

PERCEPTIONS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT, GENDER ROLE ATTITUDES
AND SELF-ESTEEM AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN LEBANON

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this research paper to Fidel

I would not have been able to finish the work without you being in my life.

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I would like to thank:

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Abstract

This research was concerned with perceptions of sexual harassment and how they relate to gender role attitudes, self-esteem, gender, and age among a sample of young Lebanese students. The researcher also wanted to form an idea of the level of awareness on the issue in the three targeted Lebanese universities and the way these universities deal with sexual harassment. A questionnaire with three scales was filled out by 150 undergraduate university students, and interviews were conducted with university administrators and deans. Positive and significant correlations were found to exist between perceptions of sexual harassment on one side and gender role attitudes and age on the other. A significant difference was proven to exist between female and male students in how they perceive sexual harassment. A significant correlation between the egalitarian gender role subscale and perceptions of sexual harassment was also found. The results of this study could be used in universities and schools to design clearer definitions of sexual harassment. One of the clinical implications of the study would be to work on a certain level of gender role attitudes with individuals who have low perceptions of sexual harassment.

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Perceptions of Sexual Harassment, Gender Role Attitudes, and Self-Esteem among
University Students in Lebanon

As long as men and women have direct contact in society, the problem of sexual harassment is bound to come up. No matter how developed or underdeveloped, conservative or liberal a society is, the issue of sexual harassment was always present to create fear and distress for the victim among many other problems.

According to Fitzgerald and Ormerod (1993) and Leaper and Brown (2008) cited in Bursik and Geftner (2011), most women and adolescent girls do not label the sexual encounters they experience as sexual harassment even though these experiences fall under the definition of what constitutes sexual harassment.

Sexual harassment is different from flirting which is not defined as harassment and which is harmless and enjoyable by most people (Murnen & Smolak, 2000; Powell, 1986). Sexual harassment can be verbal such as making comments about a person's body, spreading sexual rumors, sexual remarks or accusations, or telling dirty jokes or stories. Physical harassment constitutes grabbing, rubbing, touching, and pinching in a sexual way. Visual harassment includes display of naked pictures or sex-related objects, and obscene gestures (Equal Rights Advocates, 2003).

A victim's reaction towards sexual harassment whether trying to avoid it, stop it, or even report it is directly linked to the understanding of the nature of the violation. If people do not perceive a certain act as sexual harassment then they will probably refrain from reporting it. Perception of sexual harassment is linked to several factors that were tackled in this study.

The present study examined perception of sexual harassment (PSH) and its relationship with gender role attitudes and self esteem, in addition to relating PSH to age and gender of university students in Lebanon in order to understand their perception of what constitutes acts of sexual harassment.

Statement of the Problem

One of the challenges in both Arab and Western communities is that of sexual harassment. Even though it is a social phenomenon that has always been present, the concept itself is recent. It was created by leaders of the feminist movement during the seventies in America. The concept remained dormant for almost twenty years until it became a major foundation of “political correctness” in the early 1990’s (Goujon, Morestin, & Previu, 2001).

Sexual harassment is a serious problem that is found everywhere in society. Age and gender are never barriers in the face of perpetrators. Young students face sexual harassment in schools and later on in universities. Men and women are also harassed in the workplace (Baugh & Page, 1998; Murnen & Smolak, 2000; Witkowska & Menckel, 2005).

Sexual harassment is an unwanted behavior which is becoming a social problem in some Arab countries, such as Egypt, where the problem is reaching epidemic proportions (BBC News, 2012). Sexual harassment has effects on victims that are numerous, very serious and alarming. Witkowska and Menckel (2005) show that girls who are sexually harassed in schools manifest a huge number of psychological implications such as lower rates of self-esteem, commitment to education, hopes and future related expectations. Sexual harassment also has destructive consequences on levels of organizations where it

may result in decrease of productivity, low morale, high rate of absence and turnover, not to mention lawsuits and their costs (Baugh & Page, 1998).

Therefore, it is necessary and crucial to educate students on this matter that is still misperceived and underestimated. In his study conducted with university undergraduate students, Bursik (1992) states that the most shocking result he found was the discrepancy between definitions of acts of sexual harassment belonging to most researchers and those of students'. He adds that not much can be done to raise awareness on the matter if students do not define or perceive certain actions as sexual harassment.

“It is evident, therefore, that more must be done to educate young women and young men that behaviors of this type warrant inclusion in the definition of sexual harassment... We cannot hope to eliminate this social problem until more are willing to perceive it as problematic” (Bursik, 1992, p. 410).

Bursik repeated the same experiment almost 10 years later with undergraduate students attending the same university only to find out that the perceptions of university students regarding acts of sexual harassment are still the same as they were a decade before (Bursik & Geftter, 2011).

David Bassham (2009) argues on the issue of perception of sexual harassment that “when we look at the issue of sexual harassment, it is clear to see that it is a complex issue that is very strongly tied to each individual’s perception of the situation. Each situation is different, and seemingly identical facts in separate situations can lead to totally different interpretations by the parties involved”. He explains that some acts might be considered as sexual harassment by some people and considered as flirting by others. He adds that this is sometimes connected to whether a potential victim considers the perpetrator as a possible mate or not.

Gender role attitude is one of the factors affecting how people perceive sexual harassment. Research has shown that men with more masculine gender role attitudes are the least to observe remarks and behaviors of sexual nature as examples of sexual harassment (Powell, 1986). Moreover, Russel and Trigg (2004) found that males who demonstrate traditional masculine gender roles were those more likely to “sexually harass women, have more positive attitudes toward sexually harassing behaviors, and misinterpret a woman’s friendliness as a sexual advance”.

Dr. Mahmoud Al Ghazali, a psychology professor in Cebes University in Tunisia, also explains the phenomenon of sexual harassment from the perspective of behavioral psychology and directly relates sexual harassment to gender role: “Harassment is the practice of oppression by the party who is believed to be the strongest on the weakest party who in this case is the female, and this takes place through trying to humiliate her. Evidence to this is that a man is not necessarily sexually aroused the minute he chooses to harass a woman, but he carefully chooses the victim and specifies the way to attack her whether verbally or physically”(Yemen Today Net, 2010). In light of the aforementioned literature, the author of this study proposed that scores on the gender role attitudes scale correlated positively with scores of perceptions of sexual harassment.

Another factor affecting how young people understand and define sexual harassment is self-esteem. Very little research has been done to confirm the correlation between the two concepts, but those that have studied the relationship show that people with high self-esteem perceive more incidents as sexual harassment than those with low self-esteem (Ulusoy, Swigart & Erdemir, 2011; Murnen & Smolak, 2000). After hypothesizing that students with more experience of sexual harassment exhibit lower levels of self-esteem, Murnen and Smolak (2000) suggested that maybe the relationship is in the

other direction where actually people who exhibit low self-esteem react less effectively towards sexual harassment experiences. In the same study, the researchers found that the relationship between sexual harassment and self-esteem was only positive in girls, whereas it did not show significantly with boys taking part in the study.

On the other hand, Polce-Lynch et al. (2001) did not find a significant correlation between self-esteem and sexual harassment as was expected in their study. The researchers explain that the reason behind this insignificance goes back to the type of instruments used to measure sexual harassment. At the end of the paper they recommended using instruments that measured “hands on” types of harassment meaning physical harassment rather than visual or verbal, they thought this might give contrary results. In light of the above cited research, the author of this study proposed that self-esteem scale scores positively correlated with scores of perceptions of sexual harassment. Moreover, participants scored higher on the subscale of physical harassment than the visual subscale or verbal subscale of sexual harassment.

As for when it comes to gender differences in perceptions of sexual harassment, the research is rather quite extensive. Steenkamp (2010) writes that most of the studies conclude that women have higher perceptions of sexual harassment than men, meaning that women view more incidents as constituting acts of sexual harassment (Fitzgerald & Schullman, 1993; Gutek, Morasch, & Cohen, 1983; Harnett, Robinson, & Singh, 1989; Hendrix, Rueb, & Steel, 1998; Matchen & DeSouza, 2000; Workman & Johnson, 1991 as cited by Steenkamp, 2010). A research with university students in Nigeria on the issue of sexual harassment found that the genders differ significantly in their PSH (Ekore, 2012). Research has also shown that in addition to “women defining harassment more broadly than men, they express more negative attitudes toward socio-sexual behaviors at work, and

are more likely than men to consider sexual advances by the opposite gender as objectionable and potentially damaging” (Baugh & Page, 1998). Based on the above discussed literature, the author proposed that female students scored higher than males on all scales of perceptions of sexual harassment.

In addition to gender, the second demographic factor considered to study its effect on PSH is age. Very little research tackled the issue and tried to come out with a conclusion. In a research done by Colarelli and Haaland (2002), it was proven that age had a significant effect on how women perceive sexual harassment: older women were less tolerant of sexually harassing behavior than younger women. Supporting the previous results, and in a study covering almost a thousand students and staff in a Midwestern university in the US, it was found that the younger age sample were “less sensitive to harassment” than the older sample (Ohse & Stockdale, 2012). However, and contrary to the aforementioned researches, Ford and Donis (1996) confirmed that tolerance towards acts of sexual harassment increased with age in women but decreased with age in men; older men showed less acceptance to sexual harassment than younger men. In other words, younger women were more sensitive to harassment than older women and the opposite apply to men. In light of the literature, the author proposed that age correlated positively with scores of perceptions of sexual harassment.

In summary, addressing sexual harassment as a social problem is very crucial. Research has shown the negative and detrimental consequences of experiencing sexual harassment in schools, universities, and even the workplace. Raising awareness on this issue needs to be based on a genuine comprehension of its causes and effects. Understanding perception of sexual harassment and its relationship with all the aforementioned factors helps educators in designing school and university curricula to

address this issue and open more eyes on its importance and its effects on the health of members of the society.

Purpose of the Study and Hypotheses

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between perceptions of sexual harassment on one side and the gender role attitudes and self-esteem on the other.

Therefore, the following hypotheses were proposed:

1. Scores on the Gender Role Attitudes Scale correlate positively with scores of Perceptions of Sexual Harassment.
2. Self-Esteem Scale scores positively correlate with scores of Perceptions of Sexual Harassment.
3. Participants score higher on the subscale of physical harassment than the visual subscale or verbal subscale of perception of sexual harassment.
4. Females score higher than males on all scales of Perceptions of Sexual Harassment.
5. Age correlate positively with scores of Perceptions of Sexual Harassment.

Significance of the Study

As was discussed in the statement of the problem, sexual harassment is a very serious social problem. Victims of sexual harassment may be of any age and any social background. The less people know about this issue, the more vulnerable they become where the possibility of experiencing it and suffering from its consequences increases.

Thus, it is important to raise awareness among school and university students regarding sexual harassment: what constitutes an act of sexual harassment and what proper actions should be taken as a reaction to the perpetration. This starts with understanding how and why perceptions of sexual harassment differ from one individual to another.

When teachers and counselors understand the factors affecting perception, it becomes easier for them to educate students on the matter.

Sexual harassment has always been a taboo in our Arabic culture where the norm is not to report the incident and not to talk about it to anyone either. Our society still holds the victim of sexual harassment responsible for the perpetration in suggesting that the victim had an inappropriate attire, action, or conversation.

Therefore, it is basic to try and comprehend the mechanism of sexual harassment and how people in an Arab culture understand it and why they perceive it the way they do. In that way, the problem would be addressed in a more scientific manner where awareness would be raised among the young generation about the importance of respecting each others' bodies and the importance of defending these bodies through saying no to perpetrators and asking for help when experiencing such acts of sexual violation.

Sexual harassment has been discussed and researched extensively in the western societies and very timidly in our Arab culture since it was somehow difficult to find many studies on the issue researched by Arab scholars or conducted in Arab countries. This study looks at how young university students in Lebanon understand sexual harassment and how this perception relates to several factors. The directions and effects of some of these factors such as gender role attitudes are outcomes of the society.

Even though the suggested hypotheses in this study were tested before by American and European researchers they were not thoroughly studied in this part of the world. The issue of sexual harassment is ignored in the Arab world and very little research is done to understand its aspects in order to try and restrict it. This research is hoped to be a starting point for other studies on sexual harassment in Lebanese universities.

Nature of the Study

The research discussed is quantitative since it used the method of statistical analysis to measure variables by using correlational analyses in addition to tests of comparison of means. It relied on self-report measures where participants were asked to provide demographic data such as age and gender, and fill out a questionnaire containing the 3 scales: Sexual Harassment Index, Gender Role Attitude Scale, and Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale.

The questionnaire was filled by a random sample of 150 undergraduate students from three different universities in Beirut area. Analysis of correlations and regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses.

Definition of Terms

The following terms and others were defined in more detail in the following chapter, the literature review.

Sexual harassment: Sexual harassment is defined as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when: (1) submission to such conduct is made a term or condition of employment or participating in educational programs; or (2) submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as a basis for employment or academic decisions affecting the individual; or (3) such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an employee's work performance or student's academic performance creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working or learning environment (US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, EEOC).

Gender role: a set of perceived behavioral norms associated particularly with males or females, in a given social group or system (University of Colorado, nd).

Self-esteem: Sense of personal worth and ability that is fundamental to an individual's identity (Merriam Webster Online Dictionary, 2013).

CHAPTER 2

Review of the Literature

As mentioned in the previous chapter, it is very important to understand what sexual harassment is. Part of understanding this matter lies in looking at how it is defined in the general legal context and how it is defined by universities which are the main concern of this study. Policies of sexual harassment in universities in Lebanon were examined and presented in this part of the study. This chapter also shed more light on the different research conducted to study PSH and the different variables affecting them.

Definition of Sexual Harassment

It might not be the easiest and most obvious task to come up with one single definition of sexual harassment as it depends on several factors such as the culture and the extent of respect for others' freedoms and privacies. Nevertheless, some countries have come up with some definitions in an attempt to avoid confusion when matters reach the courts.

In its "Policy Guidance on Current Issues of Sexual Harassment", the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission defines sexual harassment as "unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

- (1) submission to such conduct is made a term or condition of employment or participating in educational programs; or
- (2) submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as a basis for employment or academic decisions affecting the individual; or

- (3) such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an employee's work performance or student's academic performance creating an intimidating , hostile, or offensive working or learning environment” (EEOC, 1990).

The first two situations go under what is known as “quid pro quo” type of harassment. The third situation goes under the “hostile environment” type of sexual harassment. Quid pro quo, which means ‘this for that’ in Latin, type of sexual harassment takes place when a student is asked for a sexual favor by a teacher or school employee in return for a better grade or any other kind of privilege. It could also happen that the student is threatened to be failed in case he/she refuses to do the sexual favor (Equal Rights Advocates, 2003).

The more vague or controversial type is the hostile environment sexual harassment. It is when the student has an experience of undesirable or unwanted sexual act whether verbal or physical. The act makes the student uncomfortable in the school setting and this negatively affects school performance or the general learning experience. The harassment can be from any person present in the school or university setting including other students (Equal Rights Advocates, 2003). The reason it is controversial is because of the term “unwanted” and “hostile” which may significantly vary from one person to another.

Unsuitable actions that comprise sexual harassment can be divided into four types of behavior:

Physical: sexual advances, touching of a sexual nature, pinching, patting, brushing up against, sexual motions, assault, or touching oneself sexually.

Verbal: sexual jokes; talking about one’s sexual activity in front of others, spreading rumors about a sexual activity, pressure for sexual favors, comments or

questions about a person's body, dress, or personal life, using demeaning or inappropriate terms; using crude and offensive language of a sexual nature; name-calling.

Visual: cartoons, drawings, or caricatures of a sexual nature; pin-up pictures or calendars; displaying sexual objects; inappropriate or offensive e-mail messages; graffiti of a sexual nature; displaying or distributing sexually explicit drawings, pictures, and written material.

Hazing: teasing, practical jokes of a sexual nature, excluding others, starting or spreading rumors about a person's personal life or sexual activities (US Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2001; Iowa Civil Rights Commission, n.d.)

As for the laws concerning sexual harassment in the Lebanese Republic, they are closer to null. The Lebanese law defines rape of minors and the consequences for those who commit such a crime. There is not a definition of sexual harassment.

While the Lebanese law doesn't have any clear section regarding sexual harassment, the Lebanese universities try to define it and make policies on how to deal with it and report it. But still the efforts done by most universities in Lebanon are not strong enough to educate students on the issue or to raise awareness on how to face sexual harassment or at least label it to be able to report it properly.

In its Student Life Handbook of academic year 08-09, Haigazian University clearly states that "HU is committed to maintaining an environment free of harassment for students, faculty, and staff. Consequently, sexual, racial or ethnic harassment of HU students or employees is unacceptable and will not be tolerated" (Haigazian University, 2008). The handbook however, does not include a definition of what constitutes an act of sexual harassment. Unlike the student life handbook, the staff handbook for the year 08-09 defines sexual harassment in four simple sentences and it also mentions the methods to

report the unwanted behavior. The staff handbook is meant for the employees at HU and not the students even though it is accessible for everyone on the university's website.

University of Balamand is another Lebanese university that was included in this study. The student handbook for the year 2013 indicates that harassment in general is intolerable on all premises of UOB. The handbook also dedicates a special section on sexual harassment where it is defined with specific examples. The section also includes a part that explains the process of filing a complaint in case of experiencing sexual harassment. The university claims to "strive to keep the identity of persons making reports as confidential as possible" (University of Balamand, 2013). Ensuring the anonymous identity of the victims is a very difficult matter to guarantee, but it definitely encourages more students to step up and report the incidents they encountered.

The third Lebanese university studied here is the Lebanese American University. The university's harassment policy was first adopted in 2003, amended in 2006, and then amended a second time in 2013. The policy, which is available on the university's website, defines what constitutes an act of sexual harassment and includes the procedures to follow in case a victim wants to complain (Lebanese American University, 2013). Intolerance of harassment, including sexual harassment, is mentioned another time in the Students Code of Conduct.

It is concluded that in the absence of any action from the Lebanese government's side in drafting a clear law governing sexual harassment in Lebanon, universities are trying to move forward with the issue through attempts in defining it and setting rules regarding such actions.

Theoretical Models

A few theories try to explain the causes behind sexual harassment. Some of these formulations are somewhat old and can be simply counter-indicated. In this section, five theories were discussed.

The Abuse of Power Theory

The theory of abuse of power explains the most common view of sexual harassment, a way for males to dominate over females. The theory suggests that males use sexual harassment to “keep females in their place” (Lee, Croninger, Linn, & Chen, 1996). Males with traditional gender role attitudes tend to sexually harass females in educational institutions or the workplace when they sense that these females pose a threat to their privileged positions as males in the society. Additionally, males abuse their higher ranks in the workplace to harass females. This is more applicable to males since they typically occupy higher ranking positions at work. Another form of abuse of power is the abuse of power the society gives to men. Male students harassing female teachers and male patients harassing female doctors are examples of males abusing their societal power over females (Lee et al., 1996). Even though this theory explains the behavior of sexual harassment very well, the theory does not apply to cases of peer harassment and females harassing males in schools or the workplace.

The Biological Theory

This theory indicates that since males and females have different biological compositions then they act and react differently in several situations, sexual harassment being one of them. The theory explains that males are more aggressive than females and therefore react aggressively towards females who are in this case the victims. Accordingly, the best solution for such a problem would be to better protect females or simply “hide

them” so they would not be harassed by aggressive males. The biological theory justifies that males are just born this way and punishing their actions would not actually refrain them from being perpetrators of sexual harassment. The fact that both males and females sexually harass others proves that this theory is not always accurate (Lee et al., 1996).

The Feminist Theory

Feminists claim that sexual harassment is better understood within the context of the control that males have over females within the patriarchal society. The main purpose of acts of sexual harassment is the control over women and not sexual satisfaction. Sexual harassment is seen to be an instrument of social control used by males in patriarchal societies (Gouws & Kritzing, 1995 as cited by Steenkamp, 2010).

The Pathology Theory

Even though it is not considered as a mental disorder by the American Psychology Association, but this theory suggests that sexual harassment is “a severely antisocial form of behavior” from a pathological point of view (Lee et al., 1996). The way to “cure” people of this illness is through subjecting them to therapy. The high incidence of sexual harassment in the society indicates that this theory might not actually hold ground. Despite the fact that it is popular among ordinary people, professionals do not take it seriously (Lee et al., 1996).

The Developmental Theory

This concept supposes that since people are social beings and they need to communicate their needs, desires, and feelings through social interactions, and since young people are socially immature, they tend to “fall in the trap” of harassment when they try to express these feelings. The theory suggests that as people grow older and become more socialized these acts of sexual harassment decrease. But the mere fact that sexual

harassment is so evident in the workplace and among highly socialized people such as managers, professors, and politicians, proves the theory is not entirely true (Lee et al., 1996).

The aforementioned theories more or less summarize the causes behind sexual harassment. There are other concepts that were discussed and studied by researchers but which are very close in conceptualization to what has been mentioned here.

Prevalence of Sexual Harassment

Even though the majority of countries around the world do not use the expression sexual harassment or have laws protecting people from it, sexual harassment remains a universal behavior where people express it differently in each culture (Donovan & Drasgow, 1997; Gelfand *et al.*, 2002 as cited by Paludi, Nydegger, DeSouza, Nydegger, & Dicker, 2006). This fact drives victims of sexual harassment into remaining silent about their experiences and not reporting them.

The prevalence of sexual harassment has been studied in different cultures. Barak (1997) as cited in Paludi et al. (2006) studied sexual harassment in more than 25 different cultures and concluded that the phenomenon itself is not different among the countries, what differs is the way the behavior of sexual harassment is being practiced. In a study conducted by Hill and Silva (2005) with over 2000 undergraduate college students from the United States, it was concluded that almost one third of the students experienced physical sexual harassment and were able to report it; on the other hand one third of college students would not report sexual harassment. The study also showed that females and males had different experiences of sexual harassment, but they did not differ in the rate of experience (Hill & Silva, 2005). One hundred and twenty six Australian undergraduate

females were involved in a study on the incidence of sexual harassment in Australian academia where 53% of the participants reported experiencing sexual harassment from instructors while 88% reported experiencing it from peers (Gardner & Felicity, 1996 as cited by Paludi et al. 2006).

Incidence rates of sexual harassment in universities were studied by DeSouza and Solberg (2003) in 7 countries: Brazil, China, Italy, Pakistan, Puerto Rico, Sweden, and Turkey. Rates were shown to be relatively high in all the countries involved in the study (DeSouza & Solberg, 2003 as cited in Paludi et al. 2006). Many studies have been conducted in African universities trying to better understand the issue of sexual harassment on campus and how university students perceive it. Some of these studies concluded that many students do not know what sexual harassment is and therefore fail to report it. Additionally, these studies recommended having clear policies regarding sexual harassment at the African universities (Steenkamp, 2010). One of the results of a particular study conducted at Stellenbosch University in South Africa showed that 28% of the 1679 undergraduate student participants have been victims of at least one experience of stalking, a form of sexual harassment (Steenkamp, 2010).

In summary, sexual harassment is a social problem that is present in all societies presenting itself in different forms, levels, and incidence rates. The problem is so prevalent that Fitzgerald and Omerod (1993) stated that it is estimated that one of two women are harassed at some stage of their academic or working lives (Fitzgerald & Omerod, 1993 as cited in Paludi et al. 2006).

Perceptions of Sexual Harassment

The way people perceive the world around them is affected by a range of factors. Knowledge and experience play a role in building a person's individual view of reality. Additionally, education, social interaction, values, and beliefs influence the way the information received from the senses is interpreted. Another factor that might affect the perception of individuals and situations is a person's emotional state (Bassham, 2009). The wide research on PSH tackles the factors mentioned before in addition to others.

Pryor and Day (1988) claimed that behaviors of sexual harassment are interpreted differently by different individuals because of the factors affecting their decision making. In their research, Pryor and Day (1988) concluded that contextual variables play a big role in how people perceive sexual harassment. The power of the perpetrator, the way the victim reacts, and the degree of attractiveness of the victim are all examples of factors affecting the perception of each individual (Pryor & Day, 1988; Angelone et al., 2009). The results of the research conducted by Hendrix (2000) showed that the participants in the study rated the behaviors involving older males who were unattractive and held high positions as more sexually harassing. The study conducted by Katz, Hannon and Whitten (1996) with 197 college students confirmed that the factor of power differential between the victim and perpetrator highly affects PSH. It was shown that as the difference in power between the harasser and the victim increased, the perception of the sexually harassing behavior also increased (Katz et al. 1996; Bursik & Geftter, 2011). However, the difference in power between female professors and male students did not match the power differential between male professors and female students where undergraduate college students rated the acts perpetrated by female professors as less harassing than those perpetrated by male professors (Marks & Nelson, 1993).

The marital status of the perceiver also played a role where single individuals rated behaviors as less sexually harassing than did married and divorced participants. Males and females differ in their views towards perpetrators. Females showed to have the same judgment over males and females who initiated sexual harassment. On the other hand, males viewed acts of sexual harassment done by females as less harassing and sometimes flattering or seductive (Hendrix, 2000; Katz et al., 1996; Tata, 1993). The views of male versus female perceivers and the effect of the perpetrator's attractiveness were also studied by LaRocca and Kromrey (1999) who found somehow contrasting results to the research mentioned before: both female and male perceivers rated behaviors done by female perpetrators as less harassing than when done by male perpetrators. Both genders were also influenced by the attractiveness of the perpetrator where the more attractive the perpetrator was, the less harassing the behavior was rated (LaRocca & Kromrey, 1999). The attractiveness and the age of the perpetrator were also studied by Fairchild (2010). In this research two other factors were added: time of the day when the behavior took place and whether the victim was accompanied by friends or not. Fairchild's research agreed with others on the matters of age and attractiveness where younger more attractive perpetrators were seen as less harassing (Fairchild, 2010). The severity of the behavior described was another factor studied by Colarelli and Haaland (2002) and that had a strong effect of the perception of sexually harassing behaviors viewed by males and females. The study also confirmed that as the power of the perpetrator increased and as the social status decreased the PSH increased (Colarelli & Haaland, 2002).

Some researchers (Heider, 1958; Jones et al., 1972; Weiner, 1974; 1986 as cited by Steenkamp, 2010) explain why individuals' perceptions are affected by the factors mentioned previously by what they call the attribution theory. Attribution theory "proposes

that individuals attribute their behavior and the behaviors of others, to either internal or external causes” where the behaviors that are “more role-discrepant” are considered to be more sexually harassing (Steenkamp, 2010).

Much evidence of the factors affecting PSH can be found in the literature. Most results in these studies coincide showing that power differentials and contextual factors affect the way people understand sexual harassment. The focus of this research was two different factors: self-esteem and gender role attitudes.

Effects of Self-Esteem and Gender Role Attitudes

People understand, explain, and react differently to different issues they face in their everyday lives. Sexual harassment is one of those issues that people disagree upon. Perception of sexual harassment is linked to many factors, and two of these factors are a perceiver’s self-esteem and his/her gender role attitude. In this section some of the studies on the relationship between PSH and self-esteem and gender role were reviewed.

Gender roles are the social and behavioral customs: duties, activities, and responsibilities that are considered appropriate for either a male or a female in a social context (World Health Organization, 2013). Gender roles are reflected in a person’s life on all levels: family, professional, social, and education life, and they are usually classified as egalitarian and traditional. For example, men with traditional gender roles are those who believe that they are supposed to be the only decision makers in the house while women with traditional gender roles believe that their parents should make the decision of choosing their husbands. On the other hand, men and women with egalitarian gender roles believe in sharing responsibilities equally (Zeyneloglu & Terzioglu, 2011).

Even though much research has been conducted to study the relationship between gender roles and PSH, it was concluded in some that no significant relation existed

between the two variables (Powell, 1986; Russel & Trigg, 2004). Nonetheless, in his research, Powell (1986) concluded that masculinity had a negative relation with PSH for men where males with high levels of masculinity defined fewer behaviors as sexually harassing. Additionally, another negative relationship was proven to exist between femininity and tolerance of sexual harassment. People with high levels of femininity perceived more behaviors as sexually harassing and had low tolerance for them (Russel & Trigg, 2004). The effect of gender role on the PSH sometimes cancels the effect of gender itself. Research proved that women had less tolerance for behaviors of sexual harassment than men did, but the equation changes when women with high masculinity and men with high femininity are involved. Women who have traditional gender roles show low perception and men who have egalitarian gender roles show high perception of sexual harassment (Angelone, Mitchell, & Carola, 2009). In a study conducted with American undergraduate students, Maddox (1993) found out that only 54% of all the students with traditional gender roles and 77% of students with egalitarian gender roles perceived the behaviors they assessed as sexually harassing.

The other variable affecting PSH is self-esteem. Self-esteem is an expression used to reflect a person's overall assessment of his or her own value. It covers beliefs and emotions such as achievement, despair, satisfaction and shame. "Self-esteem is a judgment of oneself as well as an attitude toward the self" (Hewitt, 2009 as cited in Wikipedia, 2013). The effect of self-esteem on the perception of sexual harassment needs much more research as the relationship is still a bit vague (Polce et al., 1999). The relationship between the two factors has been studied both ways. Experiences of sexual harassment were proven to cause low self-esteem in victims (Witkowska & Menckel, 2005). Looking at the relationship from a different angle it was concluded that people with low self-esteem

showed to have high tolerance for sexual harassment. Participants in these studies and who had low self-esteem perceived fewer behaviors as being sexually harassing than participants with high self-esteem (Murnen & Smolak, 2000; Paludi et al., 2006; Ulusoy, et al., 2011).

In summary, and despite the research done on the effects of self-esteem and gender roles on perceptions of sexual harassment, much more needs to be done especially that most of this research showed insignificant correlations. Additionally, gender roles might have different effects when studied in societies famous for traditional attitudes in both males and females.

Effects of Gender and Age

Two demographic variables: age and gender were tackled in the research studying the factors affecting PSH. Males and females differ in the way they view and explain harassing behaviors. Young people also differ from older ones in their tolerance to sexual harassment.

The majority of research that examined gender differences in perceptions of sexual harassment has concluded that in general women are less tolerant of harassing behaviors than men (Fitzgerald & Schullman, 1993; Gutek, Morasch, & Cohen, 1983; Harnett, Robinson, & Singh, 1989; Hendrix, Rueb, & Steel, 1998; Matchen & DeSouza, 2000; Workman & Johnson, 1991 as cited by Hendrix, 2000). When female and male participants were given the same descriptions or scenarios of incidents describing sexual harassment, females were able to point out more behaviors as harassing than males did (Bursik, 1992; Colarelli & Haaland, 2002; Ekore, 2012; Ford & Donis, 1996; Marks & Nelson, 1993; Pryor & Day, 1988; Tata, 1993). In a study involving 100 full-time American workers,

some of the conclusions agreed with summaries made in most other studies about gender and PSH. In comparison to male participants, female participants showed less tolerance of behaviors of sexual harassment when they happened in the workplace and considered asking someone for a date in a workplace as sexually harassing. Male participants however, stated that if an act did not violate work regulations then it was not considered as sexual harassment. On the other hand, other conclusions in the study came out opposite to most research. Female participants were more tolerant of sexual jokes told in the workplace than male participants were. Females also stated that a behavior was not considered harassing when the perpetrator's intentions were not harmful. However, male participants were less tolerant than females of harassing behaviors when the victim did not welcome them (Hurt, Wiener, Russell, & Mannen, 1999). It also seemed that the gender differences in perceptions of sexual harassment were much larger when rating certain behaviors (Rotundo, Nguyen & Sackett, 2001). Such behaviors, Rotundo et al. (2001) concluded, involved "hostile work environment harassment, derogatory attitudes toward women, dating pressure, and physical sexual contact".

In addition to gender, age is another demographic variable affecting how people perceive sexual harassment. A few studies have been conducted to test the relationship; sometimes inconsistent results have been concluded. Some researchers studied how female college students and working women differed in their perceptions. Age was proven to play a role where working women viewed more behaviors as sexually harassing than did female undergraduates (Hendrix 2000; Ohse & Stockdale, 2012; Terpstra & Baker, 1987). Furthermore, when Colarelli and Haaland (2002) conducted their study with 352 undergraduate students and university employees, they noted that older women were less tolerant of sexually harassing behaviors than younger women. However, the differences

were much less evident when the behaviors were severe (Colarelli & Haaland, 2002). On the other hand, Ford and Donis (1996) conducted a study on full-time workers and concluded that women younger than the age of 40 were less tolerant of sexual harassment than older women. In contrast, older men showed less tolerance for sexual harassment behaviors than younger men (Ford & Donis, 1996).

In conclusion, the majority of research conducted proves a significant difference between genders in their perceptions of sexual harassment where women view more behaviors as sexually harassing. Additionally, age is proven to predict perceptions of sexual harassment where most studies prove that the older the person the less tolerant to sexual harassment he/she is.

CHAPTER 3

Method

The issue of sexual harassment is a serious social problem that is present in different societies. School and university students suffer from this problem and from its consequences. Many of them do not understand the nature of sexual harassment or which acts constitute it. The better students understand this problem, the more appropriately they could deal with it. Additionally, teachers and administrators need to be aware of the nature of sexual harassment and how students perceive it as well as respond to it. Consequently, schools and universities would be better equipped to help students face this problem and hopefully deal with it more effectively in the future.

Setting

The questionnaire was conducted inside the classrooms of three universities in Beirut: Haigazian University, University of Balamand, and American University of Beirut. The researcher was present during the administration of the questionnaire and was ready to answer any question and to explain unclear words. The professors teaching the classes sometimes left the class and came back when the students were done filling out the questionnaire. The participants answered the survey during their class time.

Participants

All participants taking part in the survey were undergraduate students enrolled in the university's program. The sampling procedure used in the research was convenience sampling. The researcher did not choose the participants according to a certain criteria. The only condition was that they be undergraduates attending the university. The universities' administration chose the classes to be attended as per the time schedule provided by the researcher. The students present in the assigned class at the time of the study took part in it.

The total number of participants was 150. Their ages ranged from 18 to 25 with a mean age of 20. Female and male participants were almost the same number with 79 females and 71 males taking part in the survey. Thirty nine participants from University of Balamand answered the survey, 67 participants from Haigazian University, and 44 participants from the Lebanese American University.

Table 1: Participants by gender.

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Female	79	52.7
Male	71	47.3
Total	150	100.0

Table 2: Participants by age.

Age	Frequency	Percent
18.00	9	6.0
19.00	39	26.0
20.00	53	35.3
21.00	24	16.0
22.00	11	7.3
23.00	7	4.7
24.00	4	2.7
25.00	3	2.0
Total	150	100.0

Materials

Before handing out the questionnaire, the researcher briefly explained the purpose of the study, the time it will approximately take, and each student's freedom of withdrawing or refraining from taking part. The handouts consisted of a cover page including information about the study, confidentiality concerns, the researcher's email address, demographic information about the participant's age and gender, and a question

asking whether the student is aware of a sexual harassment policy at his/her university. Filling out the first page was considered as giving an informed consent. The pages that followed included the three questionnaires: Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale, the Gender Role Attitude Scale, and the Sexual Harassment Index.

Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale

The Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale is a self-report instrument that was used to measure self esteem. The scale consists of ten items scored on a four point Likert scale. There are five items with positive wordings and the other five are formed with negative wordings. The answers to the items would vary from strongly agree, agree, disagree, to strongly disagree. The scores varied from 0 to 30. The higher the score, the higher the self esteem of the participant. The scale does not consist of subscales. It measures personal worth, self-confidence, self-satisfaction, self-respect, and self-denunciation. The original sample for which the scale was developed consisted of 5,024 high school juniors and seniors from 10 randomly selected schools in New York State (Rosenberg, 1965).

The scale generally has high reliability: test-retest correlations are typically in the range of 0.82 to 0.88. Rosenberg reported internal consistency reliability ranging from 0.85 to 0.88 for college samples.

Gender Role Attitude Scale

The Gender Role Attitude Scale is a 37 item instrument developed to determine Turkish university students' attitudes towards gender roles. It is a 5-point Likert type scale. The scale's answers varied from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The highest possible score from the scale is 185 and the lowest is 37 according to this scoring scale. The higher scores from the scale indicated that the students had more egalitarian attitudes towards gender roles and the lower scores showed that the students' attitudes were more traditional.

The scale had 5 subscales with 8 items in the 'egalitarian gender roles', 'marriage gender roles', and 'traditional gender roles' subscales, 7 items on the 'female gender roles' subscale, and 6 items in the 'male gender roles' subscale.

The traditional attitude sentences regarding gender roles were scored opposite to the positive sentences: 1 point for 'strongly agree', 2 points for 'agree', 3 points for 'undecided', 4 points for 'disagree', and 5 points for 'strongly disagree'.

The instrument's total Cronbach alpha internal consistency coefficient was found to be 0.92. A reliability coefficient of 0.80 was found for the 'female gender roles' subscale in the analyses of the subscales for internal consistency. A Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of 0.78 was found for the 'egalitarian gender roles', 'marriage gender roles' and 'traditional gender roles' subscales. The reliability coefficient for the 'male gender roles' subscale was found to be 0.72 (Zeyneloglu, S. & Terzioglu, F., 2011).

Sexual Harassment Index

The Sexual Harassment Index is a 12 item 5-point Likert scale used to measure perceptions of sexual harassment. The scale was obtained from a thesis paper conducted by Setma Madox in 1993 in the University of Texas. The severity dimensions in the scale were designated in accordance with court ruling as harmless (HL), annoying (A), insulting (I), threatening (TH), and harmful (HF). For purposes of data analysis, these items were weighed as HL=1, A=2, I=3, TH=4, HF=5 where 1 and 2 are not harassing; 3, 4, and 5 are harassing. There are three subscales: the verbal, the physical and the visual with 4 items for each subscale. The scores ranged from 12 to 60 and the results were interpreted where the higher the score, the higher the perception of sexual harassment. The Cronbach alpha coefficients for internal consistency for the total scale was 0.88 and for the three subscales were relatively high: verbal- 0.79, physical- 0.73, and visual- 0.75 (Madox, 1993).

Procedure

When the questionnaire was ready for use, the researcher contacted several universities in the Beirut area and asked for approval to conduct the survey on campus. The three universities that replied asked to view the questionnaire for approval. After the needed adjustments were made to the document, the researcher was given consent to enter certain classes and carry out the survey. The questionnaire had a cover page explaining the aim of the study and the confidentiality of the information gathered. In total, 152 students filled out the questionnaire, but two were disregarded for having missing answers. The questionnaires were collected, and the data were entered into SPSS.

The independent variables in this study were self esteem, gender role attitudes (egalitarian, female, marriage, traditional, and male subscales), gender, and age. The dependent variable was the perception of sexual harassment (visual, verbal, and physical subscales).

Additionally, the researcher conducted interviews with the Registrar and the Director of Orientation Office at Haigazian University, the Dean of Students at the Lebanese American University, and the Dean of Students at the University of Balamand. The same set of questions was asked to form an idea on how universities deal with the issue of sexual harassment. The questions were the following:

- 1- Is there a policy regarding sexual harassment in this university?
- 2- If there is, how is it made public for students and staff?
- 3- How often do you get complaints of sexual harassment?
- 4- What is the standard procedure followed in cases of sexual harassment complaints?
- 5- What are the steps taken by the university to prevent or raise awareness on the issue of sexual harassment among students and faculty?

CHAPTER 4

Results

The researcher used three scales, the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, the Sexual Harassment Index, and the Gender Role Attitudes Scale, in this study to determine the correlations between perceptions of sexual harassment the dependent variable and self-esteem, gender role attitudes, gender, and age, the independent variables. The researcher also conducted interviews in three private universities in Lebanon to form an idea of how administrators deal with the issue of sexual harassment.

In addition to answering the scales' questions and filling in their demographic information, the participants answered one question in the questionnaire that was not related to the scales. The question was: are you aware of any policy regarding sexual harassment in your university? The participants only had to circle the words yes or no. The researcher emphasized that the question was not whether there was a policy in the university or not, it was whether the student knew of such a policy or not. Out of the 150 participants that answered this question, 53 said that they were aware of a sexual harassment policy in their universities while 97 participants said they do not know if their universities had such a policy (See Table 3).

Table 3: Answers of participants to the question: are you aware of any policy regarding sexual harassment in your university.

Awareness	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	53	35.3
No	97	64.7
Total	150	100.0

As for the interviews conducted with administrators at the targeted universities, and as per their answers, they all had policies on the issue of sexual harassment. The policies were made public through almost the same methods in all three universities. The official website of the university was the place the students needed to look for such policies. Additionally, the matter of sexual harassment was tackled, on different levels in the three universities, in the students' handbook and in the orientation programs presented to new students at the beginning of each year. The number of sexual harassment complaints raised by students varied from 1 per year, to 3 per year, to 3 per semester in the targeted universities. In regards to the standard procedure taken by each university in case a complaint of sexual harassment was raised, all three universities seemed to have a clear procedure involving several steps and different persons of concern at the university. The targeted universities make it a yearly routine to organize lectures, seminars, and activities with NGOs to raise awareness on the topic. Counselors of these universities also get involved in raising awareness and talking with grieving students.

The researcher used three scales in this study to determine the relationship between perceptions of sexual harassment and gender role attitudes and self-esteem. The internal reliability of each scale and subscale was determined through calculating the Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The alpha coefficients calculated for each scale were as such: the Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale - 0.764, Gender Role Attitude Scale - 0.905, and the Sexual Harassment Index - 0.834. As for the subscales of the Gender Role Attitude Scale, the Cronbach alpha coefficients were calculated as follows: Egalitarian Gender Role - 0.695, Female Gender Role - 0.769, Marriage Gender Role - 0.688, Traditional Gender Role - 0.753, and the Male Gender Role subscale - 0.646. The subscales of the Sexual Harassment

Index had alpha coefficients as follows: Verbal Sexual Harassment - 0.647, Visual Sexual Harassment - 0.714, and the Physical Sexual Harassment subscale - 0.739 (See Table 4).

Table 4: Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the scales and subscales.

Scale	Original Cronbach's α	Current Cronbach's α
Rosenberg Self Esteem	0.85-0.88	0.764
Gender Role Attitude	0.92	0.905
Sexual Harassment	0.88	0.834
Egalitarian Gender Role	0.78	0.695
Female Gender Role	0.80	0.769
Marriage Gender Role	0.78	0.688
Traditional Gender Role	0.78	0.753
Male Gender Role	0.72	0.646
Verbal Sexual Harassment	0.79	0.647
Visual Sexual Harassment	0.75	0.714
Physical Sexual Harassment	0.73	0.739

The following hypotheses were also tested:

Hypothesis 1: Scores on the Gender Role Attitudes Scale will correlate positively with scores of Perceptions of Sexual Harassment.

To test the relationship between gender role attitudes and perceptions of sexual harassment a correlation was calculated. Even though the correlation was weak, but it was positive and significant thus supporting the hypothesis: $r = 0.183$ and $p = 0.025$ (See table 8).

Therefore, hypothesis 1 was confirmed.

Hypothesis 2: Self-Esteem Scale scores will positively correlate with scores of Perceptions of Sexual Harassment.

A correlation was also calculated between the scores of Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale and the total scores of perceptions of sexual harassment scale. The correlation was not significant with $r = 0.035$ and $p = 0.674$.

Therefore, hypothesis 2 was not confirmed.

Hypothesis 3: Participants will score higher on the subscale of physical harassment than the visual subscale or verbal subscale of sexual harassment.

To test this hypothesis, the means of the scores of the three subscales were calculated. The three subscales had very similar means with the visual sexual harassment subscale having the highest mean and the verbal sexual harassment subscale having the lowest (See Table 5).

Table 5: Mean scores of the three sexual harassment subscales.

	Verbal SH	Visual SH	Physical SH
Mean	11.02	12.07	11.69
Minimum	4.00	4.00	4.00
Maximum	18.00	20.00	20.00

Therefore hypothesis 3 was not confirmed.

Hypothesis 4: Females will score higher than males on all scales of Perceptions of Sexual Harassment.

To test this hypothesis, an independent samples t-test was run. It was concluded that there is a significant difference between the scores of females and males on all three subscales of the Sexual Harassment Index. Females scored higher than males on all three subscales (See Table 6). There was also a significant difference between the genders on the total SH index, $t(148) = 5.481$ and $p < 0.001$ and a significant difference on all three subscales (See Table 7).

Table 6: Mean differences between genders on the SH index and its three subscales.

SH subscale	Gender	N	Mean	SD
Total SH	F	79	38.2532	7.10989
	M	71	30.9155	9.24082
Visual SH	F	79	13.2405	3.27075
	M	71	10.7606	3.68962
Physical SH	F	79	12.6709	3.50721
	M	71	10.6056	4.04432
Verbal SH	F	79	12.3418	2.42258
	M	71	9.5493	3.64413

Table 7: Independent samples test between gender and sexual harassment index and its subscales.

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig.	Mean Diff.	SE Diff.	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Total SH	Equal variances assumed	5.442	.021	5.481	148	.000	7.3	1.34	4.69	9.98
	Equal variances not assumed			5.406	131.017	.000	7.3	1.36	4.65	10.02
Verbal SH	Equal variances assumed	14.956	.000	5.577	148	.000	2.79	.50	1.80	3.78
	Equal variances not assumed			5.463	119.702	.000	2.79	.51	1.78	3.80
Visual SH	Equal variances assumed	1.502	.222	4.364	148	.000	2.48	.57	1.36	3.60
	Equal variances not assumed			4.336	140.775	.000	2.48	.57	1.35	3.61
Physical SH	Equal variances assumed	2.054	.154	3.349	148	.001	2.07	.67	.85	3.28
	Equal variances not assumed			3.324	139.436	.001	2.07	.62	.84	3.29

Therefore hypothesis 4 was confirmed.

Hypothesis 5: Age will correlate positively with scores of Perceptions of Sexual Harassment.

To test the relationship between age of all participants and the perceptions of sexual harassment, a correlation was computed. A weak but positive and significant correlation was computed, $r = 0.222$, $p = 0.006$. This shows that as age increased the perception of sexual harassment increased. Older students showed less tolerance for sexual harassment than younger ones (See table 8).

Therefore hypothesis 5 was confirmed.

Table 8: Significant correlations between the dependent and the independent variables including subscales.

		Total SH	Verbal SH	Visual SH	Physical SH
Age	Pearson Correlation	.222**		.187*	.295**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.006		.022	.000
	N	150		150	150
Gender role	Pearson Correlation	.183*			.166*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.025			.043
	N	150			150
Egalitarian role	Pearson Correlation	.261**	.280**	.181*	.188*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.001	.027	.021
	N	150	150	150	150
Marriage role	Pearson Correlation	.195*		.174*	.186*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.017		.033	.023
	N	150		150	150
Male role	Pearson Correlation	.193*			.207*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.018			.011
	N	150			150

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

To test the effect of the 5 Gender Role Attitudes subscales, a linear regression was computed (See Table 9).

Table 9: Regression analysis between subscales of Gender Role Attitudes and Sexual Harassment Index.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	11.391	6.504		1.751	.082
Egalitarian	.549	.215	.251	2.561	.011
Female	-.155	.157	-.102	-.987	.325
Marriage	.183	.226	.092	.810	.419
Traditional	-.219	.187	-.135	-1.172	.243
Male	.351	.267	.155	1.313	.191

a. Dependent Variable: total SH

It was concluded that only the Egalitarian gender role subscale had a significant correlation with perceptions of sexual harassment with $p < 0.05$.

Another independent samples t-test was computed between gender and gender role and self-esteem. No correlation was found between the factors gender and self-esteem. On the other hand, a significant difference was found to exist between the genders in their gender role attitudes with females scoring higher on the gender role attitude scale with $t(148) = 3.877$ and $p < 0.001$.

When the relationship was investigated between gender role attitudes and self-esteem, age and self-esteem, and age and gender role attitudes, it was concluded that the factors did not correlate at all.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between perceptions of sexual harassment and gender role attitudes and self-esteem among university undergraduate Lebanese students. The researcher also wanted to form an idea of how universities dealt with the issue of sexual harassment and the level of awareness the students had.

Perceptions of SH in Lebanese Universities

A comparison was made between the information collected from the interviews conducted with administrators in the three Lebanese universities and the results of the question the participants answered in the beginning of the survey, mainly if they were aware of any policy regarding sexual harassment in their university. The two sets of information did not match and a discrepancy was found. When asked whether they know about any policy regarding sexual harassment in their universities, around 65% of the participants answered that they were not aware of such a policy. On the other hand, university administrators in the targeted universities stated that they made sure these policies were made public and accessible for all students in student hand books and online and were discussed during orientation sessions and in seminars. The fact that the majority of the students participating in the study were unaware of sexual harassment policies implies that the universities were not making enough effort to educate students on the topic. This might also imply that students themselves are not interested in knowing much about the subject and therefore do not make an effort to look up these policies on the university website.

One of the hypotheses in this study predicted that participants would score higher on the physical sexual harassment subscale than on the visual and verbal sexual harassment subscales. The hypothesis was not confirmed since the means of the three subscales and their standard deviations were almost the same. The result is very important and reflects the high perception of the participants regarding the different forms of sexual harassment. Acts of visual and verbal sexual harassment were mistakenly rarely considered as important or as effective as physical SH, but the result at hand shows a deviation from this misconception (Polce-Lynch et al., 2001).

On the other hand, a relatively low mean score on the Sexual Harassment Index was obtained: $M = 34.8$ and $SD = 8.9$ where the highest possible score on the scale could be 60. The low score indicated that the participants had low PSH and therefore high tolerance for acts of sexual harassment. This result is another evidence that universities need to approach the issue of sexual harassment in a more serious and effective ways. Sexual harassment is proven to have many negative effects on the physical, psychological, and academic aspects of a victim's life (Baugh & Page, 1998; Witkowska & Menckel, 2005). Therefore, it is extremely crucial for young students to understand what sexual harassment is, and that their university understands it as well and is willing to stand by the victim and support her/him in all possible ways.

Perceptions of SH and Gender Role Attitudes

The students taking part in this study filled out the Gender Role Attitudes Scale that measures traditional and egalitarian gender role attitudes. The mean score for the whole scale was $M = 138$ and $SD = 19$ where the highest possible score on the scale was 185. The

result showed a big difference among the participants with a relatively high mean score. The result indicated that most participants have egalitarian gender role attitudes.

The result of the correlation between the scores of the Sexual Harassment Index and the total scores of the Gender Role Attitudes Scale showed a positive and significant but weak relation between the perception of sexual harassment and gender role attitudes. This meant that a person with an egalitarian gender role attitude would most likely have less tolerance for sexual harassment.

After studying the literature that tackled the relationship between the two factors, a positive correlation between gender roles and PSH was predicted. Some of the studies conducted found an insignificant correlation between the two factors (Powell, 1986; Russel & Trigg, 2004; Toker & Sumer, 2010). The positive and significant correlation that was calculated in this study reflected the beliefs and attitudes of the Lebanese society and also coincided with some of the theories explaining sexual harassment from the perspective of gender roles. Males and females who hold traditional gender role attitudes believe that it is only natural and acceptable for males to exert their masculinity and power in all possible ways even if it were through sexual harassment (Hill & Silva, 2005).

The results of this research indicate that young Lebanese students still differ significantly regarding the way they perceive the roles of males and in females in their society. This difference was also shown to affect the way they understand sexual harassment and consequently respond to it. Addressing this issue through education in schools and universities would undoubtedly help students have more respect for others in general and females in particular. In this way, and through having more egalitarian attitudes towards gender roles, young Lebanese students would have less tolerance for acts of sexual harassment leading to a decrease in the number of incidents in universities.

Perceptions of SH and Self-Esteem

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale was the part of the survey that measured the participants' self-esteem. The scores varied greatly and the mean score was relatively high with a small standard deviation: $M = 21.6$ and $SD = 4$. This indicated that most of the students had a relatively high self-esteem. When the relation between PSH and self-esteem was investigated, the researcher found that there was no correlation between the two factors.

Even though previous research (Murnen & Smolak, 2000; Polce et al., 1999; Witkowska & Menckel, 2005; Ulusoy, et al., 2011) showed a positive and significant correlation between self-esteem and PSH, the current study did not support these findings. More extensive research needs to be done on the relation between the two factors. Using a more up-to-date and culture sensitive self-esteem measure might yield more significant results.

On the other hand, Baker and Terpstra (1986) showed that the self-esteem of males and females with traditional gender roles were higher than those with egalitarian gender roles. The researchers argued that as people fulfill their gender roles, they feel the appreciation of their society and therefore have higher self-esteem. However, the study at hand did not find any correlation between self-esteem and gender role attitudes of young Lebanese students.

Effects of Age and Gender

It was hypothesized by the researcher that both age and gender of participants would have an effect on their PSH. Previous research supported these hypotheses proving that as age increased so did the perceptions of sexual harassment (Hendrix, 2000; Ohse &

Stockdale, 2012; Terpstra & Baker, 1987), and that females had less tolerance for acts of sexual harassment than males did (Fitzgerald & Schullman, 1993; Gutek, Morasch, & Cohen, 1983; Harnett, Robinson, & Singh, 1989; Hendrix, Rueb, & Steel, 1998; Matchen & DeSouza, 2000; Workman & Johnson, 1991 as cited by Hendrix, 2000). Both hypotheses were confirmed in the current study. Female participants differed from their male colleagues and labeled most scenarios presented to them as sexually harassing. Additionally, and despite the small age difference among the participants, older students had higher perception of sexual harassment than younger students. Another correlation was found significant between gender and gender role attitudes. More females than males showed to have egalitarian gender role attitudes.

Differences in perceptions between males and females create many problems for them in their daily social interactions (Madox, 1993). What males consider as harmless flirting might be explained by many females as sexual harassment. This is also related to how females and males view gender roles where female participants in this study proved to have less traditional role attitudes. The educational system could play an important role in raising awareness on the issue in addition to correcting misconceptions of students (Blakely, Blakely, & Moorman, 1998). When male and female students start having egalitarian gender role attitudes and start viewing sexual harassment and reacting to it in the same way, then this might limit experiences of SH in schools and universities.

The effect of age on PSH could also be employed to raise awareness of younger students since they have higher tolerance for sexual harassment. The result of this correlation shows that students in schools might be more vulnerable and prone to sexual harassment due to their perceptions and high tolerance. Therefore, it is crucial not only to

educate university students on the issue but also younger students in schools (Blakely, Blakely, & Moorman, 1998).

Clinical Implications

When the correlation between perceptions of sexual harassment and the five subscales of gender role attitudes was tested, it showed that the egalitarian, marriage, and male gender role subscales had a positive and significant correlation with PSH. When a linear regression was run, it showed that only the egalitarian gender role attitude subscale had a significant correlation with PSH. This result is very important from a clinical point of view. Clinical psychologists can use this result in dealing with males and females who have low perceptions of sexual harassment where they can work on this specific area through using the items of this subscale. People who have an egalitarian gender role attitude think that men and women should have equal chances and roles in their everyday lives. The egalitarian gender role attitude subscale tackles the issues of equality between men and women in performing domestic work, professional development, taking decisions within the family, and division of property. Working on these aspects with patients might decrease the chance of them becoming unaware perpetrators of sexual harassment, and it might also increase the chance of them avoiding or reporting acts of SH in case they encounter any.

Delimitations

There were a few delimitations to this study. The age range of the participants was not wide enough to truly reflect the effect of age on PSH. Seven years of difference between the youngest participant and the older one would not be considered having two

distinct groups of people. Another delimitation was the use of Gender Role Attitudes Scale which was created in Turkish and translated to English. The scale was tested within the Turkish society which might be somehow different from the Lebanese society. Some of the items in the scale had to be adjusted for language purposes, and this might have affected the validity and the internal consistency of the items. Using a more reliable and widely used scale would definitely yield better results. Finding very limited resources of research conducted in the Arab world on the subject of PSH was also a delimitation. All the references used in this study were of studies conducted in the USA, Europe, or Africa. Arabic research would have better reflected how students in the Arab world understand sexual harassment and what factors affect their understanding.

Recommendations

After looking at the findings of this study, it is recommended that universities conduct their own research on the issue of sexual harassment as it is very important for the psychological and physiological well-being of students and staff. Sexual harassment university policies need to be clearer and more widely publicized to help students learn more about the topic to be able to avoid it if possible or learn how to deal with it in case of an experience. Clear and straightforward definitions of what constitutes an act of sexual harassment would help students become more aware of the issue and consequently know how to deal with it.

For future studies, the researcher suggests a sample of students of bigger age range. A bigger range truly shows the effect of age on the PSH. To achieve that, a sample of university students could be compared to a sample of school students or even to a sample of university employees. It would also be beneficial to study the effect of other factors on

the perception of sexual harassment such as religiosity which plays a very important role in the Lebanese society. Other factors that might also affect PSH are contextual factors such as the power of the harasser and attractiveness. These factors have been tackled in research conducted outside the Arab world. It would be very interesting to see if they have the same effect on how Lebanese students understand sexual harassment. Finally, the researcher suggests studying the incidence of sexual harassment in Lebanese universities and comparing it to PSH. Showing the public reader how prevalent the issue is in universities would probably shed more light on its importance and the necessity to fight it.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A. The cover page of the survey including informed consent and demographic details

This research project, titled “Perceptions of Sexual Harassment among Lebanese University Students” is conducted as part of the requirements for the MA of a student in Haigazian University. The aim of this research is to find the relationship between how young students understand sexual harassment and their view of gender role and their self esteem.

All data and measurements obtained from this research study will be stored confidentially. Only researcher will have access to view any data collected during this research.

The research intends to abide by all commonly acknowledged ethical codes. You voluntarily agree to participate in this research project by filling the following questionnaire. You have the right to ask the researchers any question regarding this project. You also have the right to reject participation. You may withdraw from this research any time you wish.

This may take 12 to 15 minutes of your time. Please make sure that you have responded to every statement. The study is not directly beneficial to the participants. You will receive no incentive or payment for your participation.

Please read the statements carefully, and then circle only **one** answer that **mostly** reflects the way you feel or think. There is no right or wrong answer. Don't take long answering one question but **try to answer them all**.

Thank you for your appreciated time and cooperation.

If you wish to contact the investigator: lsemaan@students.haigazian.edu.lb

Please fill in your sex and your age, this information will help us better analyze the data.

Gender:

Age:

Are you aware of any policy regarding sexual harassment in your university?

Yes No

Appendix B. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

Below is a list of statements dealing with your general feelings about yourself. If you strongly agree, circle **SA**. If you agree with the statement, circle **A**. If you disagree, circle **D**. If you strongly disagree, circle **SD**.

- | | | | | | |
|-----|---|----|---|---|----|
| 1. | In general, I am satisfied with myself. | SA | A | D | SD |
| 2. | Sometimes, I think I am no good at all. | SA | A | D | SD |
| 3. | I feel that I have a number of good qualities. | SA | A | D | SD |
| 4. | I am able to do things as well as most other people do. | SA | A | D | SD |
| 5. | I feel I do not have much to be proud of. | SA | A | D | SD |
| 6. | I certainly feel useless at times. | SA | A | D | SD |
| 7. | I feel that I'm a person of worth, or at least equal to others. | SA | A | D | SD |
| 8. | I wish I could have more respect for myself. | SA | A | D | SD |
| 9. | All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure. | SA | A | D | SD |
| 10. | I take a positive attitude toward myself. | SA | A | D | SD |

Appendix C. Gender Role Attitudes Scale

Below is a list of statements describing roles of men and women. If you strongly agree, circle **SA**. If you agree with the statement, circle **A**. If you are undecided about your position, circle **UN**. If you disagree, circle **D**. If you strongly disagree, circle **SD**.

- | | | | | | |
|---|----|---|----|---|----|
| 1. Decision to have a child should be made by both spouses in a marriage | SA | A | UN | D | SD |
| 2. Men and women with similar qualifications should receive equal salaries when in the same professional post | SA | A | UN | D | SD |
| 3. Widowed women should be able to live by themselves | SA | A | UN | D | SD |
| 4. Properties should be shared equally when spouses divorce | SA | A | UN | D | SD |
| 5. Equal chances should be given to women and men for professional development | SA | A | UN | D | SD |
| 6. Domestic work should be shared equally between spouses in the family | SA | A | UN | D | SD |
| 7. Daughters and sons should benefit equally from the family's economical means | SA | A | UN | D | SD |
| 8. Spouses make decisions together in the family | SA | A | UN | D | SD |
| 9. Women should have sexual experiences only after they are married | SA | A | UN | D | SD |
| 10. The future wife of a man should be a virgin | SA | A | UN | D | SD |
| 11. Girls should be able to live by themselves when they gain their economical freedom | SA | A | UN | D | SD |
| 12. A woman should be able to go out by herself at night | SA | A | UN | D | SD |
| 13. A woman should consult a female doctor in the hospital | SA | A | UN | D | SD |
| 14. Families should be OK with their girls flirting with men | SA | A | UN | D | SD |
| 15. The last decision regarding the choice of a husband is made by a girl's father | SA | A | UN | D | SD |
| 16. Cheating of husbands on their wives should be regarded as normal | SA | A | UN | D | SD |
| 17. A man's wish is always granted at home | SA | A | UN | D | SD |
| 18. Men should remarry if their wives are not able to bare children | SA | A | UN | D | SD |
| 19. A woman has the right to reject sex with her husband if she | SA | A | UN | D | SD |

doesn't desire it					
20. The husband should make the decisions regarding a woman's life	SA	A	UN	D	SD
21. Contraception in marriages should be the responsibility of only women	SA	A	UN	D	SD
22. A woman is considered more precious if she delivers a boy	SA	A	UN	D	SD
23. Women should prefer to remain silent instead of arguing in case of a conflict with their husbands	SA	A	UN	D	SD
24. The head of the household is the man	SA	A	UN	D	SD
25. A man's main task in the family is to work and make money	SA	A	UN	D	SD
26. Women should not work if the economical situation of the man is adequate	SA	A	UN	D	SD
27. The type of job a woman applies to should be different from a man's job	SA	A	UN	D	SD
28. Men should be employed rather than women because of the women's fertility	SA	A	UN	D	SD
29. A girl should obey her father's wishes until she is married	SA	A	UN	D	SD
30. Men should take care of tasks such as shopping and paying bills	SA	A	UN	D	SD
31. Girls should be dressed in pink while boys should be dressed in blue	SA	A	UN	D	SD
32. Men should decide on how to use the family income	SA	A	UN	D	SD
33. Men should be employed in high status professions	SA	A	UN	D	SD
34. A male's education should be prioritized in the family	SA	A	UN	D	SD
35. A man should beat his wife when necessary	SA	A	UN	D	SD
36. The educational level of the husband should be higher than that of the wife	SA	A	UN	D	SD
37. Husbands should be older than wives in marriages	SA	A	UN	D	SD

Appendix D. Sexual Harassment Index

Below is a list of statements describing sexual attitude. If you feel the statement is Harmless, circle **HL**, Annoying (**A**), Insulting (**I**), Threatening (**TH**), or Harmful (**HF**).

- | | | | | | |
|---|----|---|---|----|----|
| 1. Being asked for sexual favors or sexual acts by someone who is not your partner is: | HL | A | I | TH | HF |
| 2. Being asked about your sexual activity is: | HL | A | I | TH | HF |
| 3. Being told by a person who is not your partner about their sexual prowess (ability) and/or physical attributes is: | HL | A | I | TH | HF |
| 4. Being asked for explicit sexual favors is | HL | A | I | TH | HF |
| 5. Receiving sexually suggestive cards or letters from a person who is not your partner is: | HL | A | I | TH | HF |
| 6. When a person other than your partner gives you a personal gift such as an item of intimate piece of clothes, it is: | HL | A | I | TH | HF |
| 7. A person other than your partner throwing kisses or licking lips to let you know they are interested in you is: | HL | A | I | TH | HF |
| 8. Anonymous notes with suggestive remarks about your sexuality left on your desk, is: | HL | A | I | TH | HF |
| 9. Repeatedly brushing up against someone on purpose is: | HL | A | I | TH | HF |
| 10. Unwelcome touching of your hair by a person who is not your partner is: | HL | A | I | TH | HF |
| 11. When someone who is not your partner unexpectedly gives you a neck and/or shoulder message, it is: | HL | A | I | TH | HF |
| 12. Being pinched or patted on the buttocks by someone not your partner is: | HL | A | I | TH | HF |