



Faculty of Cognitive Sciences and Human Development

**FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE EMPLOYEE'S PERCEPTION
TOWARDS SEXUAL HARASSMENT**

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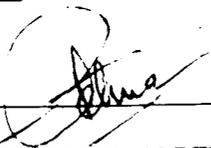
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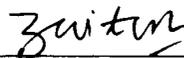
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**FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE EMPLOYEE'S PERCEPTION TOWARDS SEXUAL HARASSMENT AT THE
WORKPLACE**

by

Noor Akhma Binti Mohd Nawi

**This project is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Acknowledgement	iii
Table of contents	iv
List of Tables	vii
List of Figures	viii
Abstract/ <i>Abstrak</i>	ix
 CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	
1.0 Introduction	1
1.1 Background of study	2
1.2 Problem Statement	4
1.3 Research Questions	5
1.4 Objectives	5
1.4.1 General Objective	5
1.4.2 Specific Objectives	6
1.5 Conceptual Framework	6
1.6 Research Hypotheses	7
1.7 Significance of Study	8
1.8 Definition of Key Terms	9
1.8.1 Sexual Harassment	9
1.8.2 Level of Awareness	10
1.8.3 Preventive Actions	10
1.8.4 Work Environment	10
1.8.5 Organizational Policy	11
1.9 Conclusion	11
 CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW	
1.0 Introduction	12
2.1 Overview of Sexual Harassment	13
2.2 Theories on Sexual Harassment	14
2.2.1 Development Theory	14
2.2.2 Attribution Theory	18
2.2.3 Script Theory	19
2.2.4 Sex-Role Spillover Theory	19
2.2.5 Organizational Model	20
2.2.6 Sociocultural Model	21
2.3 Sexual Harassment Law	22
2.3.1 International	22
2.3.2 Malaysia	23

2.4	Previous Research on Sexual Harassment	24
2.4.1	International	24
2.4.2	Malaysia	25
2.6	Conclusion	26

CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.0	Introduction	27
3.1	Research Design	27
3.2	Population and Sample	28
3.2.1	Population	28
3.2.2	Sample	28
3.3	Research Instrument	29
3.4	Data Collection	29
3.5	Data Analysis	29
3.5.1	Descriptive Statistic	29
3.5.2	Inferential Statistic	30
3.5.3	Pearson Correlation Analysis	30
3.5.4	Multiple Regression Analysis	30
3.5.5	Independent T-test	31
3.6	Pilot Test	31
3.6.1	Cronchbach Alpha	31
3.7	The Analysis Method Used for Research Objectives	32
3.8	Conclusion	33

CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.0	Introduction	34
4.1	Information Analysis for Section A: Demographic Factor	35
4.2	Information Analysis for Section B: Descriptive Data	37
4.2.1	Level of Awareness on Sexual Harassment	37
4.2.2	Work Environment of Sexual Harassment	40
4.2.3	Organizational Policy of Sexual Harassment	43
4.2.4	Preventive Actions of Sexual Harassment	45
4.3	Findings and Discussion	47
4.4	Pearson Correlation Testing between Independent Variables and Dependent Variable	47
4.4.1	Relationship between Level of Awareness and Employee's Perception towards Sexual Harassment	48
4.4.2	Relationship between Preventive Actions and Employee's Perception towards Sexual Harassment	48
4.4.3	Relationship between Work Environment and Employee's Perception towards Sexual Harassment	49
4.4.4	Relationship between Organizational Policy and Employee's Perception towards Sexual Harassment	49
4.5	Independent Samples T-Test	50

4.6	Multiple Regressions Testing between Dominant factor(s) and Dependent Variable.	51
4.7	Hypotheses Analysis Review	52
4.8	Conclusion	54

CHAPTER 5 SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION

5.0	Introduction	55
5.1	Limitation of the Study	56
5.2	Recommendations	56
	5.2.1 Organization	57
	5.2.2 Human Resource Practitioners	57
	5.2.3 Further Researchers	58
5.2	Conclusion	58

REFERENCES

APPENDIX

ABSTRACT

FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE EMPLOYEE'S PERCEPTION TOWARDS SEXUAL HARASSMENT AT THE WORKPLACE

Noor Akhma Binti Mohd Nawi

This study aims to identify the factors that influence employee's perception towards sexual harassment at the workplace. The employee's perception was investigated from related aspect such as, level of awareness, work environment, organizational policy and preventive actions. The aim of this research is to identify factors that lead to sexual harassment at the workplace in Malaysia. Its objectives are to identify a significant relationship between level of awareness, work environment, organizational policy and preventive actions and employee's perception towards sexual harassment as well as to identify the differences between gender and employee's perception towards sexual harassment and to identify dominant factor that leads to sexual harassment at the workplace. This research design is quantitative study using survey methodology whereas a questionnaire designed by the past researchers was randomly distributed to 60 employees at the supermarket in Kota Samarahan, Sarawak. Data processing was analyzed using *Statistical Package for the Social Science* (SPSS 15.0) software to find the frequency, mean and standard deviation. Meanwhile, Independent T-test, Pearson Correlation Analysis, and Multiple Regression were used to analyze the hypotheses. The findings showed that there is a significant relationship between work environment and employee's perception towards sexual harassment. However, the other finding indicates that there is no significant relationship between level of awareness, preventive actions and organizational policy with employee's perception towards sexual harassment. This research finding also found that there is no difference between gender and employee's perception towards sexual harassment at the workplace. Meanwhile, Multiple Regression Analysis was used to identify dominant factor that influence employee's perception towards sexual harassment at the workplace and the result showed that work environment is the dominant factor which 14.2% changes in employee's perception towards sexual harassment was caused by work environment.

ABSTRACT

FAKTOR YANG MEMPENGARUHI PERSEPSI PEKERJA TERHADAP GANGGUAN SEKSUAL DI TEMPAT KERJA

Noor Akhma Binti Mohd Nawi

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengenalpasti faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi persepsi pekerja terhadap gangguan seksual di tempat kerja. Persepsi pekerja dikaji dari aspek tahap kesedaran, persekitaran kerja, polisi organisasi, dan langkah pencegahan. Matlamat kajian ini adalah untuk mengkaji faktor-faktor penyebab kepada kejadian gangguan seksual di tempat kerja di Malaysia. Objektif kajian ini adalah untuk mengenalpasti hubungan yang signifikan diantara tahap kesedaran, persekitaran kerja, polisi organisasi, dan langkah pencegahan dengan persepsi pekerja terhadap gangguan seksual serta mengenalpasti perbezaan di antara jantina dengan persepsi pekerja terhadap gangguan seksual dan mengenalpasti faktor dominan yang merupakan penyebab kepada berlakunya gangguan seksual di tempat kerja. Kajian ini berbentuk kuantitatif yang menggunakan kaedah kajian selidik dimana soalan kaji selidik yang direka bentuk oleh pengkaji-pengkaji kajian lepas diperolehi dan diedarkan secara rawak kepada 60 pekerja di sebuah pasaraya di Kota Samarahan, Sarawak. Kaedah pemprosesan data menggunakan perisian 'Statistical Package for the Social Science' (SPSS 15.0) untuk mendapatkan frekuensi, min, dan sisihan piawai. Sementara itu, kaedah ujian-t, korelasi pearson dan analisis regrasi berganda untuk menganalisis hipotesis. Dapatan daripada kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa terdapat perhubungan yang signifikan diantara persekitaran kerja dengan persepsi pekerja terhadap gangguan seksual. Walaubagaimanapun, hasil kajian mendapati bahawa tidak terdapat hubungan yang signifikan diantara tahap kesedaran, langkah pencegahan dan polisi organsasi dengan persepsi pekerja terhadap gangguan seksual di tempat kerja. Kajian ini juga mendapati bahawa tidak terdapat perbezaan diantara jantina dengan persepsi pekerja terhadap gangguan seksual di tempat kerja. Disamping itu, Analisis Regresi berganda juga diuji untuk mengenalpasti factor dominan yang mempengaruhi persepsi pekerja terhadap gangguan seksual di tempat kerja dan hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa persekitaran kerja merupakan faktor dominan iaitu 14.2% perubahan dalam persepsi pekerja terhadap gangguan pekerja disebabkan oleh persekitan kerja.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

Sexual harassment is not a new issue, but it has become global issues which have been discussed by many people not only in this country but also around the world. The issue of Sexual Harassment is first known during the mid- 1970s. Its had called attention 'sexual harassment' by the women's movement in the United States such as prominent groups namely, the National Organizational for Women and National Women's Political Caucus (Hardman, 2000). Before this, sexual harassment seems to be less serious issues in the workplace, however, through women movement; this issue has taken action by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in 1980 where they attempted to remedy this issue by declaring that it was illegal to harass sexually someone on the job (Brantley & Shaw Rone, 2009). Meanwhile, in Malaysia, reviews by Malaysia Trade Union Congress (MTUC) in 1987 found that 11% to 90% of women experience sexual harassment in the workplace, which depending on where they work. The studies conducted in several industrial countries show that between 42% to 70% of female employees

experienced sexual harassment. Therefore, according to Sabitha, (2005) there is Circular Letter entitled “Handling of Sexual Harassment in the Workplace in the Public Service” in order to prevent sexual harassment in government sector especially. So, many women felt relief and satisfied (Utusan Malaysia, 2005). However, the issues of sexual harassment in the workplace continued to occur widely in various industries, jobs and locations although the laws and preventive actions have been introduced by government and non-government organisation (NGO). It appears that many organizations are slow to respond to internal complaints of sexual harassment, forcing victims to go outside the organization to seek redress through the court system. The failures to respond the complaints are identified as a “deaf ear” syndrome. Three themes that are associated with deaf ear syndrome are inadequate organizational policies and procedures, managerial rationalizations, and inertial tendencies (Peirce, Smolinski & Rosen, 1998). Accordingly, Deputy Minister of Women, Family and Community, Noriah Kasnon had plans to establish a Sexual Harassment Act that will be established in this country to address issues of violence and sexual harassment against women, including eliminating sexual harassment in the workplace (BERNAMA, 2009). Statistics relating to sexual harassment have been identified from 2005 to 2008, which is 3.906 cases of sexual harassment including rape and assault reported by the Royal Malaysia Police (PDRM) and 27 cases of disciplinary action involving the public sector reported by the Public Service Department (PSD) (BERNAMA, 2009).

1.1 Background of study

Although there has been totally a lot of research into the area of sexual harassment, but a lot of the attention has been focused on particular areas, especially the prevalence of sexual harassment and the law of sexual harassments. However, the understandings of public about sexual harassment as well as the national either organizational campaign towards the sexual harassment issues is not widely in

Malaysia especially and generally in the international. It is only fewer organizations have a policy of sexual harassment, meanwhile, most employees do not understand about the sexual harassment and they just have little knowledge about it. So, this research are going to study about the perception of employee'. The aims of this study are to know the level of awareness as well as their perception towards sexual harassment.

This research is important to investigate the perception between both genders as well as to give the understanding and awareness to employees, organizational as well as national as a reference in improving the policy of sexual harassment in the workplace and to prevent the sexual harassment widely occurred. According to a journal of research by Danielle Foulis & Marita, as aptly put by Roscoe, Strouse, & Goodwin, "it is widely argued that problem in understanding and addressing sexual harassment stem from the lack of a clear, concise, universally accepted definition of sexual harassment" (1994, p. 516). This research will studies on the perception of both gender towards sexual harassment, level of awareness, the preventive actions, work environment as well as organizational policy. The aims of this study is to explore the understanding of employee's on their perception towards sexual harassment, to knows any situation that will encouraged or discouraged the occurrence of sexual harassment as well as to examined whether organizations have a policy on sexual harassment and to measure the level of awareness on employee's towards the policy.

It is important to study the issue in order to know the effects of victims and organization towards of sexual harassment. According to the past study, the victims commonly had decreased work performance and increased absenteeism, defamation of character and reputation, loss of trust in environments similar to where the harassment occurred, extremely stress on relationship with significant others, and had some of the psychological and health effects. According to Loy & Steward (1984),

75% of the respondents who had been harassed said they had experienced one or more symptoms of emotional or physical distress due to harassments. Nervousness, irritability, and uncontrolled anger were the most frequently mentioned distress responses to all types of harassments; sleeplessness, weight loss, uncontrolled crying, and stomach problems occurred less often (Grauerholz & Koralewski, 1991).

1.2 Problem Statement

This study carried out in supermarket in Kota Samarahan, Sarawak. The purpose of this study is to identify the significant relationship between the related factors that influencing sexual harassment at the workplace and how employees perception of sexual harassment.

The sexual harassment issues are become worst and more seriously. According to the past study, the complaint of sexual harassment received has been increased from time to time. This shows that employers and employees still lack of awareness in viewing behaviors or attitudes that lead to sexual harassment.

Sexual harassment is also classified as a sexual threat. MTUC defines sexual harassment as behaviors and attitudes which may results in repeatedly either physically, signal or sexual offensive. This are included touching the body, repeatedly receiving the invitations and others. The issue of sexual harassment widely occurs at workplace, such as the situation when the male are dominance at the workplace or otherwise. This issue is difficult to solve although the policy and the law have been established at the workplace.

1.3 Research Questions

Research questions in this study are as follow:

- i. Is there any difference on employee's perception towards sexual harassment based on gender?
- ii. Is there a relationship between the level of awareness and employee's perception towards sexual harassment?
- iii. Is there a relationship between the preventive action and employee's perception towards sexual harassment?
- iv. Is there a relationship between work environment and employee's perception towards sexual harassment?
- v. Is there a relationship between organizational policy and employee's perception towards sexual harassment?
- vi. Is there any relationship between dominant factor(s) and employee's perception towards sexual harassment?

1.4 Research Objectives

This section will discuss the objectives of research in general and specifically.

1.4.1 General Objective

General objective of this study is to examine employee perceptions of the factors that lead to sexual harassment.

1.4.2 Specific Objectives

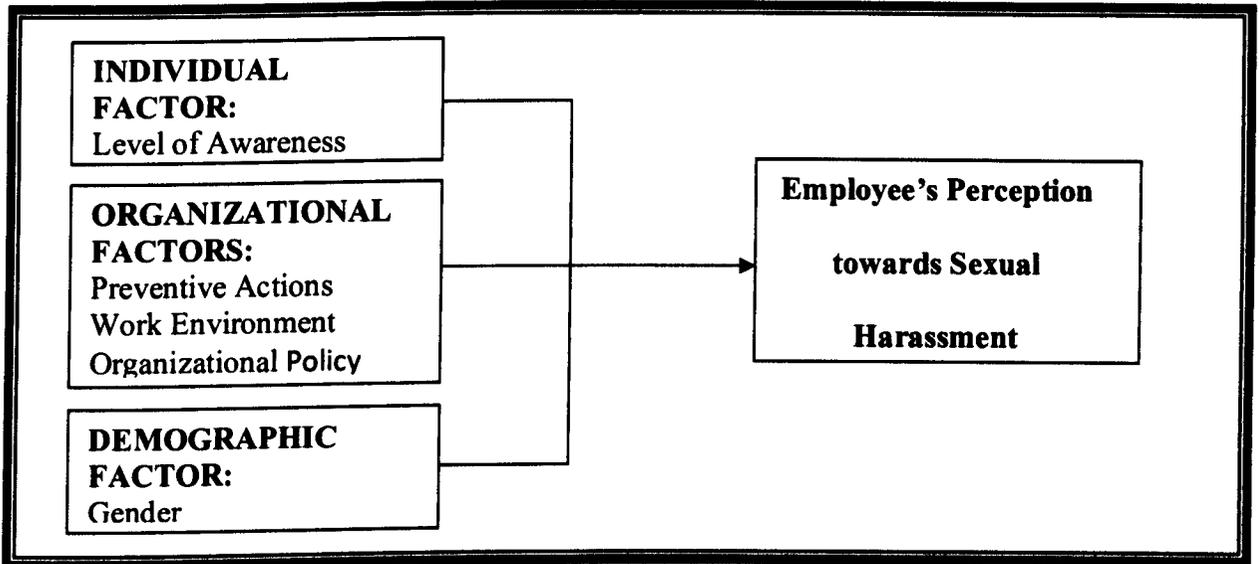
The specific objectives that will be explored in this study are as follow:

- i. To identify the differences between gender and employee's perception towards sexual harassment.
- ii. To identify the relationship between level of awareness and employee's perception towards sexual harassment.
- iii. To identify the relationship between preventive actions and employee's perception towards sexual harassment.
- iv. To identify the relationship between work environment and employee's perception towards sexual harassment.
- v. To identify the relationship between organizational policy and employee's perception towards sexual harassment.
- vi. To identify the dominant factor(s) that lead(s) to sexual harassment.

1.5 Conceptual Framework

Figure 1: The conceptual framework that being used as the guideline to identify the relationship between the main independent variables and dependent variable of the study. The independent variables of this study are demographic factor, individual factor and organizational factor whereas the dependent variable in this context is perception of employees.

The scope of this framework is to identify the existence of a significant relationship between each independent variable towards dependent variable.



Figures 1: Conceptual Framework

1.6 Research Hypotheses

Based on the research objectives, the following hypotheses were formulated:

H1: There is a significant difference between gender and employee's perception towards sexual harassment.

This hypothesis has proved by Noah, (2008) who stated that the female workers have varying perception or attitude towards sexual harassment.

H2: There is a significant relationship between level of awareness and employee's perception towards sexual harassment.

This hypothesis has proved by Lekha, Hishamuddin, Maisarah & Heng (2009) in their study "A Study on Sexual Harassment in Small and Medium Enterprises of Malaysia" stated that majority of the respondents (85.14%)

were categorized as having either very low and low level of awareness on sexual harassment.

H3: There is a significant relationship between preventive actions and employee's perception towards sexual harassment.

This hypothesis has proved by the same people in hypothesis number two, which stated that most the victims choose to handle the unwelcome sex gender related attention personally by totally avoiding the person(s).

H4: There is a significant relationship between work environment and employee's perception towards sexual harassment.

According to Tangri et. al (1982) in Organizational Model cited in Hardman (2000), found that male and female victims of sexual harassment are more likely than non-victims to work in "sexy" work environments, under management that are generally unresponsive to their concerns, and in work groups where the opposite sex is dominant.

H5: There is a significant relationship between organizational policy and employee's perception towards sexual harassment.

Worsted & Canny (2000) stated that, only 13% of respondent understood the company having a sexual harassment policy operating in the organization and 78% said they were not aware of any policy.

H6: There is a dominant factor(s) that lead(s) to sexual harassment.

1.7 Significance of the Study

In view of globalization and diversity of tomorrow's workforce, which may require both men and women to work closer, the sexual harassment issues faced are

immense. So, hope that this study can be used as guidelines for employer to build the organizational policy and help in enhancing the level of awareness and understanding among all parties such as employer and employees in the workplace.

Moreover, this study will help in educating employees to have respectful attitude towards all employees and encourage a better working relationship among them. On the other hand, this study will be conducted because based on the past research, there are still lacks of study on specific policy, procedure, awareness and prevention strategies in Malaysian context as well as to identify the different cultural orientation between men and women relationship in Malaysia compared to the west.

Thus, hope that this research can help the organization in order to handle the sexual harassment issues that occurred in the workplace and the employees can perform their job efficiently as well as eradicate the sexual harassment issues in the workplace. This study is also as a recommendation to the future studies to continue this study on further level or in another topic similar to this study.

1.8 Definition of Key Terms

The conceptual and operational terms are followed:

1.8.1 Sexual Harassment

Conceptual definition:

- Sexual Harassment defined as any unwanted or unwelcome verbal, non-verbal, or physical advance, request for sexual favors, or other conduct of sexual nature that effects an individual's work environment (Fitzwater, p.32, 1998).

Operational definition:

Sexual harassment refers to any behavior or an attitude that leads to sexual harassment at the workplace.

1.8.2 Level of Awareness

Conceptual definition:

Awareness means having or showing realization, perception, or knowledge (Merriam-Webster, 2010).

Operational definition:

Awareness is the ability of employees to identify problem in sexual harassment happens to them or the environment and policies of the organization at their workplace. In this study, the level of awareness will be assessed whether employees' are aware or not that sexual harassment had occurred in their workplace as well as the employee's awareness on organizational policy.

1.8.3 Preventive Actions

Conceptual definition:

Preventive actions are the action taken to eliminate the cause of a potential nonconformity, defect, or other undesirable situation to prevent occurrence (Carmell, 2009).

Operational definition:

Prevention actions are the action to prevent anything bad happened among employees in the workplace. In this study, action measured in the prevention of sexual harassment where the action taken by the organization or employees to prevent the sexual harassment happen in the workplace.

1.8.4 Work Environment

Conceptual definition:

The work environment is comprised of the physical location, equipment, materials processed or used, and the activities of an employee while engaged in the performance of his work, whether on or off the railroads property.

There are no stated exclusions of place or circumstance (BTS Transportation Expressions, 2009).

Operational definition:

Work environment refers to the place where employees work. Workplace is the situation or environment in which the factors can be encouraged or discouraged to sexual harassment from occurring.

1.8.5 Organizational Policy

Conceptual definition:

A set of basic principles and associated guidelines, formulated and enforced by the governing body of an organization, to direct and limit its actions in pursuit of long-term goals (Business Dictionary, 2010).

Operational definition:

A rule or course of action existing in an organization, usually provided by government or the organization itself to guide and determine present and future results and position of employee problems at work.

1.9 Conclusion

Sexual harassment is a form of serious misconduct at the workplace. It can be regarded as a form of sexual discrimination against victims. It is because of the health effects on victims which may experience emotional disturbance and serious mental illness. This issue occurs in all countries, including Malaysia.

In Malaysia, there is a sexual harassment occurs at the workplace, but this issue is still unknown the seriousness. However, the government has taken various efforts to eradicate the issue as a seriously, for an example, establishing a code of practice called "The Code of Practice on The Prevention and Eradication of Sexual Harassment in The Workplace".

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

There are several theories underlying factors that contribute to sexual harassment. This chapter described eight theories that are directly related to the incidence of sexual harassment in the workplace. The first of these is the Developmental Theory outlined by Lengnick-Hall (1995). The second is the Attribution Theory described by Fritz Heider, Edward Jones, Keith Davis, & Harold Kelley (1958). The third was proposed by Gagnon & Simon's and is called Script Theory (1973). The fourth is Sex-Role Spillover Theory, proposed by Gutek and colleagues (1987, 1983, and 1990). The fifth is the Organizational Model and sixth was Sociocultural Model, as well as the description of the law on sexual harassment in locally and internationally. Subsequently, the previous study in locally and internationally from past researchers about their view towards sexual harassment issues.

2.1 Overview of the Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is a serious issue. Due to the serious issues, many researchers have been investigated the issues in depth. The results they have received are various depending on the situations and the culture of the work environment and countries.

In internationally, International Labor Office [ILO]) founds that between 15% to 30% of women employees had sexual harassment which being harassed by the supervisors or colleagues (Noe, Hollenbeck, et. al, 1994) cited in (Zakaria et. al, 2001). In United States, the numbers of complaints to EEOC had increased to 15,549 (Sherman et al, 1998) and Japan, the survey found that 85% of women employees had "Sekuhara", which means sexual harassment. This situation occurs when they had tea times with her colleagues after working hours (Noe et. al, 1994) cited in (Zakaria et. al, 2001). However, all the countries had the policy and law in preventing the sexual harassment. Although, the issue is serious and occurs widely in international, the law and policy can help in reducing and preventing the sexual harassment at the workplace. The reason may caused the issue occurs widely is because of the interaction between them which is leads them to sexual harassment issues. The past research found that interaction between individuals and situations in the workplace can caused potential sexual harassment occurs. In other countries, the social life or relationship between men and women are too open, and this situation will encourages sexual harassment occurred. Meanwhile, in Malaysia, the social life or relationship between men and women is limited and this situation discouraged the sexual harassment occurred.

While, In Malaysia, the Ministry of Human Resource had launched "The Code of Practice on The Preventive and Eradication of Sexual Harassment in the Workplace" in 1999, there are five forms of sexual harassment that was identified