimidated is a reasonable

thing for this condition and situation due to unwanted behavior occurred. Brodsky explains five main types of harassment: Sexual harassment, name-calling, physical abuse, and work pressure [3].

Sexual harassment cases make not have decent work conditions for woman employees, especially for employees who have contract status. Several cases reported internally sometimes vanished, in fact, some cases closed due to the company prohibiting employees to report the cases to the police and even threatening termination from the company [4]. The annual report of the national women's commission on 2020 showed 91 cases of sexual harassment, compared to the previous year of 55 reported cases of sexual harassment. This number indicates increase of sexual harassment cases in the workplace. Also, it shown increasing awareness and courage of women employees to report the cases [4].

Due to the importance of sexual harassment countermeasures, the government established a women employee's protection house (RP3) in Kawasan International Industrial City (KIIC) in Karawang, West Java, Indonesia. The purpose of RP3 is as a place for women employee to share their problems and complaints in the workplace, so able to receive protection and treatment. On the contrary, based on interviews with RP3 officer, women employees who reported their sexual harassment cases considered very minimal. This brings a big question mark, are there really no cases of sexual harassment, or is there any fear or unsafe condition to report sexual harassment cases to outside parties of the company. Most of the sexual harassment victims are women, due to availability of power abuse from men. This abuse occurred due to an unaccurate point of view regarding the position of men higher than women, and in this case, sexual harasser usually has control over the victim whom is under their authority [5].

Sexual harassment has several types. In general, there are five types of sexual harassment [2], there are: 1) Physical harassment includes unwanted touch that leads to sexual acts such as kissing, patting, pinching, glancing, or staring lustfully, 2) Verbal harassment includes verbal or unwanted comment related to private life, body part or individual appearance, jokes and sexual comments, 3) Harassment of gestures includes body language or body movement related to sexual activity, repeated glances, finger gestures, and lip licking, 4) Harassment related to written or graphic images includes pornographic material, sexual images, screensavers or sexual posters, or harassment through e-mail and other electronic communication, 5) Psychological/emotional harassment consists of unwanted requests and invitations, unwanted dating requests, humiliation related to sexual. Sexual harassment may be occured if: 1) The act created intimidative, hostile, or offensive work environment, and/or di-quid pro quo, or 'this is for that', which is a situation where employer, management, supervisors, co-management members or workers make a commitment or attempt to influence the process of employment relations or working conditions or employee with sexual rewards, 2) These actions cannot be accepted by victim.

As a center of industrial area, Karawang has thousands of women employees who work in various companies, and they have a big opportunity to become victims of sexual harassment, both at work and when going to and from work. The impact of sexual harassment leads to psychological problems and ends up decreasing work

productivity. Lack of research related to sexual harassment experiences at work in the Karawang area, so it may give deep information about the experiences of sexual harassment victims from the perspective of the victims themselves.

2   Method

Participant in this research is four women employees who were victims of sexual harassment in the workplace. The sampling technique is purposive sampling technique. Researchers decide on participant and place what suits with the research theme and are easy to reach [6]. The data collection method used in this research is semi-structured interviews. According to Stewart & Cash [7] interviews define as an interaction in which there is an exchange of information, feelings, beliefs, motives, and responsibilities.

The approach in this study is using qualitative approach, with the purpose to understand what has been experienced by participant [8]. Qualitative research types used in this research is Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). In this approach, the researcher interprets and defines how each participant gives meaning to their experiences [9]. The validity of this qualitative research uses respondent validation via re-checking the data by showing the interview verbatim result and researcher analysis to the participant [9].

3   Result and Discussion

3.1   Results

The demographic data of the research participants, based on the information obtained, is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic data of research participant

	PARTICIPANT			
	WND	SBD	CAC	EY
Age	22	25	23	22
Latest Education	High School	High School	Vocational High School	High School
Duration of Work	4 yr	6 yr	2 yr	2 & 1 yr 4 mo
Employee Status	Fixed-term contract	Fixed-term contract	Fixed-term contract	Fixed-term contract
Industry	Garment	Electronic	Elektronic & automotive	Photography & Course Institute
Women Employee	400	75%	122	3 & 1
Men Employee	100	25%	58	6&6
Position	Operator Production	HRGA	Operator	Customer Service & Admin

	PARTICIPANT			
	WND	SBD	CAC	EY
Superior	Leader Production	Manager HRD	Leader	Owner
Superior Gender	Female	Female	Male	Male

Summary of whole research data which has been analyzed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach shown in two themes, main and superordinate. These themes are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Main Theme and Superordinate Theme

Main Theme	Superordinate Theme
Supporting Factor	Self-confidence
	Sexual chitchat considered as a normal thing
	Sexual harassment considered as a normal thing
	Power relation
	Quiet place
Harassment Types	Physiological
	Psychological
	Gesture
	Verbal
Psychological Impact	Psychological impact
Coping	Coping strategy

Factors contribute to sexual harassment. The discussion of factors contributing to sexual harassment in this study is related to industry and organization area, so it includes employees, colleagues, supervisors, and the social system of organization in the Karawang area. Sexual harassment will decrease self-confidence and sense of safety from the victim [10], so the victim will be preoccupied with fear and end up surrendered to accept the sexual harassment that happened to them, especially if there is a work agreement between the victim and perpetrator for a certain time. The victim hesitant to report the cases to authorities due to several reasons, such as they are being new employees and afraid the evidence will spread to others. Most of the sexual harassment victims are women, due to the domination of men over women in the workplace. This inequality leads to sexual harassment and threatened women employees in the workplace. But not all women, men also have opportunity to become sexual harassment victims [11]. Basically, sexual harassment happened mostly due to effects of power rather than emotion [12]. A survey shown that 36 percent of women employees feel harassed by their supervisors, 26 percent by persons with authority, and 32 percent by colleagues [13].

From a psychosocial point of view, chitchat and sexual harassment which are considered normal may lead to unwanted sexual harassment. This case happened to the participant in this research, who personally felt uncomfortable and afraid due to

unwanted behavior done by their supervisors and co-workers, but other women employees considered this behavior as a normal behavior. Apart from that, places which are not easily accessed and quiet are very vulnerable to bring up this unwanted sexual behavior happened.

Type of Sexual Harassment. Sexual harassment in this research form in several types: 1) gestural types of sexual harassment obtained from this study were: hand cues, sticking out the tongue, sexual cues of invitation, winking, biting the tongue, and staring at body parts, 2) psychological types of sexual harassment revealed are an unwanted sexual invitation. 3) verbal types of sexual harassment in the form of dirty words, sexual tease, comments on body parts with sexual intention, sexual jokes, and catcalling. 3) physical types of sexual harassment in the form of touching the hands, shoulders, stomach, buttocks, back of the stomach, hugging, touching breasts, kissing, and sticking the body to the victim.

Psychological Impact. The psychological impact of sexual harassment experienced by the victim in the form of: feeling humiliated, uncomfortable work environment, desire to quit the job, and leads to emotional problems. Several emotional problems may occur, such as feel guilty, cry, nightmares, fear, disgusted with self, suspicious, annoyed, overthinking, trauma, confused, daydreaming, anxious, sad, embarrassed, and feeling threatened. This condition suits with findings from one study, that shows sexual harassment may lead increasing in depression and trauma, decreasing psychological well-being, withdraw from work, desire to stop working, and decreased productivity [14].

Coping. In general, sexual harassment victims may feel depressed, anxious, confused, fearful, threatened, and other negative aspects. Each has its own way of coping according to what and how behavior is accepted. Everyone has their own experience of distress when facing problems that lead to psychological pressure [15]. The American Psychological Association offers several ways of coping to traumatic experiences, includes: ask for help from others, share experiences, give time for self-adjustment, live with a healthy lifestyle to improve the ability to cope with stress related factors, avoid big risk decision making if possible [15].

3.2   Discussion

Based on the findings presented in Table 2 regarding the types of sexual harassment, it indicates the presence of several forms, including verbal, gestural, physiological, and psychological. There is one form of sexual harassment not found in this research, visual, where usually perpetrators are showing pictures, videos, or chats related to sexual content to the victim. Sexual harassment has its roots from the view of one sex dominates and better than the other sex (Sexism) [16]. Two from the four victims admit, the perpetrators are their direct and indirect supervisor, while the other two

were colleagues from the same department and different departments. The impact of sexual harassment may lead to emotional problems where victims feel anxious, confused, sad, ashamed, annoyed, suspicious, afraid, and feels guilty. This condition in accordance to Fitzgerald, Swan, & Magley [10] that sexual harassment brings the victim to feel afraid, humiliated, fear, distress, and irritated. To deal with stress and pressure, someone conducts certain way of coping to help them adapt with the pressure or lessen the pressure from problems faced by them. Knapp, Ekeberg, Faley, and Dubois classify coping into two types, focus and mode responses. Focus response is divided into two, focus on oneself (self-focused) which does not involve the perpetrator, and focus on the initiator (initiator-focused) focus on the perpetrator. On the other hand, the mode response consists of self-response and supported response [17]. Several forms of coping include avoidance-denial, confrontation-negotiation, social coping, and support coping. Several types of coping used by the victim in this research are fighting, avoiding, speaking in moderation, ignoring, asking for advice from others, praying, emotion regulation, positive affirmation, tapping on the shoulder while affirmation talking to himself that he is fine.

4   Conclusion

This research may become the basis information for stakeholders to make policies related to sexual harassment in the workplace and able to give suggestions for stakeholders in an organization or company, 1) make a written, consistent and clear policy based on sexual harassment consequences, 2) training related to treatment and sexual harassment report, 3) research and investigation of sexual harassment, 4) procedures and actions improvement. On the other hand, sexual harassment victims should seek help from trustworthy parties, especially RP3 located in industrial areas. The limitation of this study is limited number of participants, hopefully for future researchers may increase the number of participants used with both quantitative and qualitative research methods.

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