Women and Sexual Harassment at Work: An Exploratory Study of Government Organizations in the State of Kuwait

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Abstract: *The term "sexual harassment" is considered in new Arab culture, but in past it known as "wooing" like the sense of showing love and approaching the other sex. Through global satellites it took a new style that is far away from moral and religious values. "Sexual harassment" as this term is common including verbal harassment, sexual violence and sexual perversion. Particularly women suffered by this phenomenon. This explorative study aims to revealing the presence of the phenomenon of sexual harassment among women at work which also identify the cause of address that need to reduce in our society. Questionnaires used in this research as tool to 237 Kuwaiti women working place at governmental organizations. The result found as present that many women who are exposed to this phenomenon prefer to keep silent. Few factors like wearing indecent clothes and positive interactions of women with men at work may cause typical harassment. Statistical tend confirm what they see and hear from colleagues about real sexual harassment situations. Finally, study of this research concludes with some recommendations for addressing and reducing sexual harassment against women.*

Key Words: *Sexual harassment, Kuwaiti Women.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

Kuwaiti women play a prominent and pioneering role in all areas of the state. They have notable achievements and progress in their careers, from high-ranking politician's administrative leadership positions, in both the public and private sectors. Kuwaiti women have been working hand in hand with the country's men to build Kuwaiti society, culture, and economy. Dubbed "the sisters of men," women demonstrated heroism during the brutal Iraqi invasion of the State of Kuwait. Nevertheless, women continue to experience sexual harassment, which is a form of illegal discrimination, harmful to women both psychologically and physically. Though there are cases of sexual harassment against men, women suffer disproportionately at work, on the street or other public places. Due to the sensitivity of the issue, women not being aware of their rights and protections, and the likelihood of disbelieving the victim without conclusive evidence, women rarely reported such offenses, which leaves them in a vulnerable position. Harassment comes in several forms, behaviours and affects a variety of individuals (children, women, and men), in a variety of situations. This study of the research as focused on two main components: women and the work environment. Women now occupy a prominent place in the workplace and constitute a large proportion of the workforce in all fields. There is no doubt that any negative impact on women, such as sexual harassment, regardless of who the perpetrator is, will inevitably affect performance and work in general. The sensitivity of this issue constitutes a difficulty in conducting associated research, especially in our eastern societies. Sexual harassment is of worldwide concern. Many women who are survivors of this type of harassment remain silent for fear of their private, social, and professional lives being scrutinized. For many, harassment can be difficult to prove with evidence and facts, and survivors are often dismissed easily. Therefore, data on sexual harassment underrepresents the true extent of the issue.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW:

The Egyptian Centre for Women's Rights defines sexual harassment as "any form of unwelcome words or acts of a sexual nature that violate the body, privacy, or feelings of a person and make him feel uneasy, threatened, insecure, fearful, disrespectful, insulted, offended, or violated." The Saudi Education Forum defines sexual harassment as the "annoyance, harassment or an unwelcome act of the sexual type that includes a range of acts from simple violations to serious harassment that may include uttering sexual innuendo to sexual activities. Another study exploring sexual harassment in the workplace by surveying high school student (2). 52% of the sample was comprised of women from multiple suburbs, and the results of those who had experienced harassment were compared to the results of those who had not. Other study evident from a field study conducted by an American magazine that one to two working women has been exposed to a form of harassment, with many having been assaulted multiple times. Other research estimates that between 40% and 68% of female workers have been subjected to this disgraceful behaviour at work (3). In April

of 2016, Egypt's Assiut University, in cooperation with the United Nations Population Fund and the Egyptian Centre for Women's Rights, established the first unit meant to combat harassment by opening a channel of communication for victims. Furthermore, programs were put in place to educate faculty members, workers and students on how to deal with harassment in the university, and to educate female students and faculty of their rights in the event that harassment takes place. Appropriate deterrence mechanisms were identified for the perpetrators in accordance with university laws and regulations. The university administration indicated that the Universities Organization Law and its executive regulations and the country-wide Civil Workers Law have laid down the rules that must be used in the event of harassment. One such law is Universities Organization Law Article 96, which highlights the obligation to adhere to the university values and traditions and deal with students in an appropriate and ethical ways. The associated punishment is outlined in Article 110. Furthermore, Law No. 49 states that students must adhere to the duties stipulated in Article 124 of the executive regulations of the Egyptian Universities Organization Law. The law highlights the student commitment to good behaviour and the non-exposure of students to any action, physical or verbal, that violates their moral values and duties. The associated punishment is outlined in Article 126. In Lebanon, physical or psychological harassment inside the various workplaces constitutes a threat to the mental health and physical safety of workers. Lebanese legislation is still devoid of any article stipulating warnings or penalties, leaving individuals exposed to harassment without effective recourse. Therefore, harassment is prevalent, especially among the most vulnerable groups, including domestic and agricultural workers. A proposal for a bill was submitted in Article 7 of the Labour Law, whereby workers are entitled to enjoy a safe environment for work free from any physical or psychological harassment. It is incumbent upon the employer to secure this safe environment by taking preventive measures to avoid harassment in the institution or by addressing instances of harassment. Study on the measure of self-efficacy of sexual intercourse between, male and female, 374 teenagers in the United Kingdom were surveyed (4). Factor analysis revealed the existence of five other underlying factors affecting sexual violence: contraception, negative and positive sexual messages, and sexual history. Internal consistency statistics showed the most important of these factors was the availability of contraception, and the paper presented healthy behaviours for sexual intercourse between young adolescents, males and females. Another survey conducted in London on International Women's Day at the International Centre "YouGov" demonstrates the extent of the issue – 85% of the women who have been molested with unwanted sexual intercourse. Most of this groups in between 18 to 24 years old, and the percentage is 64% of British women have suffered from harassment. As a way, to highlight the importance of the issue, an international day of women's rights has been identified by women's rights groups, with an aim of reducing the prevalence of sexual harassment, combating violence against women, and training a large group of university students who work as volunteers to educate students about the concept of violence against women. Another study aimed to uncover the factors contributing to sexual violence in South African schools for learners with mild intellectual disabilities and focused on factors that aggravate this problem (5). The study relied on individual interviews with 16 learners, school nurses and social workers from two private schools in South Africa, as well as on analyses of textbooks. The factors identified as influencers were pressure from others, concealing sexual violence incidents, and lack of school monitoring in some area where conducted a study on the gaps between beliefs and practices (5). Children between kindergartens and grade 12 in Canadian schools were asked about their attitudes on homosexuality, and comparisons were made of intersex, transgender people and those who are homosexuals. The study revealed results focused on the problematic gaps between educators, beliefs, perceptions and practices. These are the gaps that negatively affect the school climate where performance of an exploratory study about harassment and bullying in Australian universities (6). The study aimed to find out the differences between Metropolitan and G08 respondents to determine the most common areas of sexual harassment. In major universities, faculty reported higher levels of harassment in regional than in urban universities. The researchers attributed this to a lack of support for professional development, which also affects organizational culture and professional development and leads to stress. Another research aimed to study the reality of harassment in the three Jordanian public and private universities (7). The study was conducted among 600 students, and statistical methods such as frequencies, percentages, and single-contrast analysis were used. The study concluded that the female students are not aware of university regulations and laws. Furth more, women spend a significant period of time on campus, sometimes remaining alone in university classrooms. It has also deemed that these students lack modesty in clothing or appearance. The results showed differences in physical and verbal sexual harassment for some of the study variables. Similar study by explored students' impact on improving the quality of higher education in Zimbabwe's private higher education institutions (8). The study used a three-year longitudinal approach from 2011 to 2013 and was based on discussions, group interviews, and questionnaires with students, faculty members, and lecturers. The sample included was representative of the community and included both sexes. Unqualified, non-branched lecturers who work part-time appear to negatively affect the quality of education.

3. RESEARCH PROBLEM:

Many victims of harassment are afraid of coming forward for fear of scandal, losing their jobs or tarnishing their reputation. Since survivors' claims are often dismissed, many do not feel that the harasser will be punished, perpetuating

a sense of injustice. Though the true picture of sexual harassment is not complete due to the mentioned challenges, there are some studies that have taken place. Idris (Online) identifies several causes of sexual harassment:

- Absence of religious faith in the perpetrator
- Hedonistic tendencies and eagerness to immediately satisfy needs.
- Absence of the family's active and supervisory role in establishing morals in the hearts of children.
- Spread of unemployment among a large number of individuals in a convincing and unconvincing manner.

Emotional suppression in the family environment and social pressures also contribute to the spread of sexual harassment. Other factors that contribute to this are scarcity of collective activities to occupy leisure time, create common interests and absorb energy (e.g., environmental protection activities), scarcity of targeted awareness programs, and the spread of open satellite channels without censorship. Sexual harassment classified into three categories (1)

1. Verbal sexual harassment (notes, instructions, obscene jokes, urgency to request a meeting).
2. Non-verbal sexual harassment (guided looks, gestures, body cues).
3. Physical sexual harassment (beginning with inappropriate touching and eventually leading to assault).

A. Study questions

This research found as the problem statement in formed below:

1. Do women working in the institutions of the State of Kuwait suffer sexual harassment?
2. What are the causes of such sexual harassment from the sample's point of view?
3. How would they react if they were exposed to harassment at work in the State of Kuwait?

B. Research aims

The study objectives are as follows:
1. Shedding light on harassment faced by Kuwaiti women working in the institutions of the State of Kuwait.
2. Diagnosing the causes of sexual harassment from respondents' point of view.
3. Addressing the psychological and social effects as a result of such harassment, and helping women come forward.
4. Establishing regulations and controls to limit and ultimately eliminate sexual harassment.

C. Research importance

This research advances the knowledge of sexual harassment in the following ways:
1. The issue of sexual harassment is one of the scourges that societies suffer from in all their types and patterns, whether eastern or western.
2. Women are particularly exposed to this problem before men, whether at work, the street, or public shopping places, and it has generally become an immoral phenomenon.

The lack of clarity of the rules and regulations for punishment that causes psychological and moral consequences for women due to the lack of daring and frankness in presenting what they face of this phenomenon in workplaces and public places in society, which increases the spread of this phenomenon.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

This research conducting an inductive descriptive study that using SPSS Virgins 19.0 to analyses the data in terms of frequencies, percentages, arithmetic mean, and standard deviation in its statistical method whereas research tools used based on questionnaire that was designed to consisting of three groups of questions. The first group of questions explored how many women working in Kuwaiti state institutions have experienced sexual harassment, the second – on the respondents' opinions as to the reasons sexual harassment exists, and the third – on respondent's opinions of ways to confront harassment when it occurs in the field of work such as: confronting harassment, switching jobs, filing a complaint or not reporting the incident. To express an opinion on the extent to which the tool achieves the objective of the research, the method of formulating the items, and the safety of the language. The study's methodology was based on a questionnaire that developed by Fitzgerald et al. (9) and aimed to assess survivors' mental health. It was determined that, when self-reporting, the number of women who had experienced harassment is higher than the official statistics. Women who had been harassed reported less satisfaction, which may have led to a withdrawal from their academic studies. Therefore, teenagers who have experienced sexual harassment displayed reduced professional abilities and academic performance which increased absenteeism.

5. STUDY OF THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK:

Some strategies as formulated to explain, understand phenomena, and predict in many cases that challenge or extend knowledge within critical bounding that may also limited on framework in this research.

D. Strategies to reduce sexual harassment

Some illustrate strategies that solving the sexual harassment problem (10):

- **The role of women**: women should avoid walking alone in dark streets and not interact with people they do not know.
- **The role of the family**: The lesson of the Islamic religion that stipulate how to raise children, beds should be separated, and children made aware of non-accepted behaviours with relatives.
- **The role of civil society**: Society has an influential role in educating women about human rights and the recourse they have against perpetrators of sexual harassment.
- **The role of the state:** Providing security that makes guarantees for women to protect them from sexual harassment, with the aim of a security and monitoring role to reduce this phenomenon. The state also has a role in economic development to eliminate youth vacancy and reduce unemployment, to eradicate poverty and the spinsterhood of youth.
- **The role of religion**: Comprehensive and integrated treatment in the Islamic angles and clarity of the faith and ethical vision as mentioned in the teachings of the Holy Quran in Surat (chapter) Al-Nur: chastity and politeness from childhood.
- **The role of educational institutions**: Integrated educational institutions with state agencies in educating women about their rights, and that the curricula include morals in mixing with the opposite sex, spreading sexual education among university youth, and not imitating the gentle behaviours that are alien to Islamic societies.

E. Harassment in countries around the world

A study issued by the Women's Institute in the Spanish capital Madrid showed that 1.3M female workers, 15% of the total number of female workers in Spain, were subjected to some form of sexual harassment in 2005. The study indicated that 40,000 female workers will change their workplace for this reason (Web). Researchers from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences who conducted a randomized sample study found that 48% of women in the sample were exposed to sexual words, jokes and insults, 13% had received offers for sexual intercourse in exchange for workplace benefits, while 26% were touched, hugged and kissed in the workplace without consent. As a result of this analytical study, it was demonstrated that only 40% of women launched complaints related to harassment using the women's hotline. (China Today website). The results of a survey conducted in Beijing showed that 71% of the respondents had previously been exposed to sexual harassment. 54% of those had heard sexual jokes, 29% objected to those who had a habit of stripping in front of other males, 27% had been exposed to physical contact with the opposite sex without consent, 8% had been peeped on, and 2% had experienced sexual harassment over the phone. In this regard, a survey conducted by the Hong Kong Women's Union revealed that one third of the maids in Hong Kong have been subjected to sexual harassment by clients. In Egypt, approximately 68% of women surveyed had been subjected to sexual harassment within the work environment, whether this harassment was verbal or physical (Egyptian News website). According to a statistic by the Egyptian Centre for Public Opinion Research, 1 in 3 women aged 25-29 were subjected to sexual harassment in Egypt during 2014. Sexual harassment is prevalent in Algeria, despite there being laws in place that criminalize such behaviour. Under the weight of sexual harassment, many Algerian women suffer in complete silence for fear of repercussion, and those who do report such violations to the courts make a very difficult choice to do so (Woman Gate website). In a field study conducted by a global research company for the World News Agency, it was revealed that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia ranks third out of 24 countries in the number of sexual harassment cases in the workplace. The penalties are lenient – jail terms of a month to no more than a year, and a fine of 5,000 to 50,000 riyals. The Ministry of Justice had made it clear that during the past year, the number of harassment cases in the Kingdom reached a total of 2,792. The courts of Riyadh region heard 650 cases, those of the Makkah region – 430 cases, those of the eastern region – 210 cases, and the courts of the Medina region – 170 cases. The number of cases of Saudis accused of harassment reached 1,669, while the number of cases of non-Saudis accused of harassment reached 1,128. A survey that included 24 countries revealed that sexual harassment in the workplace is most widespread in India, followed by China. 50% of Chinese respondents indicated that harassment occurred in the workplace, including 36% from bosses, and 14% from colleagues. Experts pointed out that most Chinese female employees choose to remain silent when they are exposed to sexual harassment in the workplace, for fear of negatively affecting their career progression, spoiling their relationship with their colleagues, or simply out of embarrassment. Western studies conducted in this field of study show that extent of the female interest in having sex in an official or informal manner (11). Investigated research found that the experiences of LGBQT+ students at the Al-Bayda Institute at the University of South Carolina in the United States of America (12). It was determined that these individuals are often targets of sexual and verbal harassment and violence due to their sexual orientation. The results of the research showed that 31 states do not protect students from discrimination based on identity, sexuality, or gender (American Civil Liberties Union, 2015). These are places are dangerous to LGBQT+ youth due to the prevalence of heteronormativity in universities, with many students reporting

that they have experiencing harassment on campus. The study also mentioned that there is no statistically significant relationship between the variables and the university campus, and students may suffer from social bias and social discrimination between this group. A study conducted by Hillard et al. explored efforts made in schools to reduce sexual harassment by implementing policies and programs to increase safety and family involvement in reducing this phenomenon and raising students educational attainment, especially for LGBQT+ students (13). This study explored teachers' responsibility in reducing sexual harassment and bullying. by sampling 107 male and female students from one high school, and a group of 154 students from another, the researchers concluded that LGBQT+ students were more vulnerable to sexual harassment practices. The schools in question set policies for teachers to intervene when witnessing sexual harassment and developed resources for students to reduce the same; these changes produced positive results.

F. Discussion of past studies

There are a number of Arab and foreign studies that have evaluated sexual harassment in general, and its prevalence among students in secondary schools in particular. As is well-known, many women who have experienced harassment do not report it as a way of preserving their private, social and professional lives. Unfortunately, victim reports are often dismissed on the basis of lack of physical evidence, with the majority of society taking the word of the harasser over that of the victim. Furthermore, sexual harassment towards adolescents in school and universities, as well as LGBQT+ individuals appear getting more common.

The studies also report on the efforts in schools to reduce harassment by implementing policies and programs to improve the safety of students and increase the involvement of teachers, family, the state, and religious leaders as a way of protecting students. The administration of Egypt's Assiut University further explored legal aspects and recourse available for harassment victims, resulting in laws and regulations such as the Universities Organization Law and the Civil Workers Law. The procedures for establishing the first unit to combat harassment at the university were carried out in cooperation with the United Nations Population Fund and the Egyptian Centre for Women's Rights with the aim of addressing the issue of harassment and creating a channel of communication with victims. Several studies showed weak religious faith is one of the main causes of sexual harassment in society, and that the participants believe that the lack of regulations that limit harassment leads to an increase in sexual harassment cases.

6. DISCUSSION OF RESULT:

G. Research sample

Table (1) below summarizes the breakdown of the sample according to the variables adopted by the study: years of experience and age. Many respondents (42.5%) had more than 21 years of experience, followed by 11-20 years of experience. Accordingly, most respondents were over 40 years of age.

Table (1): Sample description according to the variables of the study

The variable		Number	%	Not shown
Years of experience	1-10 Years	53	14.2	5.88%
	11-20 Years	140	37.4	
	21 or more	159	42.5	
Age	20-30 Years	129	34.5	21.1%
	31-40 Years	3	0.8	
	Over 40 years	163	43.6	
Total		374	100%	

Table (2) summarizes the findings related to the extent to which women experience sexual harassment in the workplace. As question found in formulated that do women working in the institutions of the state of Kuwait suffer sexual harassment? In this case, 45.2% of respondents indicated that they believe sexual harassment in the work exists, with 41.2% believing so but not sure. Only 9.1% do not believe that workplace harassment exists. 11% of respondents had experienced sexual harassment themselves, while 13.6% believed they have but were not sure. However, a large number of respondents (46%) indicated that they have a colleague or relative who has been sexually harassed, and 21.9% believed they know someone who has experienced harassment but were not sure. 27.3% of respondents indicated that they do not know women who have been sexually harassed. The results are statistically significant and consistent with previous research.

Table (2): Frequencies, percentages, arithmetic averages, and percentage deviations for responses

	Items	Yes		I think so		No, never		Mean	Standard Deviation
		T	%	T	%	T	%		
1	Do you really believe that sexual harassment takes place in the organizations of Kuwait?	169	45.2	154	41.2	34	9.1	1.55	0.722
2	Have you ever personally been sexually harassed in the workplace?	41	11	51	13.6	264	70.6	2.50	0.872
3	Have you heard of a colleague or relative who has been sexually harassed?	172	46	82	21.9	102	27.3	1.72	0.920

Table No. (3) summarizes the responses to this section of the survey that define what are the cause of such sexual harassment from the sample's point of view? In such case, unfortunately, a large proportion of respondents (37.4%) believe that the way women dress provokes sexual harassment, with an additional 35.3% indicating that they believe that is the case. Only 20.6% of respondents believe that dress and attire does not provoke sexual harassment. Furthermore, 39.3% of respondents believe that women's behaviour provokes men to perpetrate harassment, with an additional 30.5% believing that may be the case. Only 24.1% of the sample did not know of another woman who had been sexually harassed in the workplace. The results are statistically significant and consistent with previous research.

Table 3: Frequencies, percentages, arithmetic averages and percentage deviations

	Items	Yes		I think so		No, never		Mean	Standard Deviation
		T	%	T	%	T	%		
4	Are clothes and lack of modesty among the reasons why women are sexually harassed in the workplace?	140	37.4	132	35.3	77	20.6	1.70	0.871
5	Does the way women interact with men in the work environment lead to sexual harassment?	147	39.3	114	30.5	91	24.3	1.73	0.896
6	Has any friend (a girl) of yours faced a sexual harassment problem at work?	176	47.1	61	16.3	90	24.1	1.54	1.003

Table (4) summarizes the results in terms of the actions women would consider if exposed to sexual harassment and try to expose the harassment at work in the state of Kuwait. The majority (35.3%) indicated that they would confront their harasser, while 31.6% indicated that they would file a complaint. 20.3% of respondents would consider switching jobs while 6.8% would leave the incident unreported.

Table (4): Frequencies, percentages, arithmetic averages, and percentage deviations

Confronting Harassment		Switching jobs			Filing a complaint		Not reporting the incident		Mean		Standard Deviation
T	%	T	%	T	%	T	%				
132		35.3	76	20.3	118	31.6	31.6	6.8	195		1.008

7. RECOMMENDATIONS:

Few points as recommend from this study that pointed below based on various aspects that figure it out in below.

- Raise the professional capability levels of adolescents and youth by developing targeted professional development programs.

- Develop sex education programs to be included in school curricula, especially religious and scientific materials, to explain the dimensions of sexual relations between males and females.
- Establish extension programs to reduce the phenomenon of transgender and homosexuality.
- Treating " boyish- girl" and "lady-boy" by a compulsory law for parents, by transferring them to treatment centers.
- Installing cameras on the public roads of the work centers to reduce the presence of sexual harassment in the workplace and to protect individuals.
- Facilitate the path of traditional by reviewing the customs and traditions that have been used to them, regarding the efficiency in marriage or the aspects of its expenses.
- Establish laws and punishments to curb alcohol and narcotics use to protect young people from deviations of all kinds and enlighten them about the abnormal behaviors resulting from their abuse.
- The need for a woman to adhere to modesty in her appearance, dress, speech, and the like when leaving the house, to pursue work or education at the university, and so on.

8.CONCLUSION:

Sexual harassment can take on many forms: verbal, physical, or mental. Women and LGBQT+ people in particular are the most vulnerable groups. In recent years, international women's rights organizations and university research centres have undertaken studies to understand the nature of sexual harassment, implemented policies and procedures to deal with such harassment, and put in place educational resources to prevent sexual harassment and to inform women on their rights and recourses. As the results of the study confirm that sexual harassment instances are significantly underreported since the number of respondents who indicate that they have been or know someone who has been assaulted is greater than the numbers included in official statistics. In this study, women indicated that there are factors that drive colleagues to commit sexual harassment acts in the workplace, such as wearing immodest clothing and the way women interact with men. Therefore, we put forward several proposals and recommendations associated with sexual harassment prevention methods.

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