

# Chapter 4

## Reflections of Sexual Harassment on Psychology and Media

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### ABSTRACT

*In this chapter, the aim is to discuss what sexual harassment is, theoretical models based on sexual harassment, social and individual effects of sexual harassment, and the place of sexual harassment in the media. This chapter consists of three main sections. Firstly, sexual harassment is defined, and the theoretical models related to sexual harassment, gender differences in sexual harassment, and world statistics on sexual harassment are introduced. In the second part, the effects of sexual harassment on the society and the individual are examined from the perspective of psychology. In addition, the psychological consequences of sexual harassment at the individual level are examined from the perspective of clinical psychology. The last section covers the impact and visibility of sexual harassment on the media and the social media visibility examples of sexual harassment.*

### INTRODUCTION

Sexual harassment is a phenomenon that has been studied by many researchers and different disciplines until today. Although it is considered as a joint work of psychology and legal disciplines, it is now taking its place in the media quite often. Fitzgerald, Swan, and Magley (1997), drawing attention to the distinction made in terms of the definition of sexual harassment, stated that there is a need for different definitions in terms of psychological and legal aspects. In order to the definition to be more explanatory, theoretical models have been created. In this sense, four models examining the issue of sexual harassment will be introduced in this chapter. These are Single Factor Theory, Natural/Biological Theory, Social-cognitive Theory of Sexual Harassment, Multi-factor Theory of Sexual Harassment.

According to the World Population Report (2021), it is stated that the probability of women being sexually harassed by men is 35% during their lifetime. Although 141 countries have laws on sexual

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harassment, it is understood that this number is still low and although there are laws, they are not sufficient in terms of implementation (UN Women, 2021). Although researches show that women frequently come face to face with sexual harassment, it is stated that the frequency of sexual harassment by young men and LGBTQ+ groups is increasing (Promundo & UN Women, 2017). Some social theorists regard sexual harassment as a reflection of the patriarchal system (Pryor, 1987; Vaux, 1993). Therefore, sexual harassment is frequently seen in societies where the perception that social beliefs legitimize male dominance is prominent. In such societies, women may appear to play a passive role, avoiding confusion, attractive, taking responsibility for distrusting their own judgment (Sokoloff, 1980). According to Welsh, Carr, MacQuarrie and Huntley (2006), citizenship status can also be a visible and complex component of women's definitions of sexual harassment. In societies that value women's rights, the existence of more sensitive and educated individuals against sexual harassment and the existence of legally strong systems also bring about social change.

Beside that the other impact of sexual harassment, its individual effects are also very destructive and threaten the physical and psychological health of the harassed individual. PTSD (Larsen and Fitzgerald, 2011), eating disorders (Harned & Fitzgerald, 2002), concentration problems, and depression (Chan, Lam, Chow & Cheung, 2008) would often be experienced by individual after being harassed. Amongst the long-term effects, people who have experienced this condition may experience a decrease in their self-esteem (Harned & Fitzgerald, 2002), decrease in work efficiency and even job losses (Welsh & Gruber, 1999). It is understood that reporting and not reporting the event can cause significant differences in the life of abused individual. The literature indicates that the consequences of reporting and non-reporting of sexual harassment are complex (Bell, Street, & Stafford, 2014). It shows that reporting can have both positive and negative consequences in terms of social/work life and psychological health (Campbell, 2008). It is also stated that this consequences depending on how the laws work in the region where they live.

## **SEXUAL HARASSMENT**

The term "sexual harassment" is a term that emerged in North America in the mid-1970s to address the conceptual problem that posed the work of various researchers (Farley, 1978; MacKinnon, 1979). In the most general sense, sexual harassment is defined as inappropriate behavior in the sexual dimension. But whether there is a power difference in the realization of harassment; the necessity of specifying the location; whether the victim's behavior is problematic; It is seen that there are discussions in terms of whether sexist behavior is a kind of sexual harassment (O'Donohue, Downs, & Yeater, 1998). Fitzgerald, Swan, and Magley (1997) defined sexual harassment on a psychological basis as sexually related behavior in the workplace, offensive by the recipient, exceeding resources, threatening bodily integrity, and undesirable behavior. The most common and most severe types of violence against women are rape, sexual coercion, sexual abuse, forced prostitution and exploitation of labor (Watts & Zimmerman, 2002). As can be understood from here, it can be predicted that sexual harassment is an umbrella topic and is related to many fields.

The problems faced by individuals in their social and business life can affect individuals socially, economically and psychologically. Especially with the 1900s, with the increasing visibility of women in business life, the phenomenon of sexual harassment has become a frequently encountered problem.

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