



The myth of equality: Sexual harassment behind a woman's desk

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ABSTRACT

Sexual harassment is a significant problem in employment but is often underreported. Women are one of the most vulnerable groups to get harassment in the workplace. As well as gender inequality towards women in development, which is caused by patriarchal cultural factors, such as men are always placed above women. Sexual harassment in the work environment does not only refer to physical acts but to unwanted verbal behavior, which makes the victim feel uncomfortable. This study aims to determine the harassment that occurs in the work environment. Besides, this study also aims to show that sexual jokes during breaks, even in meetings or workspaces at a telecommunication company, are considered normal. This study used qualitative methods with five subjects. These subjects are female workers at a company in Surabaya. They were chosen based on their sexual harassment experience. The research used accidental sampling to determine the subject. This study used a semi-structured interview data collection method. This study is analyzed in the theory of power relations. The theory of power relations stands on two things: (1) the power spreads everywhere (dispersed) and cannot be localized, and (2) when there are structures and relationships between people, there is power. The result demonstrated in three findings. There are several sexual harassments that occurred in the work environment, the resistance of female workers, and the challenges they faced in carrying out their work. Sexual harassment that occurs is verbally based and disguised as a joke in the work environment.

Keywords: Gender Inequality; Sexual Harassment; Women.

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ABSTRAK

Pelecehan seksual merupakan masalah yang signifikan dalam pekerjaan tetapi sering tidak di laporkan. Perempuan merupakan salah satu kelompok yang paling rentan mengalami pelecehan di tempat kerja. Serta ketidakadilan gender terhadap perempuan dalam pembangunan disebabkan faktor budaya patriarki yang selalu menempatkan posisi laki-laki di atas daripada perempuan. Pelecehan seksual di lingkungan kerja tidak hanya mengacu pada tindakan fisik, tetapi pada perilaku verbal yang tidak diinginkan yang membuat korban merasa tidak nyaman menjadi objek masalah seksual. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui pelecehan yang terjadi di lingkungan pekerjaan. Serta ingin memperlihatkan bahwa normalisasi tentang pelecehan seksual yang hanya sekadar kelakar dalam diskusi istirahat, bahkan dalam rapat atau ruang kerja di sebuah perusahaan telekomunikasi. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan jumlah subjek sebanyak lima orang. Subjek merupakan pekerja perempuan di perusahaan yang berada di Surabaya. Berdasarkan pengalaman kelima subjek yang mendapatkan perilaku pelecehan seksual. Peneliti menggunakan accidental sampling untuk penentuan subjek. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode pengumpulan data wawancara, dengan semi terstruktur. Penelitian ini menggunakan teori relasi kuasa untuk menganalisis permasalahan ini. Dimana kuasa ini menyebar di mana-mana (dispersed) dan tidak dapat dilokalisasi. Di mana ada struktur dan relasi antar manusia, di sana ada kuasa. Dalam penelitian ini di temukan sejumlah pelecehan seksual yang terjadi di lingkungan kerja, perlawanan pekerja perempuan, dan tantangan yang dihadapi dalam menjalankan pekerjaannya. Pelecehan seksual yang terjadi berbasis verbal dengan dibungkus dengan bercanda di dalam lingkungan pekerjaan.

Kata Kunci: Ketidakadilan Gender; Pelecehan Seksual; Perempuan.

1. INTRODUCTION

Discrimination is defined as the treatment of individuals differently and the unfair treatment of individuals based on gender, race, religion, age, or other characteristics. Gender discrimination will prevent women from reaching top positions (Zhao, Xiong, Wang, & Ye, 2022). Gender is the nature and behavior attached to men and women that are formed socially and culturally. Gender is a term used to differentiate between men and women based on sociocultural aspects. Suppose sex is formed through a natural process and is divine, while gender is an attribute and behavior that is formed through a social process. In that case, gender refers to a cultural building where problems or issues are related to roles, behaviors, duties, rights, and functions assigned to women and men (Sarina & Ahmad, 2021).

Gender equality is considered one of the essential elements in achieving decent work for both men and women; this gender equality refers to equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities that must be enjoyed by all people regardless of whether someone is born as a man or a woman, this becomes one of the keys to carrying out social and institutional changes that lead to sustainable development with equity and growth. Today, many female workers have begun to show equality between men and women. However, in the field of employment, it is also possible that they are very prone to gender injustice, one of which is sexual

harassment of female workers (Aslamiah & Pinem, 2022). At the same time, the notion of sexual harassment is all sexual behavior or the tendency to behave unwantedly by someone, whether verbal (psychological) or physically, according to the recipient of the behavior as demeaning, insulting, intimidating, or coercive (Sihite, 2007) in the sense that all actions which make the recipient feel uncomfortable in their environment. Sexual harassment in the workplace refers to unwelcome physical, verbal, or non-verbal behavior in the workplace that makes the victim feel humiliated or uncomfortable about sexual matters.

According to a study that systematically reviewed research on sexual harassment from 1977 to 2020, sexual Workplace harassment has been extensively addressed by studies in areas such as the military, schools, and health care. Despite the frequency and sexual characteristics, harassment varies widely, depending on cultural differences, educational level, and nationality; sexual occurrence harassment tends to be higher in more sexed occupations, where one sex predominates over the other. Several studies have investigated sexual harassment at work for decades. However, male victims receive less attention than female victims despite the damage caused by sexual harassment, regardless of the gender of the victim (Jeong & Chang, 2022).

We see that biologically, men and women are indeed different, but this difference should not be used as a reason to give further treatment. In the reality of life in society in general, it appears that the position of women is not as good as that of men. This is caused by the existence of a gender ideology that places men's and women's roles differently based on an understanding of the biological and physiological differences between men and women in determining their roles. Sarina and M. Ridwan Said Ahmad's research (2021) explained that the tendency for gender discrimination against women in development is due to patriarchal cultural factors which always place men above women. Discrimination that occurs in the Makassar industrial area is a stereotype that is developed and socialized by families through the patriarchal culture that if there are men and women in an industrial area, it is the man who has the responsibility to lead. In contrast to women, they are considered less capable of taking responsibility in a company. The view that women are weak is still developing in the industrial world in the Makassar area. Verbal sexual harassment is also another form of discrimination. Rude words given to female workers further secure the position of men who do not want to be managed by women. Male workers consider this work unsuitable to be carried out and led by women. Even more extreme, male workers doubt women who lead, causing words that should not be spoken to women.

In the study, it was also found that women's violence during their apprenticeship was greater; namely, 42.98% experienced at least one case of violence in the past year during their apprenticeship. The types of incidents of violence from high to low were: verbal harassment (38.47%), threats (14.78%), physical attacks (2.73%), sexual harassment (1.99%), and assembly disturbance (dispute medical) (1.78%) (Zhu et al., 2022). Another study also found that 82.5% of female respondents and 65.1% of male respondents had experienced sexual harassment at least once in the past year (Paradis et al., 2022). The public space that should be a place for women to develop themselves outside of their domestic sphere has become a place for sexual harassment. Public space is essential for human connection and public activity. Public space indicates a city's vitality and inclusivity—a place to socialize, celebrate, recreate, and work. Public space is "a place that is open and publicly accessible where people go for

group or individual activities" (Roy & Bailey, 2021). Public space plays a central role in cities and has become a center for economic, social, cultural, and educational activities. Provision of access to public spaces that are safe, inclusive, and accessible, especially for women, children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. Thus, describing the space and its activities affects women's ability to access and use public space.

However, the sexual violence experienced by women in public spaces is undoubtedly different in every place. Likewise, with sexual violence experienced by working women in Surabaya. Many women workers in Surabaya not only got verbal but also non-verbal sexual harassments. This study found violence in women permanent workers in Surabaya companies. This is different from another research (Paradis et al., 2022) that revealed women violence in intern workers.

From the several studies above, the researcher wants to focus on research on harassment that occurs in the work environment. He also wants to show that the normalization of sexual harassment is just a joke during break discussions, even in meetings or workspaces at a telecommunication company.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Michel Foucault introduced the archaeological method with a more explicit exploration. Archeology is a mean of critical analysis to dismantle the relationship between power and knowledge in discourse. He uses the term discourse to describe knowledge-based ways of thinking and acting. Foucault views power differently from the Weberians, namely, the subjective ability to influence others. Power is also not interpreted like the Marxians as a material artifact that can be controlled and used by certain classes (bourgeoisie) to dominate and oppress other classes (proletarians) (Suyanto & Amal, 2010).

Foucault finds that all discourses with the potential for scientific objectivity are those of someone with power. The process that turns the subject into an object creates a new way of organizing the social sphere (Ritzer, 2003). The position of women as subjects in their work environment has turned into objects so that women become objects of perpetrators of sexual harassment. Patriarchal culture also adds power to make women powerless again. Apart from that, the discourses that were built about jobs were suitable and not suitable for women. This action also perpetuates women in subordination. Foucault, power is not understood as ownership like property or position but is understood as a strategy in society that involves various relations (Haryatmoko et al., 2002). The presence of women in public spaces that involve everyone needs to be more robust to access what is needed because it must be accompanied by courage and intelligence to speak out critical ideas and convince the forum that the ideas being fought for are essential to achieve their work.

Power is not centered on one subject or institution but is spread everywhere (omnipresent) in every social relationship (Foucault, 2000). Women should obtain this because true power can also be obtained by women in their work environment. Power is not achieved and stopped but is exercised in various relationships and continues to move (Foucault, 1978).

Research (Sumintak & Idi, 2022) shows that unequal power relationships (Student-lecturers/student relations) are very vulnerable to an opportunity to cause sexual harassment, where after the incident, survivors tend not to want to report or process further the incident

they experienced. A college student who is in the process of completing her thesis is very dependent on the ease of the guidance process by her lecturer, so psychologically, the student is powerless or obeys the wishes of the lecturer, including the sexual harassment she experiences when the act is undesirable.

3. METHOD

The researcher used a qualitative approach or, specifically, a phenomenology paradigm in this research. The use of the qualitative approach and phenomenology paradigm in this research is behind the interpretation/theoretical framework that establishes or influences the study of research problems. Through qualitative and phenomenology, this can explore the meaning of this study more deeply. To study this problem, researcher use the latest qualitative approach in research. Specifically, the qualitative approach begins with observation, interviews, and documentation. Collection of data in natural settings sensitive to the people and place of research, and inductive and deductive analysis of the data and the formation of patterns or themes. The final written report or presentation includes the participants' voices, the researcher's reflexivity, the research problem's description and interpretation, and their contribution to the literature or calls for change (Creswell, 2015). Qualitative research emphasizes socially constructed traits. This qualitative research aims to explain the phenomena that occur in depth through data collection directly to the subject without using numbers.

The characteristics of research with a qualitative approach, namely orientation to unique cases, mean that qualitative research focuses on the in-depth investigation of a small number of cases (Neuman, 2018). The analysis in this study is the experience of sexual harassment of women workers in public places. In this public place, it reaches the workplace, work environment, and environment in which they live.

Qualitative research has a series of activities in the data collection process later. One of the most important ones is the selection of research subjects. An essential step in this process is finding the people/communities or subjects to be researched, gaining access, and building relationships with the subjects so that they can provide information on the existing reality. One closely related step in the process is determining a strategy for subject sampling (Neuman, 2018). Researcher used accidental sampling which can already give an idea that this technique is based on the principle of "accidental" (accidental) and occurred due to various factors, such as convenience and the circumstances that occurred at the time of research. In this study, the authors directly asked subjects who were in a company and had experienced sexual harassment. After that, approach the subject. Researcher can immediately choose any workers who is in the vicinity.

These considerations are related to (1) decisions regarding the selection of participants (or places) to be studied, (2) a specific type of sampling strategy, and (3) the size of the sample studied (Neuman, 2018). The research subjects referred here are female workers in Surabaya. Considering the researchers' limitations and the research approach, the subjects used in this study were not all female workers in Surabaya. Researcher see and select subjects based on the experiences of subjects who experience sexual harassment behavior in their work environment. So, the researcher wants to put more emphasis on the specifics of determining this subject only on the limits of having experienced acts of sexual harassment as well as

subjects who are willing to get information because researcher are aware that for this act of sexual harassment, workers hide their experiences more and are reluctant to tell others for various reasons. Therefore, the researcher determines whether workers have experienced or have not experienced sexual harassment and whether workers are still actively working in Surabaya. While the object of this research is sexual harassment, the researcher wants to focus more on extracting more in-depth information about the experiences of workers who experience sexual harassment.

In the research, the five research subjects was successfully interviewed. The first subject was Tiramisu (not his real name), who had just moved to Surabaya for a few months of work. Tiramisu is only 22 years old. She is currently working in one of the leading telecommunications companies in Indonesia. Tiramisu is a customer service (CS) that handles telecommunications network problems. Tiramisu received verbal sexual harassment in the environment she lived in. Tiramisu came from Nganjuk and migrated to Surabaya to earn a better income than in his hometown.

The second subject is Vanilla (not her real name), a marketing agent for a property developer in Surabaya. Vanilla has been working in Surabaya for a long time. If it is counted as a whole, it has been almost three years. Vanilla is currently 29 years old. Vanilla is not married yet. Before the interview began, Vanilla told many stories about her current work and life problems and until now she has still not married. After that, Vanilla recounted the incidents she often received while working.

The third research subject is Caramel (not her real name), who also works in marketing. In the story, Caramel gets sexually harassed by her boss. During a visit to a customer, Caramel was invited by his boss. However, they do not go to the customer. The leadership of Caramel instead diverted their destination to the hotel with the excuse of visiting a friend first. Caramel was able to get away with being sexually assaulted by the way she made a scene so the hotel employees came to him and broke up the incident.

Boba's (not her real name) is also a customer service (CS) at leading telecommunications companies in Indonesia. Boba is a co-worker of Tiramisu. Boba worked in Surabaya earlier than Tiramisu. Boba explained that acts of sexual harassment in her work environment were packed with jokes. She recounted the frequent verbal abuse she received while she was at work. Sexual harassment is carried out by co-workers who are on the same team. The women who are on the team are always the object of sex talk. Like "it is nice to be brought into the room," mentioning the sensitive parts of women and jokes that lead to styles of sexual intercourse.

The fifth subject was called Red Velvet (not her real name). She is now eight months pregnant. She was sexually assaulted during recess, to be precise, while buying lunch. When buying lunch, she started a joke with food vendors. Nevertheless, the seller took it seriously after a while and asked to check-in as the negative implied meaning. She felt disappointed in himself and questioned why an act like this verbal abuse could happen.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Sexual Harassment

Research (Jeong & Chang, 2022) reveals that harassment does not only occur to women but also to men. The findings reveal a sexual prevalence of harassment, with 65.2% of

male nurses having experienced sexual experience harassment at least once during the past six months at their workplace. Even so, the phenomenon of sexual harassment occurred more frequently among women (18.9%) than men (13.8%) who were victims (Lippel, Vézina, Bourbonnais, & Funes, 2016). The results of another study showed that 77.6% of children were exposed to at least one type of violence in their work environment: 70.4% reported emotional abuse, 52% experienced neglect, 5.8% reported physical violence, and 3.6% experienced sexual harassment. Much of the emotional abuse is related to workplace discrimination, such as lower pay and more workload than others (Jalili Moayad et al., 2021). This condition makes the work environment no longer comfortable for victims of harassment. As Vanilla said, she prefers to avoid talking about sex, which leads to demeaning women. In contrast to Tiramisu, she avoided meeting the perpetrators in his environment as much as possible by not talking or changing seats so that she would not meet the perpetrators.

All of the subjects interviewed never reported this act of sexual violence to their superiors. The subjects kept the action secret from anyone, including other co-workers, company leaders, and families. Passive responses about sexual harassment also happened to the male victim. Jung's findings (Jeong & Chang, 2022) revealed that more than half of the male nurses remained passive in sexual response harassment, "laughing at it" (32.3%), "not expressing anything" (12.5%), and "avoiding the situation" (9.4%), while 15.6% of respondents actively responded and expressed displeasure. In addition, most male nurses (91.1%) did not report SH incidents, with the most frequent reason for not reporting (58.9%) being that they did not expect reporting to result in any change. This illustrates that the phenomenon of sexual harassment occurs when women or men choose not to report sexual harassment due to other people's indifference to their situation and concerns about relationships with colleagues—considering that sexual harassment is considered normal in their daily conversations.

The occurrence of sexual harassment occurs due to imbalances of power and status (organizational model), inappropriate gender-based expectations (sex role spillover model), and individual predispositions combined with organizational norms (person-environment model). Normalization of sexual harassment (Jeong & Chang, 2022). Worldwide, 35.6% of women have experienced harassment from others (Temesgan, Endale, & Aynalem, 2021). The findings of this previous study also apply to the telecommunications worker environment in Surabaya. According to the findings of researchers, sexual harassment occurs because women are always the object of sex; the assumption is that verbal abuse, whistling, teasing, and profanity are jokes used to break the ice under pressure at work.

Many victims feel that this sexual harassment treatment is hidden from their environment because they hope that not everyone will know about what happened to them. All research subjects also revealed that none of them told or reported the act of sexual violence. The subjects kept to themselves and hoped that one day, the sinister events that happened to them would be forgotten. This is in line with findings (Nurbayani, Dede, & Widiawaty, 2022) stating that victims of sexual harassment, including those in their closest social environment, often perceive the case as a disgrace. This sometimes triggers the emergence of post-traumatic stress disorder when the victim is not handled correctly. In Indonesia, sexual harassment has become a concern since women's issues. Other findings also explain that the most common bullies are co-workers, supervisors, or superiors in the same

workgroup (Parke et al., 2022). It is the subject named Caramel who recounts this incident to her roommate. After telling the story, she only got peace; there was no definite solution to overcome the harassment that befell him.

The impact that was felt in Caramel's life became more careful. For safety, she always observed the surroundings where she lived in. She always looks beside the house when she wants to go to work or travel whether the father beside the house outside the house (terrace) or not. She will pass in front of the house if no one is outside the house. Whereas if he is outside the home, then she will look for another, more detour route to avoid meeting the perpetrator of sexual harassment. This impact aligns with what Paradis et al. (2022) explained: victims will feel unproductive. The act of sexual harassment will always overshadow them. Gender-based discrimination and sexual harassment exist on the ground and hurt women. Adverse effects include reduced professional achievement and physical and mental health (Paradis et al., 2022). The successful and safe integration of women workers in the industry will depend more on company policies than women's behavior. Companies must be transformed to create safe and inclusive spaces for all employees to earn income, including women, whether through their hiring practices, workplace protections, work culture, and the environment they work in (Murphy, Strand, Theron, & Ungar, 2021).

4.2. Resistance

The incidence of sexual harassment is broadly divided into three dimensions that are related but conceptually distinct: gender harassment, unwanted sexual attention, and sexual coercion. Gender harassment includes unwanted, verbal, and nonverbal incidents that humiliate and demean women (Vijayalakshmi, Dev, & Kulkarni, 2022). In this study, victims of sexual harassment resisted by avoiding jokes with coworkers. The coworkers they avoid are coworkers who have verbally abused, made sexual comments about women's bodies, sexual advances, touching, dirty sexual jokes, and talking about their sexual activities in front of others. Perpetrators of sexual harassment are not limited by gender or relationship with the victim. That means sexual harassment can be perpetrated by men and women on anyone, including wives or husbands, girlfriends, parents, siblings, friends, close relatives, and strangers (Worke, Koricha, & Debelew, 2022). In addition, this sexual harassment itself can occur anywhere, including at home, workplace, school, or campus.

The five of the subjects interviewed resisted sexual harassment by saving the incident. They think this is a disgrace that must be hidden and kept secret from other people, including family, work friends, playmates, close relatives, and even husband or wife. The first subject, Tiramisu, puts up a fight by remaining silent as well as avoiding talk that leads to her body or sexual talk. Tiramisu once talked to his roommate. Tiramisu only got peace after pouring out what happened to him.

The second subject, Vanilla, puts up a fight by challenging the seducer. She did so by replying to jokes about sex. Apart from that, Vanilla also challenged the teaser to take her in a more serious direction. "...I challenge you back, bro; I am also teased if people talk about sex like that a lot; if you hold on to it, you will not dare, bro; the courage is just talking...." Vanilla challenged by responding more ferociously so that the perpetrators were deterred and reluctant with him. Vanilla does not always show this courage; it is only shown a few times. Vanilla also spoke directly with the perpetrator that the words that were said to her made her

feel abused as a woman. Sometimes, some of them understand, and sometimes, Vanilla gave in and leaves the conversation.

Then, the subject, Boba, puts up a fight by talking directly to the perpetrator, who always talked about sex. She told the perpetrator that the action was wrong because women are always the object of sexual talk. Even though these actors are old workers at the company. However, Boba never reported this act of verbal abuse to his superiors. She did not want this to become big because she could still do it himself. Talking directly to the perpetrators was not always done because she knew they were Boba's perpetrators. Bobo thought they were still too childish. So that she sometimes shies away from conversations that lead to sex.

The last subject, Red Velvet, resisted by not visiting the food stalls guarded by the perpetrators. According to Red Velvet, this action includes resistance so that the outlet is empty of visitors, and she knows what karma she has done. Apart from that, she also asked her co-workers not to buy food at his outlets. So, she did not do it herself, but she also invited her co-workers.

5. CONCLUSION

The experience of women in this study highlights sexual harassment that occurs in the work environment, the resistance of female workers, and the challenges they face in carrying out their work. Sexual harassment that occurs is verbally based and wrapped in a joke in the work environment. As well as, determining the level of sexual harassment perpetrators within telecommunications companies is difficult. However, some issues need to be resolved to ensure that sexual harassment behavior is recognized, reported, and resolved. This research focuses more on social studies. In other words, female workers at Surabaya Telecommunication Company have yet to study the policy further. Therefore, another study will review the company's policies on sexual violence within the company.

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