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*Keywords:* *sexual harassment, media agencies, prevalence, individual response, organizational response.*

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# Sexual Harassment in Media Agencies in the Gambia- Individual and Organizational Response

Morolake Adekunle [α], Lamin Jahateh [σ], Drammeh Njundu [ρ], Madi Jobarteh [ω] & Amie Joof [¥]

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The study shows that victims of sexual harassment most often fail to lodge a formal complaint. Out of the number that sought any form of support on their experience of SH, the highest percentage, 36.4%, sought the support from family members and only 26.7% lodged a formal complaint. There is also a high degree of tolerance for sexual harassment. This can be a key factor in perpetuating the problem.

Media Organizations have largely shown low awareness of the need to create policies 96% of the respondents claimed that their organisation had no sexual harassment policy. 23% of those who claimed that their organisation had a policy felt that the policy had inadequacies. Moreover, 23.1% of the respondents felt that their organisation's policy did not adequately spell out sanctions against sexual harassment. Responses to questions on the consequences of sexual harassment for the harasser (that emanated from the organisation's intervention) and the consequences for the organization (in terms of changes) show 20% reporting that the harasser was disciplined, 30% reporting that the harasser was warned while 30% claimed that there were no consequences for the harasser. When victims level of satisfaction with their organisation's handling of their sexual harassment's complaint was measured, 0% of the complainants were extremely satisfied, only 21.4% were satisfied in any way and 50% were not satisfied.

Media organisations have been unmindful of the necessity to offer their employees training opportunities on sexual harassment. 87.2% of the respondents had never received training or materials that covered how to intervene as a bystander to protect other employees from sexual harassment & discrimination. When respondents were asked if there is an internal complaint procedure for sexual harassment cases in their workplaces, only 15% answer 'Yes', 57% respond 'No' and 28% don't know. The implication of not knowing is that such people cannot lodge any formal complaint if they fall victim, they are not knowledgeable of procedures for seeking redress. Moreover, respondent's knowledge of existing legal documents that guarantee their protection against sexual harassment is low. 72.5% of respondents were not aware of any legal document on sexual harassment and as much as 35% of the respondents could not mention any legal document.

*Keywords: sexual harassment, media agencies, prevalence, individual response, organizational response.*

*The research was sponsored by the Gambia Press Union*

## I. Introduction

### a) Background

The media, since pre-independence era in The Gambia, has played very significant roles in national development, promoting social, political and economic development while also bridging the gap between the government and the people by offering the platform for citizens' participation in national discourse.

Sexual harassment in the media workplace in The Gambia, as in many workplaces in the world, has remained under-reported due to the possible stigmatisation of victims and challenges of producing evidence. Moreover, reporting, prosecution and conviction are still not deeply entrenched into the Gambian justice system.

The media in The Gambia is operating in a patriarchal society with unequal power relations between men and women which put women at the lowest rungs of the socio-economic ladder and render them vulnerable to different forms of rights violation, sexual harassment inclusive. Studies have shown that low income workers are more at risk of being sexually harassed (7,8,9) and in the media workplaces in The Gambia, women largely occupy low positions.

Other important factors that may drive workplace sexual harassment in The Gambia are limited employment opportunities, lack of professionalism in the workplace and workers' lack of awareness of their rights and their organisation's policy on sexual harassment (1,10). The estimated unemployment rate in The Gambia according to the Labour Force survey 2018, conducted by the Gambia Bureau of Statistics (GBoS),

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unemployment in the country is about 35.2 percent, of which 57.1 per cent are female and 42.9 per cent male. Unemployment among youth aged 15-35 years is about 41.5 per cent while youth underemployment is 54.7 per cent for the urban areas and 45.3 per for the rural areas. The rates are considered high and can increase workers' vulnerability to sexual harassment and other forms of rights abuse, especially if there are no serious sanctions in place. Concerning the issue of unprofessionalism, evidence from studies show that sexual harassment thrives more in organisations with low level of professionalism as mirrored in behaviours like truancy, late coming, employees' engagement in non-job related activities, disrespect among employees and informality in the conduct of official duties (15). A 2017 World Bank report (11) indicated that unprofessionalism has weakened the Gambian civil service and reduced productivity. Essentially, where a policy on sexual harassment is non-existent or unknown to workers, the practice may persist.

There are legal documents in the Gambia that are deterrents to the undesirable act of sexual harassment. The Republic of the Gambia is a member of the global body, United Nations (UN), the regional body, African Union (AU) and the sub-regional body, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). It has ratified the human rights legal instruments of these bodies of which it is a member thus making it binding on her to adhere to the standards laid down in the documents. Among these international documents are: the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention 111 on Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) UNTS Volume 362 page 31, which entered into force on June 15, 1960, the UNESCO's Protection of Human Rights: Procedure 104 (1978) for human rights violations in UNESCO's fields of mandate and the African Union's Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa.

From the domestic sphere, Sections 28(1), 222(3) and 17(1) of The Gambian 1997 Constitution can be evoked. More pertinent are Section 126(3) of The Gambia Criminal Code, Part 11, 6(1), Section 26 (2c) and Section10(1) of Women's Act (2010) which guarantee women's protection against any form of physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm. Moreover, Gender and Women Empowerment Policy 2010-2020 in the section on Gender and the section Human Rights Gender-Based violence depicts The Gambia's strong commitment to the protection and defence of women against all forms of rights violation. The Gambia's Sexual Offences Act 2013 attaches the sanction of imprisonment to rape. Code of Conduct for The Gambia Civil Service, General Principles of Conduct" number 6 states that: "Civil Servants should not because of their sex, religious or ethnic origin discriminate, favour, victimise or willfully abuse their authority to harass subordinates or the public"

Given the highly significant role played by the media in society, there is an imperative to create a perfectly conducive media work environment for the enhancement of productivity and the avoidance of practices that are detrimental to the attainment of professionalism.

*b) Research Statement*

The role of the media in any democratic society cannot be overemphasized; the media must function effectively to ensure that institutions of governance are held accountable. There is no gainsaying the fact that sexual harassment compromises professionalism in an organisation and consequently lowers productivity.

To promote professionalism and effective service delivery to the public within the journalistic landscape, there is a need to assess the magnitude/prevalence of the phenomenon of sexual harassment among media practitioners, determine their level of awareness of pertinent issues surrounding it and assess individual and organisational response to the phenomenon.

*c) The objective of the study*

The study aims to determine the prevailing situation of sexual harassment and discrimination within the media landscape.

The Specific objective are:

- Conduct an assessment on the prevalence and modes of sexual harassment and discrimination in the media workplaces in The Gambia.
- Investigate media employees' response to the phenomenon of sexual harassment.
- Gather information on the media workplace's nature of response to issues of sexual harassment.

*d) Research Questions*

- What is the prevalence of sexual harassment in the Gambian media workplace?
- What are the situations that create vulnerability to sexual harassment in the Gambian media workplace? (predisposing conditions).
- What are the modes of response to sexual harassment on the part of individual employees?
- What are the modes of response to sexual harassment on the part of media organisations?

*e) Significance of Study*

There is a dearth of data on workplace sexual harassment issues in The Gambia. Information on the prevalence and response to the phenomenon of sexual harassment prior to this study has been through anecdotal evidence. This study has made available data to guide workplace sexual harassment policy formulation by media and non-media organisations alike.



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*f) The Scope of study*

Survey questionnaires were administered in 25 media organisations and consultations were held with selected GPU stakeholders to garner knowledge of their lived-experiences on sexual harassment in their organization and the mode of response to phenomenon.

*g) Limitations of Study*

The Covid 19 global pandemic placed some restrictions on the study.

Due to the need to maintain social distancing regulations, the focus Group discussions (FGD's) were conducted on the Zoom online platform. Likewise, the Key Informant Interviews (KII's) were conducted through Whatsapp calls.

*h) Indicators and measurements*

Indicators of individual Knowledge and attitude, violation prevalence and protective environment were used in the study in order to provide a holistic picture of the sexual harassment context.

*i) Theoretical Framework*

This study is premised on 2 theories of workplace sexual harassment which are the organisational theory and the socio-cultural theory. The organizational theory posits that sexual harassment derives from factors in the workplace and is bred by organisational climate and structuring. The socio-cultural theory asserts that sexual harassment at work is a logical offshoot of the gender inequality that exists in the society.

## II. Literature Review

*a) Workplace Sexual harassment in the Global Context*

Sexual harassment is pervasive in workplaces around the globe. Although it has been extensively studied in developed countries, literature is sparse for developing countries (21). The condemnable practice is in opposition to the principle or express declaration of different international legal documents. The Declaration of Philadephia (May 1944) concerning labour affirms that 'All human beings, irrespective of race, creed or sex, have the right to pursue both their material well-being and their spiritual development in conditions of freedom and dignity of economic security and equal opportunity'.

This is re-affirmed in the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) which in its Article 23, states that, "Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment' In the light of this declaration, sexual harassment violates the right of victims to freedom in the workplace and renders the work environment unconducive. This is further reinforced by other international legal documents on rights, the ILO in Covention190 (2019) declares that the term "violence and harassment" in the world of work refers to a range of unacceptable behaviours and practices, or threats thereof, whether a single occurrence or repeated, that aim at, result in, or are likely to result in physical, psychological, sexual or economic harm, and includes gender-based violence and harassment; (b) the term "gender-based violence and harassment" means violence and harassment directed at persons because of their sex or gender, or affecting persons of a particular sex or gender disproportionately, and includes sexual harassment. The Convention 190, among other preoccupations, defines exhaustively the various forms of sexual harassment, highlights parties that may be involved and spells out the impact on the world of work.

There have been various definitions of sexual harassment. The ECOWAS Supplementary Act Relating to Equality of Rights between Women and Men for Sustainable Development within the ECOWAS Region (2015) states that 'it is any action (verbal, physical, gestural, psychological) exerted on a person who is under the authority of another, for the purpose of obtaining sexual favors, and without the consent of the victim'

The United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (USEEOC) defines it as "unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature… when this conduct explicitly or implicitly affects an individual's employment, unreasonably interferes with an individual's work performance, or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment".(22) It has been categorized into 3 broad categories namely: sexual coercion, unwanted sexual attention and gender harassment.(23)

Sexual coercion refers to unwanted sexual advances that include the use of pressure to obtain sexual favors. This pressure often takes the form of rewards for cooperation or repercussions for refusal.(24) Unwanted sexual attention refers to unwelcome sexual advances; verbal and non-verbal, including but not limited to gestures such as staring, whistling, inappropriate touching etc., without the use of coercion to force cooperation.(24, 25) Gender harassment on the other hand refers to a range of actions that convey hostility and degradation towards members of one gender. (24, 25) Although it is thought to be the least egregious, it is the most common form of sexual harassment in the workplace. (24, 25)

Mondy and Mondy, 2012; Jones and George, 2011 cited by Hejase (16) assert that there are two forms of sexual harassment. The first, Quid Pro Quo sexual harassment, occurs when a harasser demands sexual favour so the harassed could keep their job, receive a promotion, gain a form of advantage or avoid a form of negative outcome. The second type, Hostile Work Environment sexual harassment occurs when



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organisational members are faced with an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment because of their sex (!6, 19) .

The problem of workplace sexual harassment is universal. It is recognized as predominantly a women's issue, although men experience it too. (26, 27) Studies show that women are more likely to be victims while men are more likely to be perpetrators (21, 26). A study conducted by The European Commission found that about 30-50% of female employees in European countries had undergone some form of sexual harassment.(28) Another study conducted in Brazil found 26% of female domestic workers to have experienced sexual harassment within the previous year. (21).

Within the African region, a survey conducted in South-Africa in 2018 found that 30% of South-Africa's women and 18% of the men have been victims of unwanted sexual advance in the workplace.38% reported that the advances were verbal in nature while 38% claimed it was physical in form of unwanted touching, 42% reported experiencing lustful staring at their body and 32% claimed they received messages of a sexual nature. For the women, the harasser was either a peer or a superior at work while for the men, the harasser was either a peer or a subordinate at work. The study revealed the culture of silence that characterizes workplace sexual harassment as 39% of women and 22% of men were silent about their experience. The fear of not being believed and of retaliation were found to be the major deterrents to lodging of any complaint (14).

The ramifications of workplace sexual harassment are immense. Effects have been shown to linger for many years after occurrence of the event (29). Apart from the fact that it discourages women from asserting themselves in the workplace, it has been shown to adversely mental health, professional and physical health.(25, 30) It creates anxiety, depression, decreased self-esteem, alcohol abuse, eating disorders, shame, guilt, humiliation, extreme stress and decreases overall happiness (21, 29, 31, 32). In a work environment, victims are not the only ones impacted by sexual harassment, bystanders and even the overall organization could experience consequences such as diminished work performance, decreased employee satisfaction, decreased team cohesion, loss of respect in the workplace and increased employee attrition. It could also result in negative publicity for affected organisations. (31) Boland (2002) cited by Hejase (16) highlighted the denigrating effects of sexual harassment on organisations as: decreased productivity and increased team conflict, decrease in success and in meeting of financial goals, decreased job satisfaction, high possibility of undermining ethical standards and discipline in the organisation which will lead to disrespect and lack of trust between employees and their superiors, damage to the reputation of the organisation and possible financial loss in a situation where complainants take the issue to court and increased attrition and or absenteeism of staff members with consequent loss of expertise. Robbins and Coulter (2011) cited by Hejase(16) claimed that in nations like Japan, Australia, New Zealand, and Mexico sexual harassment cases have been filed against employers. Mondy and Mondy (19) also cited by Hejase (16) posited that the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission fielded more than 13,867 charges of sexual harassment (16, !9). From 1990 to 2009, the percentage of sexual harassment claims; filed by male employees doubled from 8% to 16% while awards to charging parties amounted to more than $47.4 million excluding monetary benefits obtained through litigation.

Traditionally, worldwide, the silence option has been the most favoured form of response by victims of sexual harassment for various reasons.

Such reasons include lack of support for the victim and complicity on the part of line managers and human resource personnel and colleagues who either dismiss reported cases as not serious enough to be classified a sexual harassment or persuade the victim to discountenance the occurrence to avoid the tag of a troublemaker(15). However, the last few years have witnessed some degree of radical change. There has been an emergence of protest movements empowering women victims to speak out; the #MeToo and #TimesUp movements in October of 2017 and January of 2018 respectively pervaded the global stage. Concerning The Gambia, Fatou Toufah Jallow's 2019 revelation alleging rape by former President Yayah Jammeh triggered allegations of similar experiences by several other women in the hands of the same predator drawing scrutiny to this long-standing menace. In spite of the global outcry against the act, sexual harassment is still largely prevalent around the globe. As a matter of fact, a study in the USA reported an increased prevalence of gender harassment in the year 2018 (24).

A major determining factor of sexual harassment in the workplace is the organisational climate. For instance, sexual harassment is likely to be more common in workplaces where there are no existing deterring policies, no established reporting procedures and where employees do not undergo sexual harassment training. (25,33) Within such environments, individuals with a propensity to harass encounter no deterrence to their harassing tendencies (25), while victims of harassment may feel inclined to suffer in silence due to fear of retaliation (34). Additionally, research has shown that gender parity in the workplace is associated with lower prevalence of sexual harassment. (27) suggesting that policies promoting gender parity when combined with other interventions, could be helpful in reducing workplace sexual harassment.



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There are international legal documents that provide the framework for the prohibition an.

*b) Theories of Sexual Harassment*

Socio-cultural theory views sexual harassment as a logical consequence of the gender inequality and sexism that already exists in society. It links sexual harassment to male dominance. Sexual harassment exists because of the views of women as the inferior sex, but also sexual harassment is used to maintain the already existing gender stratification by emphasizing sex role expectations.

Another theory of sexual harassment is the organizational theory which deals with the organisational context of the harassment. According to the organisational theory, sexually abusive behavior in the organization is not just facilitated by differences in power but also by factors such as permissiveness of the organizational climate, gendered occupations, and organizational ethics, norms and policies. Sexual abuse will be minimal in organization with strong deterrents.

The sex-role spillover theory integrates both contextual characteristics and the individual gender-based beliefs and expectations of the harasser; men and women bring to workplace their pre-existing beliefs and gender-based expectations. Men may perceived their role in the workplace as involving dominating women and women may feel the need to submit themselves to domination.

The fourth theory, the natural/biological theory on sexual harassment holds that sexual harassment represents an expression of sexual attraction, a natural element in mate seeking. According to this theory, men are naturally more sexually aggressive. Therefore, such sexual behavior is not meant as harassment but an expression of men's higher sex drive. The natural /biological theory fails in the light of the fact the will of the victim is involved, persistence in the face of any unwillingness is a violation of the dignity of the person (8,16).

## III. Methodology

*a) Research Design*

The study used a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods to assess the nature and prevalence of sexual harassment in media agencies, the attitude of stakeholders to the phenomenon and the availability of policy and communication framework for addressing the problem.

Two categories of complementary methods were employed:

The Qualitative methods -semi-structured key informant interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs).

The quantitative methods used survey questionnaires to measure the incidences or prevalence of sexual harassment and its nature.

*b) Data Collection Procedure*

i. *Sampling Methods*

The sample was drawn from the target population which is media practitioners in The Gambia. The study population was selected using a combination of probability and non-probability sampling techniques. 25 media organisations were purposively selected while respondents within the organisations were randomly selected. This was to ensure that samples were derived from the different media organisations whose experiences with sexual harassment might be unique.

ii. *Sample Size*

For the quantitative survey, questionnaires were administered on 109 respondents from 24 media organizations and 6 freelance journalists. For the quantitative survey, 2 Focus Group Discussion sessions were conducted:

Male Focus Group Discussion- 12 participants were drawn randomly from the different media houses.

Female Focus Group Discussion- 12 participants were drawn randomly from the different media houses.

Key Informant Interviews(KII's)- 5 veteran Journalists purposively sampled based on their experience within the media landscape.

iii. *Compliance with ethical requirements*

Informed consent was sought from all respondents before their participation in the data collection process and confidentiality was promised. Getting the consent of individual respondents was not difficult because the media organisations helped to facilitate the process.

## IV. Presentation of Findings

Respondents' Distribution by Gender
(n = 109)

*a) Gender of Respondents*

A total of 53 males (48.6 percent) and 56 females (51.4 percent) participated in the survey



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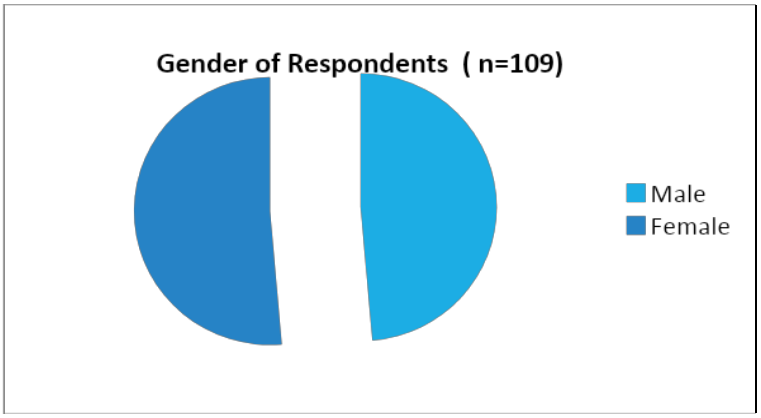
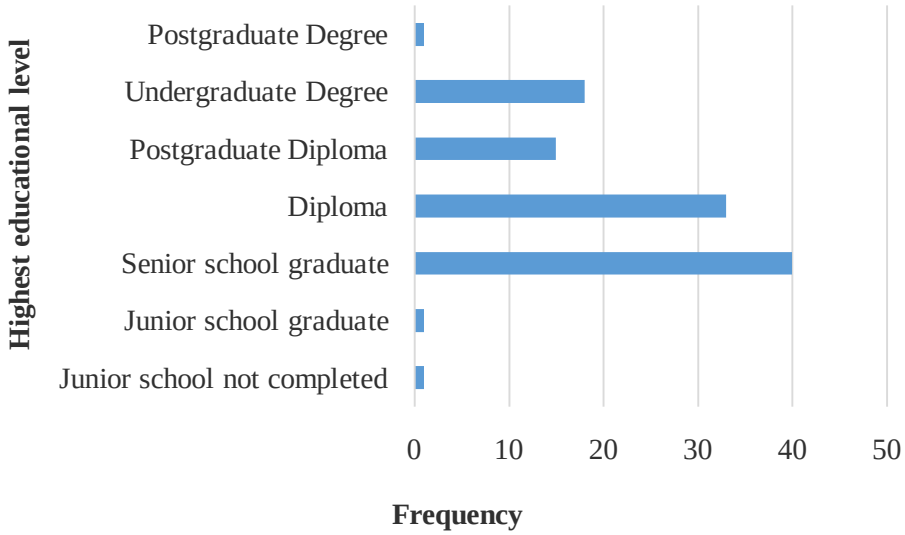



*Figure 3:* Respondents' Distribution by Educational Qualification

Highest educational qualification (n = 109)




i. *Media Organisations*

25 media organizations, print and broadcast, as well as 6 freelance journalists were enlisted in the study.

*b) Prevalence of Sexual Harassment*

22% of respondents have heard rumours of sexual harassment in the workplace, 40% of this have heard it more than twice. 23.9%of respondents in the last five years are aware of someone being sexually harassed in their workplace. 7% witnessed the act while 15% were told by the person sexually harassed. In the bid to triangulate, the question was asked about the immediate circle of friends have 13% claim that they know someone in their circle of friends while 87% do not know anyone. 13.76% have experienced sexual harassment in the workplace responded and 86.2 4%have not.

i. *Gender of Perpetrators of SH*

Out of 15 respondents who have experienced SH, 13 respondents (86.7%) experienced it from males while 2 respondents (13.3%) experienced it from females.

ii. *Relationship to the Harasser*

11, 46.7% of those who experience harassment did from co-workers of the same level and 53.3% from superiors.

iii. *Locations where Harassment was experienced*

A vast majority of 65% experienced the SH in the workplace

*c) Knowledge of Acts constituting Sexual Harassment*

Respondents were very knowledgeable about acts constituting sexual harassment. A considerable percentage 38.5% for behavior category 'H' and 45.9% for behaviour category 'F' still recognise these less serious acts as sexual harassment. In the bid to triangulate, the question was asked about respondents' perception of the ability of their co-workers to recognize appropriate and inappropriate behavior, 69% asserted that employees in their workplaces have a clear sense of



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appropriate and inappropriate behavior. *69 percent of the respondents believed that* there is a clear sense of appropriate and inappropriate behavior among employees in their organization while 31 percent did not It is an established fact in the field of Behavioural Sciences that knowledge does not automatically translate to practice as attitude serves as a strong determiner of behavioural change (Kraus 1995). It is in this light that questions were posed to determine respondents' attitude to an act of sexual harassment and the party to be blamed for the occurrence of sexual harassment. 12% reported that they view sexual remarks/jokes in the workplace as a compliment and 9% don't care while this percentage may seem low, given the status of the target population as media practitioners it is a very significant indication of inadequate training and awareness creation.

i. *Who respondents felt should be blamed in a situation of sexual harassment;*

30.56% expressed the view that both harasser and victim should be blamed, 0.93% the victim and 67.59%would blame the harasser. The 31.49% who would not unreservedly blame the harasser only display a poor attitude informed by cultural biases.

*d) Awareness of Legal Documents*

72.5% of respondents were not aware of any legal document on sexual harassment and there was no legal document that could be mentioned by up to 35% of the respondents.

*e) Individuals and the Organisations' Response to Sexual Harassment*

i. *Individual's response*

When respondents were asked if there is an internal complaint procedure for sexual harassment cases in their workplaces, only 15% answered 'Yes', 57% responded 'No' and 28% didn't know. The implication of not knowing is that such people cannot lodge any formal complaint if they fall victim.

ii. *Knowledge about making a report of sexual harassment or discrimination*

Basically, knowledge precedes practice. More than 60 percent of the respondents do not have the knowledge of how to report an incident of sexual harassment. Only 27% have knowledge about making a report of sexual harassment or discrimination.

iii. *Orientation or Instructions and Trainings on sexual harassment & discrimination in the workplace*

Only 11% of the respondents had ever received orientations or instructions about sexual harassment and discrimination in their workplace, only 16% had ever received training or materials on their organization's policy on sexual harassment & discrimination, the remaining 84% had never. Only 27% of the respondents had ever received orientation, training or materials that covered how to report sexual harassment & discrimination. 87.2% of the respondents had never received training or materials that covered how to intervene as a bystander to protect other employees from sexual harassment & discrimination, 12.8% had.

Still in the bid to assess respondents' mode of response to SH incidents, they were asked what action they took after being aware of someone in the workplace experiencing sexual harassment. Figure 27 below shows that only 8.7% reported the incident to the employer while the greatest percentage (47.8%) only offered advice to the victim.

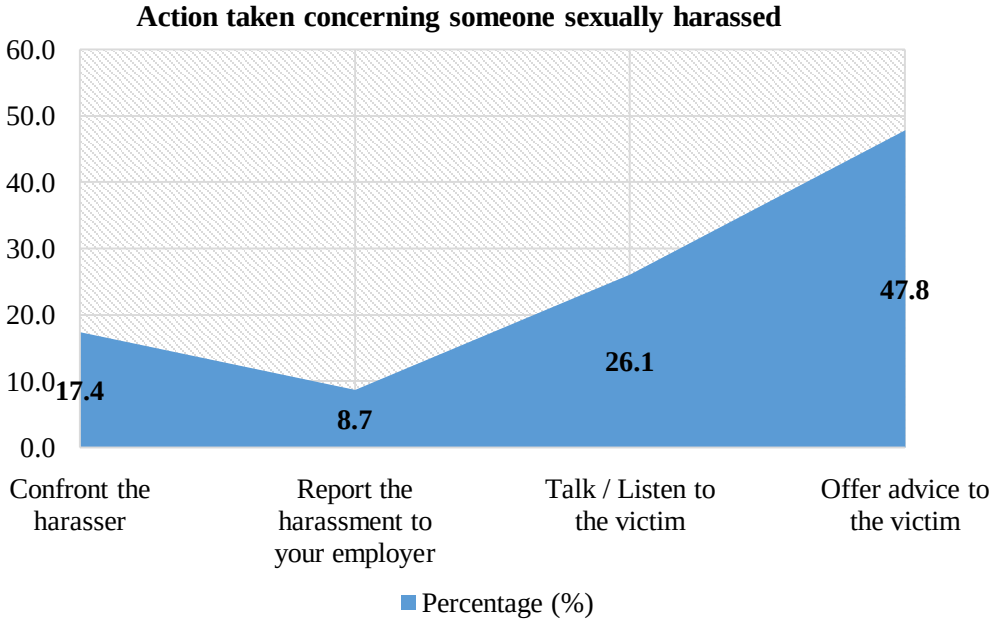



*Figure 27*



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In the case of those who were at a point in time victims of sexual harassment, 33.3% sought any form of support or advice. Out of the number that sought any form of support, the highest percentage (36.4%) sought the support from family members and only 26.7% lodged a formal complaint.

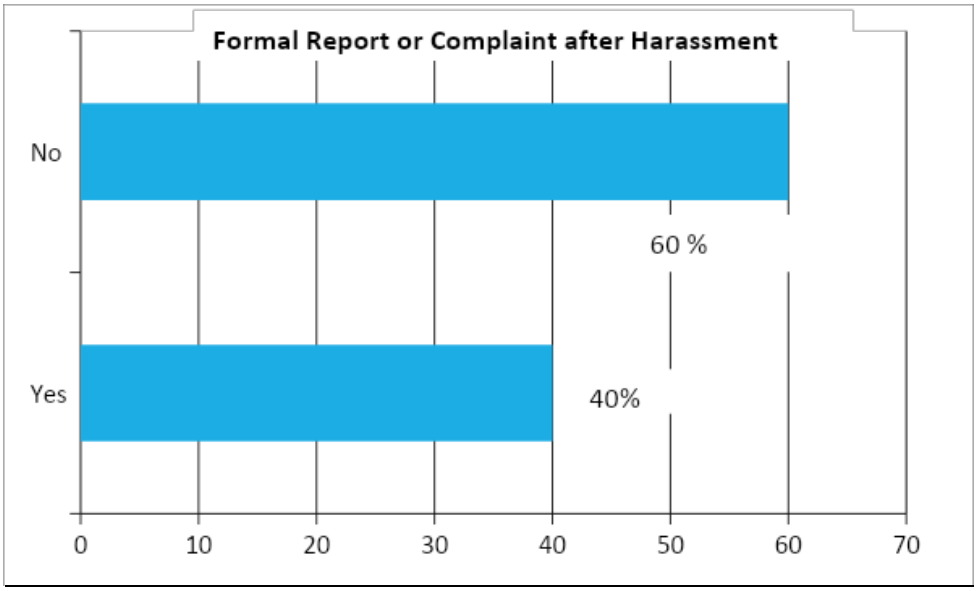



Figure 31 which is a cross-tabulation by sex shows that 73.3 percent of those who were victims did not lodge any formal complaint.

When examined by gender, the statistics confirm the views expressed by participants both the male and the female FGD respectively that it is not customary for a male to complain of sexual harassment. None of the males made formal reports or seek any help.61.54% of the females made no formal report and 45.16% sought no form of help.

iv. *Reasons for not reporting SH incident*

There are various reasons informing the victims' choice of not reporting the incident of sexual harassment. Most prominent among the reasons are the fear of the repercussion for the complainant (74.4 percent), 6.4 percent did not know how to report the case, 6.4 percent believed that reporting the case will not change anything and 4.8 percent feared they would not be believed. Others reasons given are that they feared negative consequences for the harasser (4.8 percent), they were advised by family and friends not to take any action (1.6 percent) and they felt that it was not important (1.6 percent).

v. *Organisation's Response*

The organisation's response can be both preventive and punitive. In terms of preventive response, having a policy in place and empowering employees to recognize and resist sexual harassment are quite germane. Figure 33 shows that 96% of the respondents claim that their organisation has no sexual harassment policy. 23% of those who claim that their organisation have a policy feel the policy has inadequacies (Figure 34). The identified inadequacies depicted in Figure 35 include unwelcome touching of sexual parts and employees' access to the sexual harassment policy among others. Moreover, 23.1% of the respondents feel that their oganisation's policy does not adequately spell out sanctions against sexual harassment. 88.1% of the respondents claimed that their organization had no sexual harassment policy. 23.1% of the ones who claimed their organisations had felt that the policies did not adequately cover all forms of sexual harassment.

*Respondent's view on whether their organistion's policy adequately spells out sanctions against sexual harassment*

76.9 percent of the respondents were of the view that their organisation's policy did not adequately spell out sanctions against sexual harassment while 23.1 percent believed it did. This implies that media organisations have been negligent in implementing preventive measures in relation to sexual harassment.

Questions on the consequences of sexual harassment for the harasser (that emanated from the organisation's intervention) and the consequences for the organization (in terms of changes) were also used to determine organizations' response to the act. As can be seen in Figure, only 20% reported that the harasser was disciplined, 30% reported that the harasser was warned, while 30% claimed that there were no consequences for the harasser.



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*Figure 37*

*18D:* What were the consequences for the harasser following your complaint? (n = 10)

| Response category | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|
| The harasser was disciplined | 2 | 20.0 |
| The harasser was formally warned | 3 | 30.0 |
| The harasser was spoken to | 0 | 0.0 |
| The harasser was transferred | 0 | 0.0 |
| The harasser had his/her shifts changed | 0 | 0.0 |
| The harasser resigned | 0 | 0.0 |
| The harasser apologized | 2 | 20.0 |
| There were no consequences for the harasser | 3 | 30.0 |
| Others (please specify) | | |

Also Figure shows 71.4% reporting that there were no changes made by the organisation following their complaints

*Figure* Consequences of their complaint for the organisation *(n = 7)*

| Response category | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Your employer developed or changed the existing policy on sexual harassment | 1 | 14.3 |
| Your employer changed a practice or procedure (e.g. complaints procedure) | 1 | 14.3 |
| Your employer implemented training/education | 0 | 0.0 |
| There were no changes within the organisation following your complaint | 5 | 71.4 |
| Other (SPECIFY) _____ (DO NOT READ) | | |

Respondents' level of satisfaction with their organisation's handling of their sexual harassment complaint was also measured. 0% was extremely satisfied, 50% were not satisfied and only 21.4% were satisfied in any way.

Figure Respondents' Rating of the overall process of dealing with their sexual harassment complaint (n = 14)

| | Not at all Satisfied | Satisfied a bit | Satisfied | Very Satisfied | Extremely Satisfied | Don't know |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Response category | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Frequency | 3 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 4 |
| Percentage (%) | 21.4 | 28.6 | 14.3 | 7.1 | 0.0 | 28.6 |

## V. Discussion of Findings

As evidenced in the presentation of findings, the prevalence of sexual harassment is considerably high for a behaviour which is both a criminal offence and an aberration. Participants during the FGD attested to the fact that females suffer in silence from sexual harassment due to the fear of being tagged troublemakers.

A participant in the female FGD cited an instance in which a male harasser turned his subordinate victim into an object of gossip in the organisation after pressuring her into complying with his demand:

*Knowledge of Acts constituting sexual harassment*

Respondents have good knowledge of acts that can be classified as sexual harassment but victims' attitude towards reporting incidents may not offer the needed disincentive that would culminate in the elimination of the practice. Female FGD participants report that females who complain about less serious acts of sexual harassment are labelled as intolerant. Society expects them to be more accommodating of sexual harassment:



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When situations that are usually exploited to sexually harass co- workers were ranked, application for employment was ranked highest followed by role allocation and work trips both coming second while the need for promotion is ranked third. Organisations need to establish clear and commonly understood regulations and due processes for employment, workplace role allocation and nomination for work trip among others to eliminate the tendency to use these for the sexual exploitation of subordinates at work.

Awareness of existing international and domestic legal documents is very low. This is partly due to socio-cultural beliefs that promote gender inequality. Sexual harassment offences are usually discounted with none perceiving the need to evoke the provision of any legal document. Another explanation for the low awareness is the failure of media organizations to give serious attention to the phenomenon of sexual harassment as reflected in the lack of organizational policy on sexual harassment and the limited attention accorded to the issue in media communication outputs.

Media organizations lack workplace sexual harassment policies and the organisational framework for tackling sexual harassment cases. With the recent conscientisation in The Gambia occasioned by the revelations of women victims of sexual harassment, organisations might be endangering their finances through lawsuits if appropriate preventive measures against sexual harassment are not implemented. Perceived best practices suggested by respondents include having a media workplace policy that exhaustively describes sexual harassment acts, states clearly the procedure for tackling sexual harassment cases and indicates sanctions attached to sexual harassment acts. Media organisations should endeavor to give orientation to staff while not neglecting to send them for trainings on prevention of sexual harassment. It was also suggested that within the organisation, a unit must be established to manage sexual harassment complaints and offer counseling to victims of sexual harassment in the organisation.

## VI. Recommendations

It is recommended that media organisations should not only create policies but must additionally, through training and orientation programmes, create a common understanding among employees of structures and procedures for reporting incidents. Various advocacy channels must also be explored to change attitudes that are driving the culture of silence.

The Gambia Press Union should ensure that each media organisation produces a formal document on conditions of service for employees to serve as a point of reference in the bid to enhance a just and fair system of reward and sanctions in the workplace. A manual on sexual harassment to be created by the GPU should be made available to all media organisations.

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