

SEXUAL HARASSMENT AGAINST FEMALE EMPLOYEES AT TOURISM DESTINATIONS: A CASE STUDY IN NORTHERN CYPRUS

Assédio Sexual Contra Funcionárias em Destinos Turísticos: Um Estudo de Caso no Norte do Chipre

ESTHER KASIVA WATERI¹ & MURUDE ERTAC CANKAN²

ABSTRACT

Sexual harassment is defined by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission [EEOC] as “unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours, and other sexually based verbal or physical conduct with the aim or effect of violating a person's dignity”. Sexual harassment, as well as the rise in the number of cases, is a major problem of tourism destinations and is extremely common in the hospitality sector. The aim of this research is to examine how women employees in this industry in North Cyprus experience sexual harassment and whether they perceive the behaviors or acts that constitute sexual harassment. Qualitative research is used to understand women employees’ feelings and challenges. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with ten women employees working at five-star hotels. Findings show that women employees face sexual harassment and gender inequality in hospitality sector is clearly seen in tourism and hospitality. This study can be used by the stakeholders of tourism sector, such as governmental offices and hotel owners to establish a gender equal and safer environment for women employees. Success of a tourism destination depends on providing a high-quality service, which can be obtained only if you create a safe and peaceful working environment for the employees.

KEYWORDS

Tourism; Hotels; Sexual Harassment; Gender Inequality; North Cyprus.

RESUMO

O assédio sexual é definido pela Comissão de Igualdade de Oportunidades de Emprego [EEOC] como "avanços sexuais indesejados, pedidos de favores sexuais e outras condutas sexuais verbais ou físicas com o objetivo ou efeito de violar a dignidade de uma pessoa". O assédio sexual, bem como o aumento do número de casos associados, é um grande problema dos destinos turísticos, sendo extremamente comum no setor de hospitalidade. O objetivo desta pesquisa é examinar como as funcionárias deste setor no norte de Chipre vivem o assédio sexual e se percebem os comportamentos ou atos que constituem assédio sexual. A pesquisa qualitativa é utilizada para compreender os sentimentos e desafios das mulheres empregadas.

¹ **Esther Kasiva Wateri** – Student, Tourism and Hotel Management, Final International University, North Cyprus. Email: esther.wateri@final.edu.tr

² **Murude Ertac Cankan** – PhD. Assistant Professor, Department of Tourism, Final International University, North Cyprus. <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-7409-1836> E-mail: murude.ertac@final.edu.tr

Foram realizadas entrevistas semiestruturadas com dez funcionárias que trabalham em hotéis 5 estrelas. As descobertas mostram que as funcionárias enfrentam assédio sexual e desigualdade de gênero no setor de hospitalidade, sendo claramente visível no turismo e na hospitalidade. Este estudo pode ser utilizado pelos participantes do setor de turismo, tais como escritórios governamentais e proprietários de hotéis para estabelecer um ambiente igualitário e mais seguro para as mulheres empregadas. O sucesso de um destino turístico depende da prestação de um serviço de alta qualidade, que só pode ser obtido se você criar um ambiente de trabalho seguro e pacífico para os funcionários.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Destinos Turísticos; Hotéis; Assédio Sexual; Desigualdade de Gênero; Norte de Chipre.

INTRODUCTION

Sexual harassment in workplace is described as any inappropriate sexual behavior - verbal, nonverbal or physical, that the recipient perceives as hostile, degrading, or threatening of his or her well-being. In the last two decades, sexual harassment in the workplace has received a lot of attention, and there is a lot of empirical evidence to back it up. Sexual harassment has been shown to negatively impact employees work habits, attitudes, and well-being, including decreased productivity and work performance, increased work withdraws, life dissatisfaction, mental health, and stress (Fitzgerald et al., 1997; Ram et al., 1997; O'Leary-Kelly et al., 2009; Li et al., 2016; Collinsworth et al., 2009; Gettman & Gelfand, 2007; Willness et al., 2007).

Sexual harassment relies in service organizations because of their intrinsic characteristics. The service design process is inextricably related to the close involvement of the customer, and interpersonal standards are often based on fulfilling, if not satisfying a customer's expectations. Women make up 46 percent of the tourism workforce, according to the International Labour Organization [ILO]. Like most companies, the field of tourism has gender differences in salary (Cukier, 1996; Levy and Lurch, 1991; Lundergren, 1993), job opportunities (Seager, 2003), level of employment, and job security.

Women in the tourism sector, on average, need higher qualifications than men (Cukier, 1996). Most workers in the hospitality sector are usually young and have basic education. Their role in the workplace is very often weak and most young women are not confident enough when it comes to dealing with people in power, which makes them feel less important than any other group of employers in the workplace. (Aaron & Dry, 1992; Hamilton & Veglaahn, 1992; Laudadid., 1988). Due to lack of legal persistence, incentive or professional power, the service

employees may be forced to rely on referent power or being socially appealing and nice with the customer. Research not only highlighted the existence of sexual harassment in everyday workplace functions, but also made it clear that women should not be silenced (Fernando & Prasad, 2019).

Considering the danger of sexual harassment in the workplace, more research is needed to improve our understanding of sexual harassment in the hospitality sector, as the current research in the hospitality industry is inadequate and limited (Ram et al., 2016). Consequently, in North Cyprus tourism businesses, such as hotels, maintaining an atmosphere free of sexual harassment is a critical factor that decide the organization's success or failure. Despite this importance, there has been little prior research related to this topic. Therefore, the aim of this study is to identify the most common forms of sexual harassment experienced according to the codes of practice among female employees working in the hotel industry in North Cyprus based on the qualitative research method involving 10 interviews with female employees working in the hospitality sector in North Cyprus.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sexual Harassment - Despite the facts that there is lack of analytical research on sexual harassment in the hospitality industry, the subject has progressively intrigued the hospitality sector and researcher's interest. According to (Eller, M.E), worldwide sexual harassment is described as any type of sexual activity, whether it is verbal, non-verbal, or physical with the intent or effect of violating and damaging a person's dignity. Farley (1978) indicated that it is widely believed that it was through her work that the word 'sexual harassment' first entered to the feminist dictionary. The first time she used the phrase publicly was in 1975 as she appeared before the New York City Human Rights Commission on women and work (Swenson, 2017). The term 'sexual harassment' as the result of her teaching and conscious awareness with students, as well as a desire to correlate experiences of both physical and emotional violence that women experienced at work.

Folgero & Fjeldstad (1995) stated that sexual harassment is regarded as the most pervading form of violence against women. Most people who are subjected to sexual harassment are women and such attitudes have been used by men towards women to the point that the harasser are men and the harassed are mostly women (Charney & Russell, 1994), Fitzgerald et al., 1988); Guuffre & Williams, 1994); Mann & Guadagno, 1999). Sexual harassment not only takes place

amidst co-workers within the company, but also can be committed by the customers on the employees. (Ryan & Kenig, 1991),

Gender inequality in workplace - Based on the Gender role theory, men and women have historically had separate social roles (Eagly, 1989). Heilman (2012) stated that men are responsible for earning money, whereas women are responsible for handling domestic work. This traits for men were frequently linked with career advancement in the workplace, such as spending more time on companies' task and ignoring home demands, women on the other hand are stereotyped as being polite, kind, and friendly. Work, family, and career advancement are all priorities for women. Men are also engaging actively in family roles.

Previous research gave a brief overview of various gender equality measures and statistics. The main goal was to develop and action plan to deal with gender equality policies. If the European Union were to achieve its goals, the study increasingly reflected on increasing its target (Susi, 2018). Different aspects of gender equality between men and women are evaluated. The research found that, in addition to the wage gap, there are other concerns such as not sharing household jobs equally, gender gaps in pensions, wealth and other aspect. Traditional methods restrict the possibilities of contrasting men and women leading in limitation. Women also gained the most access to the public sector resulting in a reduction in workplace gender inequality. (Sophie, & Dominique, 2015),

Women are confined to the private sector, and there is still a significant gender barrier to overcome, as well as gender inequality in workplace content (Walter, P, B, (2001). Another study concluded that inequality among the different genders can be removed with change in their attitude (Andrew, E & Conchita, D. 2015).

Women Employment in Hospitality Sector - Although there has been research on gender and women in the workplace in general, there has been limited academic study on women working in tourism sector. Even though the number of women working in the hospitality industry is growing, statistical data continues to show persistent horizontal and vertical segregation, as well as a pay gap that results in wasted opportunities (Segovia-Perez, Figueroa-Domecq, Fuentes-Maraleda & Munoz-Mazon 2019).

The most recent research shows continuing gender inequality in tourism industry (Morgan & Pritchard, 2019). A few studies have looked at women's empowerment through work in the hospitality industry. Women first explained that challenges in balancing senior roles with caring

duties; dominant masculine cultures, preconception, and gender inequality segregation from networks and inadequate senior female role model were identified as five main barriers to women's empowerment. In hospitality sector, discrimination at work, such as sexual harassment and gender inequality has been studied in the literature which has resulted in, pay gap, horizontal segregation of men's and women's job, and vertical segregation have resulted in women's empowerment being diminished, and women in senior positions tending to be in female-dominated roles (Cave & Kilic, 2010).

This discrimination mentality toward women in the hotel industry has recently begun to disappear but it will take time to fully be resolved. The development and public knowledge of tourism, and multinational hotels known for their major policies and practices in the field of equal opportunity will all help (Gröschl & Doherty, 1999). Given the fact that women's employment in the hotel industry has improved in the coming years women are still employed to do semi-skilled or low skilled work with low paying jobs. Overall, gender discrimination has discouraged women from progressing to high positions in their workplaces.

According to Liu and Wilson (2001), women are more determined than men and they try to be more representable in handling things which motivates workers. Commitment of women are also quite flexible at shuffling work and family life. The obstacle that encloses women's career growth starts from history, social point of view and experience from workplace (Burton 1991; Bierema & Opengart 2002). In general, men do not suffer a lot from sexual harassment than women do (Madan and Nalla, 2016). More significantly, women are more likely than men to be approachable with serious form of sexual harassment than men. About 50% of women experience unwanted and abusive sex related behaviours at work. (Fitzgerald et al, 1988; Madan & Nalla, 2016)

North Cyprus as a tourism destination - Tourism is the world 's fastest growing sector, and it will continue to be a significant source of foreign exchange for developing countries, other than the Republic of Turkey, North Cyprus has its own territory, the Turkish republic of Northern Cyprus, which is not internationally recognized. North Cyprus is a small Mediterranean Sea Island. It has a population of over 200,000 people, a land area of 3,355 km per square, per capita income of \$4,610 USD, limited natural resources, and low workforce productivity. Its economy is characterized by the features of a small island economy. Since 1975, statistics on north Cyprus have been kept on track. As Olcar, (2020) mentioned, tourism is one of the pioneer sectors for some regions and North Cyprus is not an exemption. Tourism is a high-priority area for North

Cyprus's economic growth. The hospitality industry is one of the main generators of income in North Cyprus. Tourism industry contributed \$145.6 million (3.3%) to the GDP of North Cyprus in 2005, the tourism industry in North Cyprus received 589.549 tourists, with a bed capacity of 12.222 and an annual occupancy rate of 40.7%. (Statistical Yearbook of Tourism, 2005).

Sexual harassment in hospitality sector in North Cyprus - Sexual harassment is regarded as a crucial issue with a serious implication for both people and organizations (Burke, 1995; Willness et al., 2007; Theocharous and Philaretou, 2009; Zhu et al, 2019). The possibility of becoming a victim of sexual assault is said to be higher among staff in the service sector (Yagil, 2008). Sexual harassment within the workplace in general can be taken as unwanted implicit advances such as physical touching, unwanted and offensive verbal abuse of a sexual nature. The outcome to such behavior can be in form of acceptance, submission, or rejection of such conduct by an individual performance. Such behavior can unreasonably interfere with a person's peace of mind and may create an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment (Gilbert, Guerrier, & Guy, 1998).

Unwelcome behaviours are the defined word. A victim may accept or agree of harassment and even actively participate although it can be seen as offensive and objectionable. However, sexual conduct is unwelcomed whenever the person subjected to it considers it unwelcome or not. If in fact the person agrees to a request or accepts certain comments for example, Yusuf (2010) define sexual harassment as all forms of behavioural patterns such as sexual teasing date, sex-oriented comment, or jokes depends on many variants and circumstances. Sexual harassment includes many things such as:

- ✓ Actual or attempted rape or sexual assault, deliberate touching of body, hair, or clothing.
- ✓ Unwanted pressure for sexual favours.
- ✓ Unwanted sexual looks or gestures or comments such as sexually suggestive signals of facial expression or making sexual gestures with hands or body movements.
- ✓ Unwanted letters, telephone calls, or materials of a sexual content.
- ✓ Telling lies or spreading rumours about a person's personal life.
- ✓ Unwanted pressure for dates
- ✓ Unwanted sexual teasing, jokes, remarks, or questions (Yusuf, 2010).

Turning work discussions into sexual topics such as sexual intimations and enquiries; asking personal questions about sexual fantasies, preferences, or other sexual undertones. Sexual

comments about a person's clothing, anatomy, or looks, although looks can easily be misconstrued or have a fashion or religious reference. Within the hospitality industry the outlook for the legal implications defining sexual harassment is unlimited whereas particularly in the G20 countries, where sexual harassment has developed into a huge minefield full of traps and pitfalls, innuendoes and even false accusations which have ulterior motives.

All this spills over into North Cyprus where much of the hospitality industry within the North Cyprus, are woefully lagging or have either nothing tangible in place or it becomes a police matter. Barring a few exceptions this situation seems intrinsic to middle eastern countries where accusations of harassment are only now becoming an issue. It is very apparent to the observer that the overarching religious following in North Cyprus has had a major influence in the slow adoption of harassment legislation and is only now, with western influences in life and dress-style, opening to the necessity to develop suitable-for-purpose harassment procedures. Gender inequality has been tackled in North Cyprus and the ('Reform of Discriminatory Sexual Offences Law's in the Commonwealth and Other Jurisdictions in 2014) are beginning to be driven forward. Although it does not specifically in any shape encompass the hospitality industry and the awareness of sexual harassment in all its aspects it is left to internal management to create its own policy.

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METHODOLOGY

The study utilizes a qualitative research approach that includes in-depth interviews with female employees working in a five-star hotel in North Cyprus to fully understand their experiences with sexual harassment. This is done based on feminist theory to underline the challenges and problems that women employees face in this sector, given the topic's sensibility and maturing nature, the qualitative is considered adequate. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data. Demographic information such as age, marital status, and position at work were collected.

Due to the nature of the subject, this research was a difficult challenge, finding and contacting women who have been sexually harassed or who have been ready to discuss their experiences with the researcher was difficult, in accordance with the feminist theory, both the researchers and the participants were all women. The sample was limited to female employees working primarily in the casinos and food and beverage department. The average age of the women who took part in the study was thirty-two, and they are not married.

FINDINGS

As shown in the table 1, most participants were between the ages of 20 and 45 and worked in various positions in the hotel industry. In terms of sexual harassment, 4 women stated that their employers or manager had harassed them, 1 woman was harassed by a co-worker, while 5 women said that were harassed by customers. The most usual form of harassment was verbal, while physical harassment was less common. Non-verbal harassment was also common. Table 2 shows the models of sexual harassments participants faced. According to the respondents, sexual harassment is a big problem in the hotel sector. Most cases involve customers and were not reported because the victims feared being rejected, and no action was taken against them. According to the findings, most of the harassment was perpetrated by high level employees and customers. Sexual drive, lack of character and lack of education for men were reasons given by women who have been sexually harassed.

Table 1. Demographic profile of participant profiles in 5 five-star hotels.

Interviewee	Age	Marital Status	Role	Place of Work
No.1	20-25	Single	Barmaid	Bar
No.2	27-30	Engaged	Dealer	Casino
No.3	28-32	Married	Waitress	Restaurant
No.4	20-22	Single	Barmaid	Bar
No.5	22-25	Single	Dealer	Casino
No.6	20-22	Single	Waitress	Casino
No.7	24-26	Single	Waitress	Restaurant
No.8	30-32	Married	Waitress	Bar
No.9	40-45	Divorced	Manager	Restaurant
No.10	20-25	Single	Dealer	Casino

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The interviews were made at respondents address to create an environment to help participants feel safe to share their feelings. Privacy was guaranteed by the researcher and the aim of the research is clearly explained. No names were given to the participants to ensure the privacy. The aim of the interviews was to be women employees voice and let them share how and whether they had been subjected to any type of sexual harassment as well as their attitude regarding the issue. Also, the researchers encourage participants and make sure they feel secure to share who was the perpetrator and what steps the respondent took to deal with the situation.

The interview questions covered the following areas:

- ✓ Understanding of sexual harassment
- ✓ Women's insight about the seriousness of sexual harassment at workplace.

- ✓ Forms of sexual harassment experienced.
- ✓ The offender.
- ✓ The action taken by the victim.
- ✓ The action taken by the company.
- ✓ Organisation's sexual harassment policies

The interview lasted for 10-15 minutes per respondent and was performed using open-minded questions that allowed the participant to express their views. The interview was audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and coded using constructivist grounded theory methodology. Constructivist Grounded Theory is an examination strategy that spotlights on creating new hypotheses through inductive investigation of the information accumulated from members as opposed to from prior hypothetical structures. In this subjective examination approach, the specialist looks to figure out a social peculiarity and develop speculations through members' encounters, utilizing iterative information assortment and examination (Charmaz, 2006). This theory methodology adheres to (Glaser & Strauss 1967), with the permission of the respondent, and used a semi-structured method, the main subject included the hospitality sector's policy on sexual harassment, strategies for sensitizing female employees and other related topics.

Data Collection - Face to face interview data helps in the interpretation of social phenomenon such as sexual harassment because of the nature of the subject (Kwortnik, 2003; Mertens, 2005). It was important to build trust and provide participants the ability to express themselves and allow them to share their experiences in their own perspective while also allowing the interviewer to manage the interview because the interviewer can participant's perceptions of their roles and how they react to and handle harassing behaviors. McNeill and Chapman (2005) considered semi-structured interviews to be particularly ideal for an interpretivist approach.

Participant were asked up to 10 questions based on a set of questions with the goal of finding themes to identify employee-related harassment effects. Question focused on causes and impacts, such as participant and harassers' characteristics. Participants were asked if they had been harassed, where it happened and how they felt, what they did about it, the harasser's gender and if the harasser was a colleague of customer. They were also asked what they believed could be done to reduce harassment as a company and the legal levels.

Data analysis - Qualitative data analysis discovers themes through exploring, categorizing, and interpreting the data. (Huberman and Miles, 2002). Some themes are so distinct that they may

be detected right away. (Dey, 2003). P.41, while others require data to be sorted in the groups. The researcher utilized the manual cutting and sorting procedure, which allows them to identify common motives without knowing the participant identities. (Gough and Scott, 2002). This was done by sorting data into codes, employee’s policies, gender norms and power using a content analysis approach, which were then categorised into influence categories, from which the key themes were gender inequality customer’s power and employee’s policies were extracted.

Modes Of Sexual Harassment

Table 2. Sexual harassment includes the following

Verbal	Non-verbal	Physical
Calling an adult as baby, honey babe	Staring a person up and down	Touching someone without consent
Whistling as someone	Blocking a person’s path while passing	Giving massage around the neck
Making sexual comments about someone’s body	Stalking the person	Touching the waist or person clothing, hair, or bod
Talking about sexual topics at work	Giving personal gifts	Hugging kissing and stroking
Asking about sexual fantasies	Putting on sexual suggestive visuals	
Making kissing sounds	Making sexual gestures with hands	
Asking to go out for a dance	Facial expressions such as winking kissing	

Source: Compute by authors (2022).

The subjective nature of sexual harassment opens a door for harassing behaviour and limit the responsibility of stopping harassment can be classified in three categories: Employee’s opinion, and company policies; Customer power, behaviour, and management relationship; Gender inequality

Understanding nature of sexual harassment - Most participants described sexual harassment as unwanted attention or uncomfortable attention. Two participants stated that some customers might harass them without shame, but younger participants although found most sexual harassment uncomfortable, they think it is the normal behaviour which they need to accept. Sexual harassment can be described by the participants in many ways:

“Men staring at my breast when they are drunk which makes them feel it’s their right to do so, ‘they will be like, I love your figure, you’ve got such a nice breast or hey sexy’” (Anne)

A lot of men in places like casino feels that they have a right over a female participant, things get serious when they are losing money.

“One customer used abusive words when he lost money, he said ‘get off my face you big ass.’” (Lisa)

Employees understand the hospitality industry norms and rule from management. In hospitality industry bar, restaurant and casinos are considered as places where sexual harassment behaviour is likely to happen and tolerated. Participated said:

“If you want to get tip, you must tolerate the behaviour.” (Kate)

“As an employee you cannot tell them off” (Nadia)

Most managers in this industry recruit young and beautiful women to encourage tip and customer loyalty, which makes it hard for them to avoid the harassment behavior. Participants shared below statements:

“They hire attractive women to bring men in for gambling or buying more drinks in the bar, so women must do it to get more tip.” (Casey)

“Customer may think that because you are being nice and polite, female employees are interested in them and they can tolerate their nasty behaviour.”

“Sometimes employees think if you defend themselves or customer report you for saying no to their behaviour, it might affect tip” (Stella)

“As a woman working in the casino or bar, we are expected to flirt with men to make them gamble more or buy more alcohol.” (Heidi)

“You are there to talk to customer, be friendly and make them feel comfortable so they can keep coming back, so you must put yourself out there more for them” (Aliyah).

One participant said she was sexually harassed verbally by the manager, she reported him to the senior manager, but nothing was done, she said she suffered so much emotionally. Several women expressed an implicit acceptance of sexual harassment as unavoidable part of human interaction that the hotel industry had no control over. One participant recalled asking the restaurant manager why the restaurant did not adapt policies for dealing with sexual harassment complaints.

Customer power, behaviour, and management relationship - The impact of customer power was clear, and it was related to tip, customer relationship, management, and the participant.

“One customer threatened me because he was a VIP and a regular customer at the restaurant, and because he was the manager’s friend. “(Mary)

One participant (Lidia) observed and said that:

“Most women undergo sexual harassment from male customer because they believe that if they do, their tip will increase, so when they use vulgar words, they smile, and when women accept it, it enhances the man’s ego, and when his ego rises, so the tip goes up.”

Another participant said that she saw an incident where customer touched the waitress buttocks and the waitress just gave him a smile, but later the waitress said the customer left a good tip. As a result, it appears that the hotel industry tipping system works against to the issue of protecting female employees from sexual harassment.

Combating sexual harassment in Tourism sector - The EEOC suggests the following interventions to help reduce sexual harassment in the workplace. Making the workplace safe for all workers by providing resources and training to prevent and address workplace sexual harassment. Employers should implement and enforce comprehensive anti-harassment policies, as well as communicate them to employees on a regular basis.

it is important to include the topic of sexual harassment in workplace risk assessment to ensure safe, fair and effective reporting and complaint procedures. Employers must ensure that sexual harassment perpetrators are disciplined. Employers should train middle-management and supervisors on how to effectively respond to sexual harassment incidents. Researchers should evaluate the impact of workplace trainings on reducing sexual harassment in the workplace. Labor unions should ensure that their own policies and reporting systems adhere to the same standards as their employers' systems.

DISCUSSION

The female employees were initially asked to describe the issues in their job that they disliked and the major challenges they faced. The key topics that were examined were recorded in the content analysis these challenges were gender inequality and sexual harassment experiences at workplace. Participants agreed that they were frequently disadvantaged because of their gender and stereotyped as polite and friendly, and that women should prioritize family

responsibilities. Gender discrimination was frequently mentioned as a form of sexual harassment. Several participants expressed dissatisfaction with the nature of working in the hospitality industry, including low pay, long hours, and dealing with difficult customers.

Sexual harassment experiences - Given the sensitivity of the topic, the interviews were conducted at the respondent's address to ensure that the participant felt safe in sharing their feelings. They were approached with a non-personal statement about whether they believed female employees in the hospitality industry experienced sexual harassment and who the perpetrators were.

Several participants claimed that sexual harassment, both verbal and physical, was common among female employees. One participant claimed that a customer sexually harassed her verbally. Several participants experienced sexual harassment but were hesitant to report it because it could have a significant negative impact on their work. This supports the theory that female employees in the hospitality industry may be less sensitive and more resilient to sexual harassment incidents (Folgero & Fjeldstad, 1995; Giuffre & Williams, 1994). The participant identified employers/managers, customers, and co-workers as the main perpetrators, while others mentioned bus drivers, indicating that there may be more sexual harassment offenders.

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CONCLUSION

Sexual harassment is a major concern in the hospitality industry, where one out of four women are experiencing unwanted and unpleasant sexual behavior (Hoel, 2002; Poulston, 2008). The aim of this study was to examine employee's reaction to sexual harassment behavior at their workplace, as well as the factors that influence them and as a result, measures taken to minimize harm. The current research focuses on sexual harassment and its effects on the quality of work life and psychological wellbeing of female employees, based on the qualitative research method involving 10 interviews with female employees working in the hospitality industry in North Cyprus.

Findings clearly show that young female employees are not educated about sexual harassment, and they think it is normal to be harassed. Another point which should be underlined is that management encourages female employees to accept sexual harassment and normalize this situation. According to the results, younger female employees lacked abilities to deal with challenging behaviours making them vulnerable to harassment. Data also showed that some

employees behaved promiscuously, believing that this is how the industry works and it is what the management expects. Therefore, these behaviors lead to have sexual harassment.

Due to the hotel industry's environment and close contact with the colleagues and customers which leads to an increased socialization and interaction with their male colleagues. This explains why female employees experienced mostly verbal harassment. This research should be considered as an urgent call to both governmental and non-governmental offices to plan and implement seminars and training programs to establish gender equality in tourism sector and educate female employees to raise their voice against sexual harassment. Also, this is an urgent call for other researchers to do new studies to underline the problem of sexual harassment against female employees working in tourism and hospitality sector.

The study has its limitations. Because of the sensitivity of the study, it was difficult to find too many participants. Therefore, the small sample size, is small and it only includes five-star hotel workers. While the data from this study are helpful for describing the nature of sexual harassment, generalization is not possible. Hence, the study should be repeated, and data should be collected from hotels other than five-star hotels, such as 3-star hotels, casinos and restaurants. This is an exploratory study, and the data should be used to guide further research on sexual harassment. Also, according to the nature of this study, although men can also be victims of sexual harassment, the research only focused on female employees in the hospitality sector. Further research should be done including male workers as well in order to understand the nature of sexual harassment on both genders.

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