AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

A NARRATIVE LITERATURE REVIEW ON SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST FROM A FEMINIST FRAMEWORK PERSPECTIVE

by
NAJI ZAKARIA AL FATEH

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Approved by:

_____   Signature

Dr. Yasmeen Makarem, Assistant Professor   First Reader
Suliman S. Olayan School of Business

_____   Signature

Dr. Fida Afiouni, Associate Professor   Second Reader
Suliman S. Olayan School of Business

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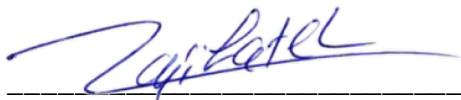# AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

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ABSTRACT

OF THE PROJECT OF

Naji Zakaria Al Fateh   for   Master of Arts
                                             Major: Human Resource Management

Title: A Narrative Literature Review on Sexual Harassment in Higher Education in the Middle East from a Feminist Framework Perspective

In this narrative literature review, I aim to review the existing sexual harassment (SH) in higher education literature to understand the reasons behind its occurrence and determine the relationships between the different interplaying factors that facilitate its prevalence in the Middle East through the lens of the Feminist Framework Theory. This review will further highlight the need for scholars to focus their research interests on topics of SH and other related issues in the Arab world and in higher education, as it is highly prevalent and misunderstood. The review of the literature is important to understand how previous research tackled this topic, which theories they adopted, how people's perceptions differ through the lens of each theory, and how societal factors contribute to such perceptions and manifest itself through policies and its implementation. This study reviews 24 articles based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria. These studies have targeted men and women in higher education in the Middle East, and focused on the perceptions of SH, reporting and culture across universities that may or may not have anti-harassment policies. The analysis that was carried out was based on the five core dimensions of the Feminist Framework Plus (FFP), in which the results were linked and correlated to these dimensions. The results yielded recommendations to managers to adopt a feminist perspective in developing policies by using the intersectionality perspective and reduce patriarchal perspectives as suggested by the FFP. This study aims to give a different perspective on the prevalence of SH and what needs to be done to prevent it using the FFP, and the urge for future research to examine the perpetrators' profiles and take gender into consideration and gender minorities' experiences to have a culturally sensitive environment in the Middle East.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure

TABLES

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background

The fight against the phenomenon of sexual harassment has been ongoing for decades and many researchers have highlighted its prevalence and effects on all aspects of an individual's life (Abel, 2017; Butler & Chung-Yan 2011; McDonald, 2012; Sang et al., 2016). However, until this day, it remains an issue that is highly misunderstood and misinterpreted by people in society, particularly in the Middle Eastern countries. According to Karam and Ghanem (2019), the understanding of sexual harassment is influenced by the context in which the phenomenon is being studied due to the factors that affect the context including "political, financial, education, labor, and cultural subsystems within a nation state," (p. 376). In their study, they stated that out of the 22 Arab countries, only Algeria, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq have adopted laws against workplace sexual harassment. According to Saghieh, a Lebanese Human Rights lawyer, cited by Hejase (2015, p.110), states that cases of workplace sexual harassment were not recorded despite reporting and coming forward to court with it. Recently, Lebanon has passed a law on workplace sexual harassment, which is crucial as, according to Thomas (2013) "the Lebanese Ministry of Social Affairs revealed in 2007 that three complainants had been filed per week for sexual harassment and rape," (ibid.). Nevertheless, there is a gap in research that focuses on women and their professional experiences – in academia, particularly in Arab and Muslim countries (Lekchiri et al., 2019), hence tackling the topic of sexual harassment in higher education in the Middle East is crucial to understand how multiple socio-cultural factors intertwine and affect the perceptions of sexual harassment of people in academia.

Sexual harassment is a multifaceted phenomenon and researchers have defined it from different aspects and perspectives, most important of which are legal, psychological, sex-based, and behavioral (Li et al., 2016; O'Leary-Kelly et al., 2009), but they have yet to agree on a universal definition for what it constitutes (O'Leary-Kelly et al., 2000). In a study focusing on anti-sexual harassment efforts in the context of the Arab Middle Eastern country of Lebanon, the definition of sexual harassment adopted was: "unwanted, unwelcomed behavior of a sexual or sex-based nature that can manifest in different forms (e.g., verbal, physical and psychological) and across different mediums (e.g., cyberspace, in person, through images, etc.)" (Karam & Ghanem, 2019). This definition is in alignment with the psychological perspective which will be adopted in this research study. It is important to understand that people have unique perceptions and interpret things differently. This is where the conflict lies – in cases where the harassers may not perceive their actions or behavior as inappropriate while the harassed person may perceive them as out of bounds and a harassing behavior (Hejase, 2015).

Consequently, this misconception and individual interpretation of behavior or actions are reflected in the workplace, especially in a diverse workplace where employees come from different educational, cultural, and religious backgrounds, and personal beliefs. A common type of sexual harassment is gender-based sexual harassment, which makes women in the workplace more prone to such behaviors than men, experiencing rude sexual jokes, unwanted sexual advances or demands, physical or verbal misconduct and so on (Sang et al., 2016). In the Arab world, there is yet to be consensus on having an inclusive approach towards women participating in the workforce (Lekchiri et al., 2019; Sidani, 2005) . Unfortunately, according to Collinson and Collinson (1996), some women in male dominated work environments tend not to identify behaviors of sexual

harassment to be viewed as competent and team players as their male counterparts (McDonald, 2012).

Due to the complexity of the phenomenon and its prevalence across multiple disciplines, this research study will focus on its occurrence in the academic field, particularly in universities. This direction stems from the gap in research that focuses on women and their professional experiences – in academia and tackling the topic would allow me to further examine and understand the issue. The previous research conducted on sexual harassment has tackled several aspects of it, mainly in the academic field – at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, and in organizations, most important of which are the perceptions of employees on sexual harassment, organizational policies, reporting, and organizational culture (Abel, 2017; Butler & Chung-Yan, 2011; McCabe & Hardman, 2005; McDonald, 2012; Tindigarukayo, 2006).

Higher education in the Arab world is considered somewhat recent, as it emerged after the mid-twentieth century (Issa and Siddiek, 2012; Abu-Orabi, 2012). Based on the literature, there were only three universities in the Arab world up till 1950. Despite the expansion of higher education in the Arab world ever since, it is still considered modest in comparison to other countries in the Global North. With that comes various challenges, hence, focusing on higher education in the Middle East will be an eye-opener to the root causes of the systemic issues caused by the patriarchal society. This context of the study will be further elaborated on in Chapter 3.

Some of these researchers have focused on the perceptions and attitudes of faculty, staff, and students towards their university's policies on sexual harassment, while others have focused on the parameters, content, and clear communication of the existing policies (Fusilier & Penrod, 2015; Todorova, 2018). In one study, in an academic context,

it was found that over one-third of the second-year students indicating that they have been sexually harassed (mainly sexual jokes), and first year students have experienced sexual harassment from day one in school (mainly sexual topics or jokes, demands to view pornographic videos…) (Sang et al., 2016). On the other hand, some researchers have focused on the various aspects of the policies in universities including (1) the different types of policies that exist in universities (2) whether they are specific and clear or general and vague, (3) the measures taken in case of violations – some organizations develop policies without explicitly including sanctions or punishments regarding policy violations (Spence, 1997), (4) the parties affected and protected by these policies, (5) whether these policies are applied organization-wide or position/department specific – this aspect and the one preceding help in identifying if the policies are applied equally and fairly, for instance, between entry-level employees and top executives, and (6) the process of reporting, investigating, and grievances. However, even with the implementation of policies against sexual harassment, the issue still persists, and many people face it regularly, particularly women and other gender minorities (Berdahl & Moore, 2006; Kalof et al., 2001). If policies are developed and implemented to prevent these incidents, and if members of the university community are still facing this issue, then more needs to be researched to understand the reasons behind the occurrence of sexual harassment and identifying the factors that hinder its proper elimination. Thus, the purpose of this study is to review the existing literature on sexual harassment in higher education, in the Middle East, in order to identify the reasons behind the prevalence of SH in higher education, identify the profiles of perpetrators and survivors, and the factors that affect its prevalence.

B. Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to review the existing sexual harassment in higher education literature to understand the reasons behind its occurrence and to determine the relationships between the different interplaying factors that facilitate the prevalence of sexual harassment in higher education in the Middle East through the lens of the feminist framework theory. The aim of my study is to highlight on the need for scholars to focus their research interests on topics of sexual harassment and other related issues in the Middle East and in higher education, as it is highly prevalent and misunderstood. The review of the existing literature is important in order to understand how previous research tackled this topic, which theories did they adopt, how perceptions of people differ through the lens of each theory, and how societal factors contribute to such perceptions and manifest itself through the existence of policies and its implementation. The literature review will include studies that have targeted men and women in higher education in the Middle East. My aim is to make the literature review process more concise and relevant, through focusing on the phenomenon of sexual harassment in higher education and academia across the region in order to identify the reasons behind the prevalence of sexual harassment in universities. Therefore, this study will examine all the preceding issues to perceptions of sexual harassment, reporting and culture across universities that may or may not have anti-harassment policies set in place.

C. Research Questions

The literature review will allow me to answer the research questions guiding this study, including:

1. What is the prevalence of sexual harassment in higher education? What are the reasons behind its occurrence?

2. Who are the most common perpetrators and survivors?

3. What are the factors that prevent men and women from reporting? Is it cultural and/or societal? Is it organizational?

4. Why do incidents of sexual harassment still occur and/or are not reported despite the existence of anti-harassment policies? Is it different between universities that have policies and those that do not?

5. How can a feminist reading of the sexual harassment literature inform our understanding on how sexual harassment is perceived and the reasons of its occurrence?

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

A. The Phenomenon of Sexual Harassment

1. Definitions

Sexual harassment is a contextual phenomenon despite it being universal and researchers have yet to have consensus on its definition and what constitutes sexual harassment. The American Association of University Women (AAUW) defines sexual harassment as "a non-consensual and unwelcome sexual behavior that affects lives of the victims," (Sang et al., 2016); the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission defines it as

> "unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when 1) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment or admission to an academic program, 2) submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as a basis for decisions affecting an individual's employment status or academic standing, or 3) such conduct has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with an individual's performance on the job or in the classroom, or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive work or study environment" (Kastl & Kleiner, 2001, p. 156).

The legal perspective and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (1980) define two main types of sexual harassment, including *quid pro quo* and *hostile*

environment (O'Leary-Kelly et al., 2009; Tindigarukayo, 2006). The former occurs as a favor or advantage granted in return of something; it is present whenever the harasser has power or authority over the harassed party and makes the acceptance or rejection of sexual advances the basis on which the harassed party advances in his/her career (Tindigarukayo, 2006). While the latter it is creating a hostile and unsafe work environment through unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature (e.g., uninvited regular physical contact, unwanted touching or fondling, unwelcome sexual materials like cartoons or posters of a sexual nature, vulgar comments, or jokes, etc.) (ibid.). According to Fitzgerald, Swan, and Magley (1997), the psychological perspective defines it as "unwanted sex-related behavior at work that is appraised by the recipient as offensive, exceeding her resources, or threatening her well-being" (O'Leary-Kelly et al., 2009). Researchers have stated that the difference between the legal and psychological perspectives is that the former views sexual harassment objectively whereas the latter subjectively (Zhu et al., 2019; Li et al., 2016; O'Leary-Kelly et al., 2009). Unlike the legal perspectives, the psychological perspective defines sexual harassment more broadly (Cortina & Berdahl, 2008, p.470).

In addition to the legal and psychological perspectives, there exists a new perspective – lay or public perspective (ibid.). The below table represents a clearer idea of how sexual harassment is defined from the three perspectives based on the studies that were conducted from their lens.

Table 1

Legal, Social-Psychological, & Lay Definitions of Sexual Harassment

Perspectives	Definition
Legal Perspective (Cortina & Berdahl, 2008, p.470; O'Leary et al., 2009)	Historically, sexual harassment is defined based on quid pro quo harassment that involves two people – a perpetrator and a victim, and in the workplace, a supervisor and a subordinate.
	The definition was expanded to include hostile workplace environment which encompasses incidents not limited to a supervisor/subordinate relationship where power dynamics exist.
	The EEOC stated that (1) victims and harassers can be of the same sex, (2) anyone can be affected by the misconduct (even if indirectly), and (3) the harasser does not need to be employed by the organization.
Social-Psychological Perspective (Cortina & Berdahl, 2008, p.471; Zhu et al., 2019)	It is broad and subjective and focuses on specific individual behaviors and victims' subjective experiences with these behaviors.
	Sexual harassment was classified by psychologist Frank J. Till (1980) into five main categories including:
	1. generalized sexist remarks or behavior
	2. inappropriate and offensive (but essentially sanction-free) sexual advances
	3. solicitation of sexual activity or other sex-linked behavior by promise of rewards
	4. coercion of sexual activity by threat of punishments; and
	5. sexual assaults
Lay Perspective (Cortina & Berdahl, 2008, p.471)	It takes into account the general public's opinion about sexual harassment and how it impacts the existing organizational policies and their perceptions of what constitutes appropriate behaviors in the workplace. It states that cultural differences as well as gender play a role in the perception of people about sexual harassment and appropriate behaviors.

Followed by Till's study and classification, Louise F. Fitzgerald and colleagues (1988) conducted a study in an attempt to identify sexual behaviors that represent Till's five categories. The study was done on women students and employees (ibid., p.471). The following table represents Till's five categories matched by Fitzgerald's sexual behaviors.

Table 2

Fitzgerald and Till's findings correlation

Fitzgerald's Behaviors	Till's Categories
Gender Harassment	Category 1
Unwanted sexual attention	Category 2 and 5
Sexual Coercion	Category 3 and 4

The ongoing debates on defining sexual harassment have included debates on which perspective to adopt in order to define it – should it adopt the legal, social-psychological, or lay perspective? (ibid., p. 472). Each perspective takes into account various aspects pertaining to sexual harassment and they are interdependent, for the legal perspective views sexual harassment as unlawful behaviors, whereas the social-psychological perspective views it from a broader lens taking into consideration the cross-cultural factors that play a role in the occurrence of this phenomenon and how people perceive. Consequently, it is important not to overlook the lay perspective as individuals and their experiences are crucial; however, as aforementioned, sexual harassment is subjective, and people have different perceptions of what constitutes sexual harassment. In other words, not every person views a sexual behavior as inappropriate rather some

enjoy these behaviors and what would be inappropriate is considering it a harassing experience (Cortina & Berdahl, 2008, p.472; McDonald, 2012). More importantly, not everyone experiences sexual harassment in the same way even if they belong to the same sex. For instance, if two women have been sexually harassed, it does not mean that both experienced the same act or incident and suffered the same consequence, and it is wrong to assume that it is and disregard the intersectionality of people that affects how each person experience this type of misconduct (Collins & Chlup, 2014). As well, women of color, members of the LGBTQIA+ community, and women with disabilities, are prone to experience "double jeopardy" when it comes to workplace sexual harassment and discrimination based on their race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and physical disability (Banner et. al, 2021; Berdahl & Moore, 2006; Boyer, 2022; Boyle and Kalof et al., 2001; McKinzie, 2021; Wood et al., 2021). As well, members of the LGBTQIA+ community are more prone and have higher chances of experiencing sexual harassment during different stages of their life more than their straight peers – starting in middle and high school, (Boyle and McKinzie, 2021; Smith et al., 2022; Sutton et al., 2021; Wood et al., 2021).

2. Types of Sexual Harassment

As aforementioned, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (1980) have defined two types of sexual harassment, which are *quid pro quo* and *hostile environment.* The latter type of harassment is more subtle and more difficult to prove because it involves a series of behaviours that may be implicit (Kastl & Kleiner, 2001; Mousa and Abdelgaffar, 2022). According to Wise and Stanley (1987), there are extreme cases of

sexual harassment referred to as "sledgehammer harassment" and the "dripping tap" variety, which are the day-to-day cases (McDonald, 2012).

Moreover, sexual harassment is not limited to the preceding types only, rather in a study done by the American Association of University Women (2005), it was found that other forms of sexual harassment "involved sexual jokes; comments on body, look and private life; intentional touching of others; and sexual gestures or looks." (Sang et. al, 2016). Also, the study showed that 37% male students were victims of verbal harassment, particularly being called "homosexuals", more than females who faced this form of harassment (13%). In another study focusing on the prevalence of sexual harassment among graduate and law school students, it was resulted that "the most common form was sexual comments, jokes, gestures, and looks (30%)." (Boyle and McKinzie, 2021).

Another form of sexual harassment is cyberbullying, with today's easy access to everyone, most of the social media platforms have increased the likelihood of cyberbullying. In the organizational context, during the current global pandemic, this form of harassment can also take place with remote working, and it is intriguing to examine how organizations are adapting to these changes and monitoring the occurrence of sexual harassment incidents online.

3. Antecedents and Consequences

Researchers have also shown interest in the antecedents and consequences of sexual harassment. In one study, Pina & Gannon state that the organizational climate (i.e., tolerance of sexual harassment) and the gender aspect in the job (i.e., the proportional number of women in the workplace/workgroup) allows the occurrence of sexual harassment. "Organizational climate is considered to be the strongest predictor of sexual

harassment" (2012). Therefore, having an organizational culture that allows behavior of misconduct predicts the consequences on the harassed person. Additionally, if organizational policies are not well-communicated with employees, if any, lead to negative employee experience which in turn causes personal and job-related outcomes (Willness et al., 2007). In another study, O'Leary-Kelly et al., have studied various antecedents and consequences of sexual harassment, as well as responses of victims, organizations, and observers (2009). The below figure represents the most prominent aspects that are of high relevance to the current study.

Figure 1

Antecedents and Consequences of Sexual Harassment

Personal
- Gender
- Personality
- Position
- Subjective Intent

Organizational
- Job/Gender Context
- Sexual Harassment Climate
- Policies, Procedures, Practices
- Structure

Personal
- Job-related (Performance, attitudes)
- Psychological effects
- Physiological effects

Organizational
- Work Withdrawal
- Turnover
- Organizational Commitment
- Workgroup productivity
- Team conflict
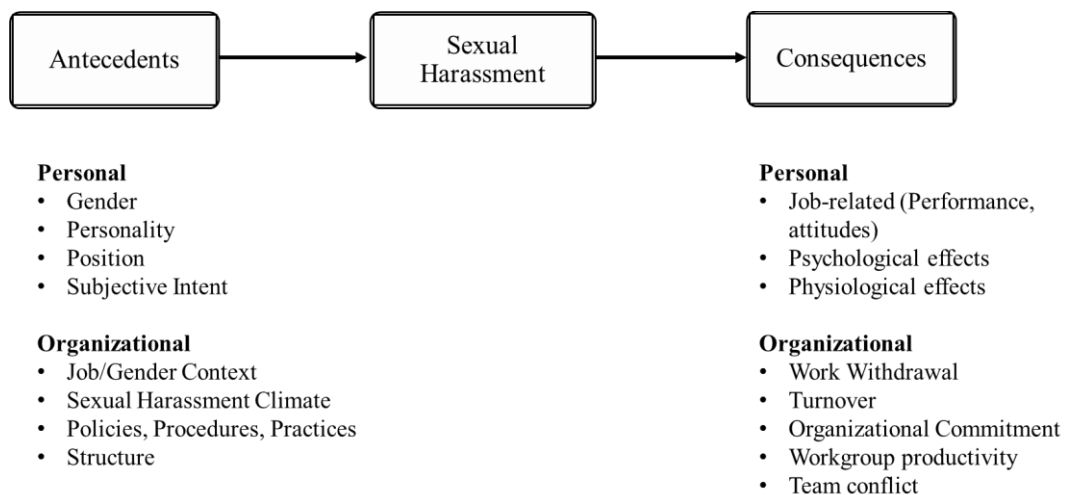
Based on the literature review, the purpose of this study, the antecedents, and consequences of sexual harassment, the definition of sexual harassment that will be adopted is the one by Karam and Ghanem's – which aligns perfectly with the psychological perspective, that is "unwanted, unwelcomed behavior of a sexual or sex-based nature that can manifest in different forms (e.g., verbal, physical and psychological) and across different mediums (e.g., cyberspace, in person, through images, etc.) (2019). The research topic is subjective as I am examining the perceptions of people and each

person views and interprets situations differently and how contextual factors intertwine with personal perceptions of situations and sexual harassment as a phenomenon, as well as impacting human behavior. Figure 2 represents the factors that affect our behavior.

Figure 2

Summary of Factors Impacting Human Behavior
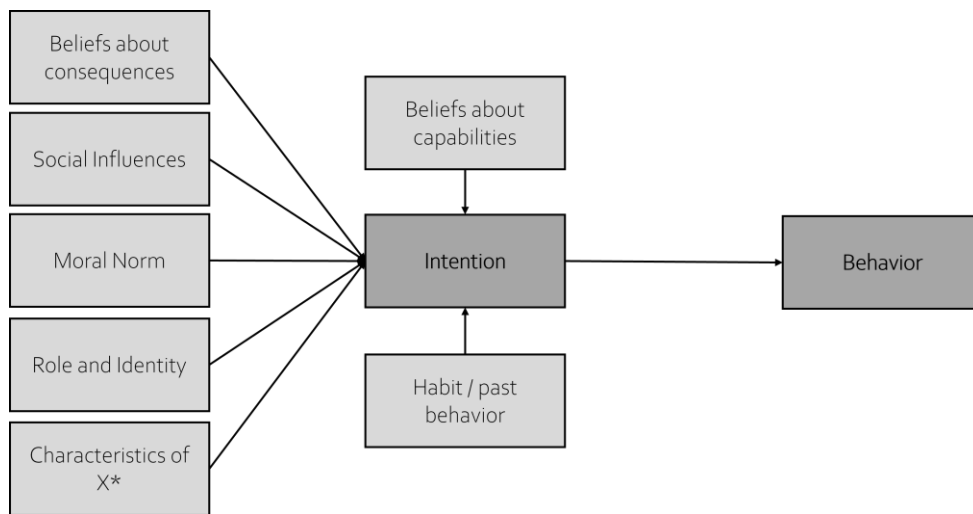
*X represents job-related traits an employee has in an organization based on her/his job position

B. Global Background on Sexual Harassment in Higher Education and the Workplace

1. Perceptions of Sexual Harassment

A study was done by McCabe and Hardman (2005), aimed at understanding attitudes toward and perceptions of sexual harassment across two different organizations – in the Melbourne Central Business District (CBD), in which individual (e.g., age, gender, gender role, etc.) and organizational (e.g., sexual harassment policies, employers' perceptions of and attitudes toward sexual harassment, etc.) attributes were considered. This study showed that most men and women experienced mild forms of sexual harassment, yet men were more tolerant of it in both organizations. Also, they have found

that workers from both organizations perceived more behaviors as sexual harassment when given the scenario that involves men harassing women rather than when it is the other way around. This finding relates to the stereotypes of men always harassing women, which affects the workplace dynamics in any organization and the believability of the parties involved. In other words, people are more likely to believe a woman if she accuses a man of harassing her automatically based on the gender of the harasser. Other studies have resulted in similar findings to, for example, the US Merit Systems Protection Board (USMSPB) (1994) conducted a study on federal employees across three nonconsecutive years and found that the results "have consistently shown that women are more likely than men to view sexual behaviors as harassing," (Cortina & Berdahl, 2008, p.471).

However, this is not always the case, as a study on perceptions on sexual harassment in Jamaica, it was found that "89% of the respondents (n=36) felt that both men and women are potentially guilty of sexual harassment, which is a more balanced view than the stereotypical one that looks at men as the only offenders," (Tindigarukayo, 2006). Nevertheless, people base their assumptions and negative perceptions on individual attributes without any valid correlation. In a study that gathers the literature review on workplace sexual harassment, the following were discovered regarding people's perceptions of sexual harassment incidents and reporting: women who are physically attractive are believed to be harassed more, and men who are married and unattractive are usually considered to be harassers (McDonald, 2012). Therefore, it is crucial to understand the relationship between personal attitudes and perceptions on men and women and how it affects sexual harassment behavior and incidents.

2. *Permissive Factors of Sexual Harassment*

In their study, Pina & Gannon state that the organizational climate (i.e., tolerance of sexual harassment) and the gender aspect in the job (i.e., the proportional number of women in the workplace/workgroup) allows the occurrence of sexual harassment. "Organizational climate is considered to be the strongest predictor of sexual harassment" (2012). Therefore, having an organizational culture that allows behavior of misconduct predicts the consequences on the harassed person. Also, if organizational policies are not well-communicated with employees, if any, lead to negative employee experience which in turn causes personal and job-related outcomes (Willness et al., 2007).

Additionally, organizations play a role in mediating tolerance of sexual harassment at work, and one interesting finding was that both men and women experienced the same amount of sexual harassment, yet women were less tolerant than men (McCabe & Hardman, 2005). Studies by Cortina & Wasti (2005) and Offerman & Malamut (2002) found that "women who believe that their organizations are tolerant of sexual harassment are less likely to file a formal grievance or report their harasser," (Butler & Chung-Yan, 2011). According to Kabat-Farr and Cortina (2014), "When women are under-represented in a field, category, or workplace, sexual harassment is more likely to occur." (Banner et. al, 2021). This emphasizes the crucial role organizations play in eliminating the occurrence of sexual harassment through adopting a non-tolerant culture in the workplace, providing their employees with reporting tools, and encouraging them to utilize them. In Hejase's research study, an interesting result was that when participants were asked whether their supervisors (who the cases were reported to) took any actions, the results were collectively positive.

Furthermore, Todorova attributes the failure in preventing sexual harassment to the "lack of richer, multidisciplinary, and expansive theoretical frameworks to provide deeper and wider understanding of the global contextual worlds of 'sexual violence prevention' in higher education" (2018). In the academic context, decision makers in higher education are not being able to initiate cultural change when it comes to the subtle behaviors (Banner et. al, 2021), which previously were mentioned to create a hostile work environment. According to Boyer, it is stated that over 60% of students experience some form of sexual violence at the university (2022). In their study, Boyle and McKinzie found that 33% of the participants have experienced a hostile environment and around 11% experienced other forms of harassment including unwanted sexual contact in their graduate or law program (2021). Hence, it is intriguing to understand what other factors in the organization's climate that have affected some cases not to be reported and it shows that management's support alone is not enough to eradicate sexual harassment incidents, particularly when respondents stated "fear of not being taken seriously, fear of not being promoted, fear of receiving a warning and kept in record, fear of being fired from the job, and out of shame (only females)," (2015) as reasons for not reporting their incidents.

Nevertheless, not only does sexual harassment have negative implications on individuals and employees in organizations, but also it has various drawbacks on the organization as an entity due to the impact it causes employees on a personal and a professional level. These implications on organizations include (1) decrease of employees' productivity and increase of team conflict; (2) failure to meet organizational goals; (3) lack of job satisfaction and commitment; (4) increased questioning of the organization's values and ethical standards which in turn affects employees' trust and respect towards their superiors and the organization; and (5) all the preceding will tarnish

the organization's image and reputation, as well as increase employee turnover (Hejase, 2015; Iqbal, 2010; Li et. al, 2016).

3. *Reporting of Sexual Harassment*

Researchers have also examined the reasons why sexual harassment incidents are not being reported, even in organizations where policies are implemented. Both the "#MeToo" and "#TimesUp" movements have given attention back again on workplace sexual harassment. Sadly, most incidents go unreported, and those who do report face retribution despite the impact of these movements in encouraging women to break their silence and speak out (Langone, 2021; McCann and Tomaskovic-Devey, 2018; Mousa and Abdelgaffar, 2022). The reason behind this is still known little about because it is not caused by one definite factor, rather it is different in every sexual harassment case, and it depends on the people involved and the organization where the incident took place. Thus, through understanding the culture of the organization, I can identify various aspects pertaining to the prevalence and underreporting of sexual harassment.

The fact of the matter is that organizations must put in place sexual harassment policies to prevent its occurrence and reprimand the harassers. However, the intentions behind implementing such policies may be blurry or for underlying reasons that may not be to protect employees and create a safe working environment. Lonsway, Cortina, & Magley (2008), state that effective policies increase the likelihood that a target will file a complaint if harassed, improve bystanders' responses, reduce victim-blaming (Buchanan et. al, 2014). As cited in Fusilier and Penrod (2015), it was stated that 80%, out of the 97.8% staff members who reported the existence of sexual harassment at their higher

education institution, that the policy is effective for diminishing SH incidents. On the one hand, some organizations implement anti-harassment policies for the mere purpose of protecting themselves from legal liabilities, rather than protecting or assisting complainants in the workplace (McDonald, 2012).

Sexual harassment in the academic field, particularly among graduate students is an understudied topic and there is a gap in research as most of it tackles it at the undergraduate level (Cipriano et al., 2021; Klein et al., 2021). "Title IX is a civil rights statute which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in educational institutions receiving federal funding." (ibid., p. 3) Within institutions of higher education, the Title IX office is also responsible for handling all reports related to sexual harassment as well as for the formal grievance process for sexual harassment reports. In a study conducted with graduate students who previously reported being sexually harassed to the Title IX office of their respective university, when asked about the reason why they chose to report, the results were that they believed the Title IX office can remove the posed threats in their educational environment caused by harassers, and that they aim to report to provide a better learning environment and a safer access to their institution for themselves and for others (ibid., p. 15-16).

In her dissertation, Renee A. Spence, she interviewed women in higher education, who believe they have been harassed, to understand their experiences with their organization's policies and how it is really applied. She found that the university claims to have a zero-tolerance culture; yet, in action it does not take incidents of sexual harassment seriously. She also found that the policy does not reflect the reality of sexual harassment which place women at a disadvantage as the statement can be interpreted as

existence of almost equal sexual harassment incidents among men and women (1997). However, Boyle and McKinzie found an equivalent number, in their study, of men and women reporting sexual harassment despite the differences of their experiences (2021).

Even in universities where policies are implemented, it is found that their administrators have an unclear and confused understanding of their requirements in protecting and preventing sexual harassment incidents (Abel, 2017). In their study, Cipriano et al. found that the Title IX officers, who were handling reports of SH, were assessing the reported incidents based on the type of behavior being reported and the severity of the situation, disregarding the consequences it may have on the survivor. They also found that formal investigations were initiated for cases that include the stereotypical forms of sexual harassment (2021). Consequently, this resulted in the students questioning their decision to report to the Title IX office, in the first place, because according to the results it was stated that one student changed the university and enrolled in a new program, and another one was told that her report was invalid because the harassment initiated by her advisor happened once and for it to fit the criteria it needs to be a pervasive and repetitive behavior.

Moreover, Antecol & Cobb-Clark (2003) state that organizations that provide education on harassment increase employee knowledge of the definitions and policies related to sexual harassment (Buchanan et. al, 2014). Also, in some cases, questioning university members who are assigned to handle prevention policies and programs is crucial, particularly when previously these members have been identified as "perpetrators and accomplices of sexual violence by intimidating students who are victims, protecting perpetrators, and refusing to deal with the issue." (Todorova, 2018)

Jones and George (2007) have identified steps that organizations need to follow and implement in order to eradicate sexual harassment. These steps include (1) developing and clearly communicating a sexual harassment policy endorsed by top management; (2) using a fair complaint procedure to investigate charges of sexual harassment; (3) taking corrective actions, when it has been determined that sexual harassment has taken place, as soon as possible; and (4) provide sexual harassment education and training to organizational members, including managers (Hejase, 2015). Therefore, further research needs to be conducted on the reasons affecting employees to report incidents of sexual harassment.

In the following section of the literature review, I will dive deeper into the phenomenon of sexual harassment and its prevalence in higher education in the Middle East.

C. Sexual Harassment in Higher Education in the Middle East

Due to the societal norms that view women as care workers who belong to households to take care of their children and husbands, according to the Arab Barometer, most respondents believe in limiting the role of women in society, with 60% of them believing that men should only be the decision-makers in their household, and that men make more effective political leaders than women (Robbins & Thomas, 2018). Consequently, this is represented in the participation of women in the labor force, with 24% of women in the MENA region being employed compared to 77% of their male counterparts (Mail & Guardian, 2020). Unfortunately, it is also stated that women with higher education have less access to employment opportunity than their less educated

male counterparts. However, this perception of women and their role in society is slightly shifting with the societal progress and the increase in the access to education, which is improving the support of women to attaining equal rights as men.

Attitudes towards women having equal access to education has not always been positive and welcoming. Previously, citizens of the region believed that education is more important for men than women, the Arab Barometer results show the percentages of people who believe in this across the region. The results were 25% Algeria, 19% Palestine, 18% Jordan, 15% Egypt, 12% Morocco, 11% Tunisia, and 8% Lebanon. Also, there is the view that men make more effective leaders than women, in which Algeria and Egypt were the countries with the highest percentage holding this view, with 81% and 79% respectively. Soltan et al. conducted a public opinion study, in the Arab Republic of Egypt, and found that "Most Egyptians reject the idea of a woman holding high-level political positions such as prime minister or president." They also reported that most of the respondents believe that "the principle of equality, as a basic right, is not effectively applied in Egypt." The study also included questions about people's perception on women's role in society, and surprisingly, Egyptians are in favor of equality between men and women, with 74% for believing in their participation in the workforce, right to choose a partner and/or file for divorce, 86% and 78% respectively. Unsurprisingly, 14% to 28% of the respondents do not agree with the equality between the sexes (2021).

Similarly, the Center for Strategic Studies at the University of Jordan supervised a project to measure Arab public opinion in the Republic of Yemen, and according to the Arab Barometer, the emerged results included the following: (1) Yeminis somewhat believe in the limited role of women in society; (2) 63.4% believe that women cannot be

a president or a prime minister in a Muslim country; (3) 81% agree that men make better political leaders; and (4) 44.3% do not believe that women and men should have the same access to job opportunities (2007). In parallel, Dr. Alkhatib conducted a public opinion survey in Iraq, in which he also examined the country's attitudes towards women, he reported that despite the common acceptance that married women can work outside their house, this consensus did not exist when it comes to women working in the political field, as 37% of the respondents believe that men are better fit for this role than women (2014). In terms of access to education, half of the respondents reported that they disagree with the view of education being more important for men than women.

Unlike Algeria, Egypt, Yemen, and Iraq; Morocco, Tunisia, and Lebanon – 56%, 55%, and 52% respectively, were less likely to hold the view of men being more effective in politics than women, despite the reality of these countries favoring men over women in politics.

In the Lebanese context, the Executive Director of the Lebanese Center for Policy Studies, Sami Atallah, conducted the public opinion survey to tackle several social issues including attitudes and perceptions of women's role in society. The results showed strong support for women to participate in the political sphere, choose the partner she wants, and have equal rights as men when it comes to divorce. In contrast with the Yemenis' opinion, Lebanese participants showed positive answers (82.6%) in agreeing to the statement that a woman can become a president or a prime minister of a Muslim country (2012).

D. The Feminist Theory Framework

The added value of this research study is that it adopts the Feminist Theory Framework in analyzing the findings of the existing literature on sexual harassment in higher education in the Middle East. In order to explain the rationale behind adopting this theory in this study, it is important to provide some background information about the feminist theory, its definitions, how it differs from other theories tackling the same issue, as well as the aspects/factors that this theory take into consideration when examining the issue of sexual harassment.

By definition, the Merriam-Webster (2018) defines feminism as " the theory of the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes." (Canan and Levand, 2019) The feminist theory takes into consideration socio-cultural factors in tackling the issue of sexual harassment in order to explain and interpret it. Advocates of this theory argue that sexual harassment should be contextualized in the realm of women's diminished role in the patriarchal society and society's acceptance of male dominance over women and must be analyzed the same way feminists tackle rape and domestic violence (Henry, 2017). As well, sexual harassment might be a clear manifestation of this socialized aggression and oppression (ibid.). Feminist theorists also argued that men are socialized to believe that their SH behavior is justified whereas women are socialized to blame themselves for it (Vaux 1993).

Therefore, adopting the Feminist Framework in analyzing the phenomenon of sexual harassment will allow me to examine the topic from multiple lenses. In other words, it will not only provide a better understanding of the prevalence of sexual harassment in higher education in the Middle East, but it will also give me an insight on

the socio-cultural and intersectional factors that intertwine with the perceptions and prevalence of sexual harassment.

In addition, Canan and Levand (2019) suggest that there are various types of theories within the feminist theory including *Liberal Feminist Theory, Radical Feminist Theory, Marxist Feminist Theory, Intersectional Feminist Theory, "Doing" Gender Theory: Masculinities,* and *Feminist Framework Plus.* Table 3 gives an overview of each of the preceding theories (Canan and Levand, 2019).

Table 3

Different Types of Feminist Theories

Theory Name	Overview
Liberal Feminist Theory	It is concerned with policy and legal changes that foster equal economic and social opportunities for women. Through structurally equal treatment of the law, symptoms of women's oppression, which can include sexual assault, will be resolved. Even though it is not directly related to sexual violence (because it addresses legal/economic issues broadly), it laid a foundation for the emergence of contemporary feminist theories that do. This theory is criticized for "playing by the rules" of a governing system that is inherently unequal because it was built on patriarchal values. For example, liberal feminist efforts to put forth new legislation and judicial policies that were still decided on by a heavily male-dominated legislative and judicial branch in the US; therefore, largely men still got to decide what opportunities and protections were permissible for women.
Radical Feminist Theory	It finds that patriarchy is the key cause of gender inequality and sexual violence. The radical feminist perspective frames sexual violence as not merely random acts of aggression but a means of social domination over women. This social domination occurs due to the continual threat of sexual violence that perpetuates fear in women. This theory helped to expand conceptualizations of sexual violence beyond stranger rape to include other types of rape (e.g., acquaintance rape). It has had, perhaps, the largest influence in framing sexual assault as an act of violence instead of an act of sex. This theory is criticized by intersectional and transnational feminists, for they find the idea of a universal patriarchy and timelessness of sexual victimization narrow in scope because patriarchy and sexual victimization exist in varying degrees across culture and time.
Marxist Feminist Theory	It finds that the primary basis of sexual violence is class inequality; gender is a secondary concern. Schwendinger and Schwendinger (1983) state that "inequality bred by a capitalist society enhances the conditions for female subordination and sexual violence…. In noncapitalist societies, rape is rare, and egalitarianism between males and females is high." Although this lens brings in important issues of the relatedness of gender and poverty, it stops short of examining the intersections of gender and poverty with race, citizenship, sexual orientation, and other important social strata.

Intersectional Feminist Theory	It focuses on the idea that people occupy multiple social identities simultaneously, and each of these identities intersect with one another to form a person's unique experience of the world, particularly as it relates to their experiences of oppression. For example, a person can have the identities: Mexican, immigrant, transwoman of low socioeconomic status. Each one of these identities has social implications alone and creates a distinct identity when layered together—the whole (person) is more than the sum of their parts (identities).
	Intersectional Feminist Theory highlights the limitations of other theories that consider one identity of individuals which can lead to their misrepresentation and their experiences. Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), coined the term "intersectionality" first within discussions of employment discrimination and quickly applied Intersectionality to violence literature.
"Doing" Gender Theory: Masculinities	Some gender theorists conceptualize gender as a performance, rather than an innate quality that a person holds. Judith Butler (1988) explains that "gender is an act that has been rehearsed, much as a script survives the particular actors who make use of it, but which requires individual actors in order to be actualized" (p. 526).
	People learn how to perform these actions (gender expression) through learned gender scripts. That is, how to perform masculinity and femininity is both actively learned (e.g., a father explicitly telling his son "a real man takes what he wants") and/or passively learned (e.g., watching media that rewards male violence with "getting the girl") within a culture. Feminist theory of masculinities finds that some cultures or subcultures may endorse and, subsequently, teach men to perform different types of masculinity or perform traditional masculinity to varying degrees.
	It is argued that because dominance and aggression are characteristics associated with traditional masculinity, sexual violence against women is one way to accomplish this type of masculinity.
Feminist Framework Plus	It is a newer feminist theory that aims to understand sexual assault through "knitting" together several preexisting theories according to Beverly McPhail. Each theory partially explains motivations for sexual assault, but no one theory fully explains it alone. To look at sexual assault through a broader lens, she brings together five core ideas while noting the strengths and weaknesses of each.
	The five core ideas include Patriarchal Power and Control, Normative Heterosexuality Perspective, Intersectional Feminist Theory, "Doing" Gender and Masculinity, and Embodied Sexual Practice Perspective. Despite the knitting of theories, this framework has some limitations which are related to the idea that it does not provide a theoretical explanation for female sexual offenders, an area of research that, though historically neglected, is included in more contemporary sexual violence research.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This research study adopts a narrative review on the existing literature on the topic of sexual harassment in higher education in the Middle East context.

According to Rother, narrative literature review is the process of gathering articles that discuss and describe the state of the science of a specific topic or theme from a theoretical and contextual point of view (2007). This type of review provides readers with the recent information and knowledge about topics understudy. In other words, the purpose of this review is to "analyze and summarise a body of literature." (Danson & Arshad, 2014, p.37). To do that, I have provided a comprehensive background on the existing literature tackling sexual harassment in higher education in the Middle East. It allowed me to identify gaps in the literature or overlooked areas that might be of interest to research and contribute positively to research and practice (ibid., p.38). Coughlan et. al (2007) states that this type of literature review may aid researchers in "refining, focusing, and shaping research questions as well as in developing theoretical and conceptual frameworks." (ibid., p.38)

A. Data Collection

The first step that I adopted was gathering peer-reviewed academic journal articles published after 2005, from credible sources using multiple databases, most relevant of which are SCOPUS, SAGE, ProQuest, Google Scholar, and the Arab Barometer (keywords used: sexual harassment, higher education, Middle East, profiles of sexual

harassers, perception of sexual harassment, prevalence of sexual harassment, common perpetrators, victims and reporting). These databases are focused on the fields of business and management, that are related to the topic and the areas that this research focuses on to help in answering the research questions guiding this study. In total, I was able to gather around 65 relevant articles that have targeted the topic. Based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria, I was able to use 24 articles and base my analysis on for this study (see table 4). In the first round, I read the abstracts in order to identify the context of the study as some of the articles were focused on the national level and not higher education, then after excluding these articles, I divided the articles and grouped them into categories based on the countries they targeted. After that, I read the articles of each category (sorted by country) and identified and highlighted the main ideas and findings. Table 4 provides an overview on the number of articles that I was able to gather and have used for the analysis of the findings, along with information on the methodology adopted in each study and the country where it was conducted.

Table 4

Data Collection Overview

#	Article Name	Authors/Year	Methodology	Context
1	*Women and leadership: challenges and opportunities in Saudi higher education*	Abalkhail, 2017	Qualitative; In-depth interviews; Interpretive approach	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
2	*Diagnosing Norms Surrounding Sexual Harassment at a Jordanian University*	Bergenfeld et al., 2021	Qualitative; Interviews & Focus Groups	Jordan
3	*"There Is Always an Excuse to Blame the Girl": Perspectives on Sexual Harassment at a Jordanian University*	Bergenfeld et al., 2022	Qualitative; Focus Groups, Participatory Data Collection, and Interviews	Jordan
4	*Sexual Harassment and Domestic Violence in the Middle East and North Africa*	Bouhlila, 2019	Quantitative; Survey	Middle East and North Africa
5	*Sexual Harassment in Higher Education: Students' Perceptions and Attitudes*	Magaji et al., 2020 (as cited in Calisir and Korhan, 2020)	Quantitative; Survey	Cyprus
6	*Contextualising street sexual harassment in Morocco: a discriminatory sociocultural representation of women*	Chafai, 2017	Exploratory Case Study	Morocco

7	*Mapping Anti-Sexual Harassment and Changing Social Norms in Egypt*	Cochrane et al., 2019	Qualitative; Interviews	Egypt
8	*Sexual Harassment in Egypt*	El-Ashmawy, 2017	Case Study	Egypt
9	*Employee sexual harassment policies and Kuwait transnational higher education*	Fusilier and Denny, 2014	Qualitative	Kuwait
10	*An application of the ecological model to sexual harassment in informal areas of Cairo, Egypt*	Hassan et al., 2021	Qualitative; Interviews and Focus groups; Descriptive Analysis of Survey	Egypt
11	*Sexual Harassment in the Workplace: An Exploratory Study from Lebanon*	Hejase, 2015	Quantitative; Questionnaire	Lebanon
12	*Sexual Harassment in the Egyptian Streets: Feminist Theory Revisited*	Henry, 2017	Qualitative; Interviews; Thematic Analysis	Egypt
13	*Localizing women's experiences in academia: multilevel factors at play in the Arab Middle East and North Africa*	Karam and Afiouni, 2014	Qualitative; Emergent Coding and Content Analysis approaches	Middle East and North Africa

14	*Perceived workplace gender-bias and psychological impact: The case of women in a Moroccan higher education institution*	Lekchiri et al., 2019	Qualitative; Critical Incident Technique (CIT)	Morocco
15	*Women in the Middle East North African region pushing back against patriarchy*	Mail and Guardian, 2020	Quantitative; Survey	Middle East and North Africa
16	*New Private Universities in Kuwait Pin Their Hopes on U.S. Partners*	Mills, 2009	Qualitative; Interviews	Kuwait
17	*Coping with sexual harassment in the Egyptian context: a study on female academics*	Mousa and Abdelgaffar, 2022	Qualitative; Semi-Structured Interview; Thematic Analysis	Egypt
18	*Challenging Inequality: Obstacles And Opportunities Towards Women's Rights In The Middle East And North Africa*	Nazir, 2005	Quantitative; Survey	Middle East and North Africa
19	***Sexual Harassment and Women's Mobilization in Egypt***	Sara Tonsy	Qualitative; Interviews	Egypt
20	*When Sexual Harassment Becomes a Barrier to Development*	Shalaby, 2013	Quantitative; Survey	Egypt

21	*The Arab Barometer Project Arab Republic of Egypt*	Soltan et al.	Quantitative; Survey	Egypt
22	*Adapting and Validating the Sexual Experiences Questionnaire to Study Sexual Harassment Among University Women in Jordan*	Spencer et al., 2021	Mixed Method approach using Sexual Experiences Questionnaire (SEQ), Cognitive Interviews, Survey, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), and Confirmatory Bifactor Analysis.	Jordan
23	*Faculty response to ethical issues at an American university in the Middle-East*	Tabsh et al., 2012	Quantitative; Questionnaire	Middle East
24	*Harassment-related maladaptive cognitions in a sample of Mansoura University students, Egypt*	Tobar et al., 2015	Quantitative; Questionnaire	Egypt

The literature review provided an overview on the topic across multiple countries in the Middle East, as shown in Table 4, which allowed me to make sense of the existing data and identify how contextual factors affect the prevalence of the issue and any other factors that intertwine with its understanding. This approach is defined by Henry H. H. Remak as "the study of literature beyond the confines of a particular country, and the study of the relationship between literature on the one hand and other areas of knowledge and belief…" (Stallknecht and Frenz, 1961).

It is important to note that adopting the narrative literature review approach does not mean replication of existing literature, rather it provides researchers with the tool to identify any discrepancy or inconsistency in the literature (Danson & Arshad, 2014, p.39).

B. Data Analysis

In addition to the psychological perspective mentioned earlier, this research study also adopts the feminist's theory explanations of sexual harassment, which defines sexual harassment, according to Kosny and MacEachen (2010) as "a systemic attempt to control women that is deeply rooted in patriarchal societies," (Henry, 2017). Thus, the data gathered from the literature review will be analyzed, in the next chapter, from the Feminist Framework lens, "which takes into consideration socio-cultural factors in explaining and interpreting SH," (ibid.) in order to uncover the gendered dynamics underlying the perceptions and practice of sexual harassment, which will be the main contribution of this work.

Adopting the Feminist Framework Plus and its knitted theories will better allow me to leverage the findings of the existing body of literature and divide them to answer

the research questions guiding this study. These knitted theories overlap in their focus on a feminist perspective which will help me analyze the findings from that perspective and relate it to the socio-cultural factors that the FFP is based on, as well as a theoretical overlap in relations of power, cultural/patriarchal influences, and gender dynamics.

C. Context of the Study

Globalization, in the past two decades, has been a central force for society and higher education. It has resulted in the growth of the private sector and increased the pressure on higher education (Altbach, 2007). Historically, the Arab world had three universities in the mid-twentieth century, and ever since it has expanded and seen greater success. However, the reality of higher education in the world reflects inequality. Altbach suggests that if we dive into the developing countries and take a closer look on academia, we can immediately notice the prevalence of such inequality (2007). Consequently, higher education institutions in the Arab world face challenges including poor level of harmony between higher education institutions and the development needs and labor market. This leads to the poor quality of knowledge, skills, and abilities of Arab graduate students. The Arab Human Development Report pointed out that the most prominent challenge of higher education in the Arab world is the poor quality of education that lacks development of the required capabilities. Today, there are around 35 universities that are ranked top in the Arab world that are located in Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, and United Arab Emirates. As it will be discussed in the following chapter, I found that not all of the universities of higher education provide policies that protect their faculty, staff, and students against sexual harassment, and those

that do, are affiliated with U.S. partners and are legally obliged to implement such policies. This raises the question of the credibility of the policy-makers in these Arab institutions and hence, the interest in narrowing down my focus to examine this phenomenon in the Arab world.

D. Analytical Framework

As aforementioned, this study will analyze the findings using the feminist framework, more precisely, I will adopt Beverly McPhail's Feminist Framework Plus (FFP) theory. Although the theory tackled the issue of rape and knitted several feminist theories around it, it combines multiple aspects from these theories to rationalize and explain the issue. Thus, I will adopt some of the aspects from the FFP to apply it on the issue of sexual harassment while taking into account socio-cultural factors. As seen in Table 4, the Feminist Framework Plus is built on five core ideas, which are (1) Patriarchal Power and Control, (2) Normative Heterosexuality Perspective, (3) Intersectional Feminist Theory, (4) "Doing" Gender and Masculinity, and (5) Embodied Sexual Practice Perspective.

The Patriarchal power and control perspective views sexual harassment and other forms of misconduct as an aggressive behavior and not a sexual act, that is stemming from hostility rather than a sexual need. It puts such acts into a social and political context, motivated by male domination and female degradation. The Normative heterosexuality perspective views it as an act of terrorism and torture stemming from a systemic context of group subjugation. As for the Intersectional perspective, it views harassment from a historical context while taking into account factors like race, class, and gender that affect power dynamics and male dominance, which in turn, impact the experiences of sexual

harassment. With the notion of gender, the Doing masculinity perspective argues that gender and gender roles are socially constructed and not inherent biologically. It does not view gender as what someone is, rather it is what someone does in their interactions with people. Similar to the intersectional perspective, the Embodied Sexual Practice perspective views that since people are not the same, their experiences of such misconduct will not be the same. It is specific and situated and it includes sexual differences as well as factors of class, race, sexual orientation, age, disability, and the like.

I will adopt this framework in the analysis of the findings through providing explanations and creating links between the aspects of the framework and applying it to the to the issue of sexual harassment in higher education in the Middle East.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

In this section, I will share the findings from the existing research done on the prevalence of sexual harassment in higher education in some of the MENA region countries, including Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Lebanon, Morocco, Kuwait, and Cyprus, based on the availability of data across several databases. The research has tackled several aspects of the topic, most important of which prevalence of sexual harassment, perceptions and attitudes of university students of sexual harassment and sexually harassing behaviors, attitudes towards women, their role in society and workforce participation, and the like. As well, the findings are grouped into sections that answers the research questions guiding this research study.

According to the World Bank, the MENA region includes the countries of Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Palestine, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Malta, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, West Bank and Gaza, and Yemen (2021). As well, there is a common definition of the Middle East that consists of the states or territories of Turkey and Cyprus (Britannica, 2021). Thus, in this study, I adopted the definition that includes Turkey and Cyprus to the World Bank's classifications of the Middle East and North Africa region. Because there is a lack of existing literature on the topic in higher education in the region, I was able to gather findings from research done on some of the countries in the MENA region, most important of which are Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Lebanon, Morocco, Kuwait, and Cyprus. The findings will be discussed in this section.

Research Question 1

What is the prevalence of sexual harassment in higher education? What are the reasons behind its occurrence?

Although sexual harassment is a global phenomenon, there is an insufficient number of research that focuses on its prevalence in the Middle East, particularly in higher education (Bergenfeld et al., 2022; Mousa and Abdelgaffar, 2022; Tobar et al., 2015). The existing literature suggests that female academics experience workplace sexual harassment more than their male counterparts, by faculty or staff, which makes them feel less safe particularly in male-dominated faculties (Mousa and Abdelgaffar, 2022). More importantly, there is a gap in the existing literature in examining the socio-cultural factors that affect the existence and prevalence of this phenomenon (Bergenfeld et al., 2022; Bergenfeld et al., 2021; El-Ashmawy, 2017; Henry, 2017). "Cultural production provides an important indicator when it comes to the place of women and their treatment in public spaces," says Sara Tonsy in her study on Sexual Harassment and Women's Mobilization in Egypt (2021). In other words, there are several factors that need to be taken into consideration when we talk workplace sexual harassment. The theory of the feminist framework perspective views sexual harassment and related behaviors of misconduct beyond the individual level, meaning that it takes into account the patriarchal society, and most importantly the political level of the patriarchy. Thus, when women face workplace sexual harassment more than men, it can be attributed to the fact that society allows men to show dominance and control over women, and this can be in the form of a personal and individual violation such as sexual harassment and/or sexually harassing behaviors. Also, this represent the first core concept in the FFP that is related to patriarchal control and power.

Every year the world celebrates International Women's Day on March 8th, yet this celebration does not quite resemble the reality of women in society in terms of their rights, role, and societal status (Mail and Guardian, 2020; Nazir, 2005). Mail and Guardian state that "there is not a single country that has achieved gender equality." (2020) Also, they state that the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region experienced gender progress the least in the world. The gap between the rights of women and men is the most visible and significant in the MENA region, where there is a resistance against women's equal rights (Nazir, 2005).

In the Middle East, women are prone to experience forms of discrimination that are legally systematic and permeate every aspect of their lives, they are not provided with protection in cases of violence against women – be it cases of rape or domestic violence, nor are they given the respect and value of their own word and testimony as it is deemed less worthy than that of a man's (Nazir, 2005). The slow progression towards gender equality and granting women their rights, in the Arab world, despite the continuous efforts of feminist and other activists, is also due to patriarchal power and control in which society does not want to empower women in order to maintain male dominance and the subordination of women.

Due to the patriarchal system that undermines women and their rights and sexualizes them, men are able to get away with their sexually harassing behavior that put women at risk and degrade them through objectifying them. In Egypt, despite the shift in the society's understanding of sexual harassment, Egyptian men used to and still try to downplay their sexually explicit verbal comments and physical misconduct by referring to it as "Mu'aksa" or "Mo'akasat", which is an Egyptian term equivalent to the terms

"flirting" or "teasing". However, in fact, it is not the same as being flirtatious with another person, but they use this term in order to minimize the severity of the behavior and situation and decrease the stigma of sexual harassment and its consequences on women (El-Ashmawy, 2017; Henry, 2017).

According to the Thomson Reuters Foundation, Egypt was classified as the worst country for women to live in among the 22 Arab countries regarding sexual harassment (El-Ashmawy, 2017). "In Egypt, sexual harassment has come to represent society's growing class struggle, the state's oppressive policies, and women's empowering activism." (ibid.) Additionally, Cochrane, Zeid, and Sharif state, in their study, that Egypt has higher than the average rates of sexual harassment across the MENA region (2019). Sexual harassment is prevalent in Egypt more than 90% (Tobar et al., 2015). In their study, Soltan et al. found that almost half of the respondents (48%) stated that they do not feel safe in Egypt (2011). Dr. Shalaby, postdoctoral fellow and director of Women and Human Rights in the Middle East Program, reported back in 2013, that 99.3% of Egyptian women have experienced some form of sexual harassment. Based on the FFP, this is related to two core ideas from the knitted theories including the normative heterosexuality and the "Doing" gender and masculinity. Sexually harassing women, and in the case of Egypt, "Mu'aksa", is a representation of the normative heterosexuality where such misconduct is eroticized, which in turn, ensures their domination of women. Another representation can be linked to such behaviors is that what Egyptians call "teasing" is merely to sugarcoat the fact that they are trying to prove their masculinity. This also highlights the importance of men wanting to constantly prove their masculinity in society which stems from multiple motives and serves various purposes that are far more than just sexual.

Among the lacuna of the existing literature in these conservative cultures, a study was done among the students at Mansoura University in Egypt, aimed at gaining knowledge and comprehension of sexual harassment from female survivors and their male harassers. The study yielded interesting results, most important of which are (1) although 98% of female students reported verbal harassment and 95% physical harassment, only 7% of male students acknowledged the physical misconduct and 89% admitted the verbal one; (2) female students viewed the problem as a serious matter more than males; (3) male students blamed women for causing harassment incidents based on how they are dressed as well as sexual repression; whereas female students attributed the cause of incidents to the lack of religious beliefs and values of the harassers; (4) when asked about what to do in case of being harassed again, 6% of female students wanted to avoid confrontation, and only 4% were willing to resort to their family for help and support (Tobar et al., 2015). The results of the study show the difference between the perceptions of male and female students of sexual harassment, and particularly, the causal of such misconduct as men attribute it to the way women dress, whereas women attribute it to religious beliefs and moral values. Consequently, this perception can lead to an overgeneralization by survivors on men being harassers and it also affects their sexual identity, caused by feelings of humiliation and unfairness. "Negative feeling of being female is accentuated by awareness of male power connected with personal experience of disrespect and sexual violence." (ibid., p. 174)

Sexual harassment is not only prevalent in Egypt, rather it is present in other Arab countries such as Jordan. In Jordan, with the increase of women's enrollment in higher education institutions, they are at a higher risk of experiencing sexual harassment in the

academic context causing serious implications on their health and well-being (Bergenfeld et al., 2021; Spencer et al., 2021).

The feminist theory framework argues that a male dominated society can easily put the blame of sexual harassment, sexual objectification, and even assault on women. In the study of Henry (2017), the participants believed that women were created to please men and they are viewed as sexual objects only, and they explained that women experience sexual harassment because of their desire and goals to work and participate in the workforce. This aligns with the Jordan study, and most importantly, aligns with the core ideas of the FFP and how masculinity plays a role in the prevalence of sexual harassment, for these men believe that with women's participation in the workforce: (1) they are asking for it and (2) they are taking opportunities away from men – because they only have the right to work. Thus, women should handle the consequence of being harassed by men as a way of asserting their dominance since they decided to take their role as part of the labor market. According to Henry's study, one participant said:

> This really puzzles me. I would always expect my wife to wait for me, greet me with a smile, and pamper me with a nice meal. I am not sure how other men can function if they go home and cannot find their wives waiting for them. I think these women who do not do that deserve what they get in the streets (2017).

By the same token, Figure 3 represents how sexual harassment was categorized in another study that was conducted, by Bergenfeld et al. (2022), to identify Jordanian students' perspectives on sexual harassment. The categories were as follows:

Figure 3

Sexual Harassment Interrelated Categories
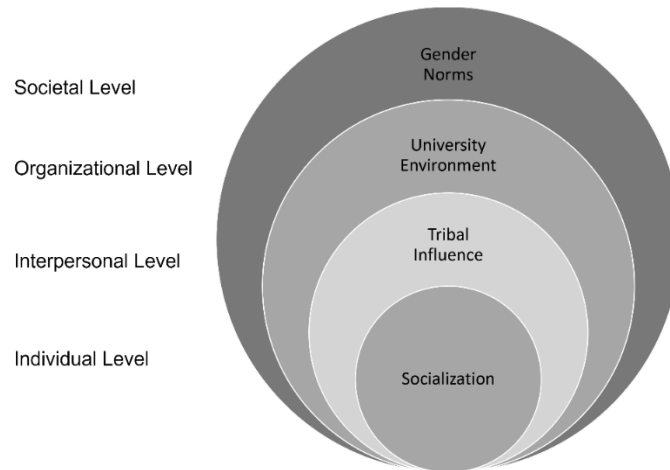
The above figure represents the results of the study that are in alignment with the previous study in terms of gender norms, tribal influences that are related to family honor and women's decency and behavior.

In alignment with the representation of women at senior levels, Abalkhail conducted a study to examine the perceptions of women of the factors that affect their attainment of leadership positions in higher education, in the context of Saudi Arabia, it was reported that recruitment policies and discriminatory practices in recruitment play an important role in impeding women's progression to leadership positions – "in most Saudi universities the administration comprises men with long work experience who tend to be promoted faster," and even if these women have the necessary qualifications and credentials, they were not promoted or selected for such positions (2017). This can be associated to Karam and Afiouni's study, in which they state that there is "a 'bursting pipeline' of sorts where more and more Arab women are prepared with the necessary knowledge, skills and abilities, but are unable to secure employment." (2014, p. 526) At these universities, the chances of women, in higher education, sexual harassment is

prevented by gender segregation – in which men and women do not work together in the same office or building.

In addition to the preceding studies, Lekchiri et al. (2019) explored the experiences of working women in the male-dominated country, Morocco, in which they examined the perceived workplace gender-bias through the lived experiences of women in a Moroccan higher education institution. The researchers classified the findings into themes, most of which the most interesting is the *"Abusive behavior/verbal and sexual harassment,"* this theme involved reported results of harassment behaviors that take the form of demeaning and derogatory verbal behaviors and insults (e.g., stupid woman, you are useless…). Over 90% reported a hostile work environment of verbal and nonphysical behaviors. Unsurprisingly, when one woman reported being sexually harassed by her manager to the top leadership, "she was advised to stay silent if she wanted to maintain her career advancement plans within the university." (ibid., p.345) These women (over 78%) believe that the reason behind the occurrence of these incidents is due to the traditional gender roles and stereotypes that are held in the Moroccan society. This does not come as a shock because "Morocco is a developing Muslim country dominated by traditional, conservative and patriarchal ideologies and practices that legitimate male dominance and female subordination; norms that may clash with other more modern and progressive values." (Chafai, 2017)

Research Question 2

Who are the most common perpetrators and survivors?

In parallel, a study done on sexual harassment across several Lebanese organizations, participants were asked on personal aspects – related to physical factors

such as clothes and odor, that may increase the likelihood of sexual harassment, and "67% believe that physical appearance is important at work, and 90% of the respondents believe that physical appearance impacts the behavior of the other towards them." (Hejase, 2015). Also, the study results reported that 9% of males and 12% of females experienced sexual harassment, yet only 5% of the cases were reported; this can be attributed to the Lebanese cultural context that perceive incidents of sexual harassment as taboo (Hejase, 2015). This, too, is correlated to the Plus factors that are identified by the FFP, which consider the cultural and social factors that affect the perception of people in society and at the workplace when it comes to women and incidents of misconduct.

From a report by the Arab Barometer in 2019, Figure 4 represents a horizontal bar chart representing the percentages of females between the ages of 17 and 28, in the MENA, who have reported to experience sexual harassment (Bouhlila, 2019, p. 9).

Figure 4

Bar chart from the Arab Barometer regarding the frequency of sexual harassment in the MENA region
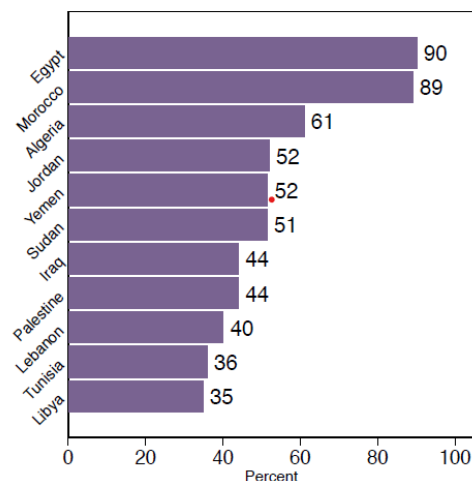
Guided by their interest in identifying how female academics cope with workplace sexual harassment in Egyptian public universities, Mousa and Abdelgaffar's study found that female academics, in Egyptian universities, are not well-represented at the professional and senior academic positions levels – due to the male-dominated culture that supports the existence of power relationships. One respondent stated that "The culture in Egyptian academia is intense as the female-male relationship is not democratic and female voices are hardly heard. This academic culture places female academics and students at a disadvantaged position, whereby males may transgress boundaries."

Moreover, another respondent's answer was quite interesting as she highlighted important points, aligning with the previous study mentioned, in which people blame survivors based on what they wear and how it is not always caused by women's attire, she stated:

> Do you think that sexual harassment is a hidden issue in Egyptian workplaces!? It is a phenomenon or even a trend. In private business, most managers recruit female secretaries only to exercise all types of harassment with them. In academia, I face it from students, colleagues and even supervisors. Furthermore, I cannot voice it because the colleagues in a minute will accuse me of neglecting the wearing of Hijab, being too secular, or too talkative, and would insinuate it to my male supervisor and/or a colleague. Female academics are always the victims in Egyptian universities even if they are wearing Hijab and acting in a conservative way (2022).

These findings that are related to victim-blaming due to cultural and social norms that are male focused represent the overlap in the various theories that are knitted in the

Feminist Framework Plus, for all the preceding findings represent relations of power, impact of a cultural/patriarchal society, and gender dynamics. This also reflects on the common perpetrators mentioned, along with the professors, at the university level based on the previous findings stated, and the survivors who are mostly women who belong to a wide age range, in such conservative societies.

Moreover, in a diagnostic study on social norms related to sexual harassment at a Jordanian University, almost all participants reported that sexual harassment was common on campus and in their society, despite their consensus that sexual harassment is not acceptable (Bergenfeld, 2021). It was discovered that there are indirect social norms related to gender that affect the sexual harassment norms through the protection of the perpetrators, prevention of reporting, victim-blaming, and discouragement of bystander intervention. In the same study, a participant stated, "When a girl is covering her hair or wearing modest clothes, I may look at her, but when a girl isn't covering her hair and wearing tight clothes, the guy cannot take the entire blame…" (ibid., p. 7). Even more so, some men identified some behaviors of sexual harassment, like staring and/or verbal comments, as normal and acceptable and a way of bonding with their peers. Therefore, to overcome these norms, actions must be taken including imposing stricter sanctions, implementing more effective policies at the university level that focus on reporting, accountability, and grievance in order to empower harassed women to report as well as encourage bystander intervention (ibid.). This is a perfect representation of an embodied sexual practice, which is a core idea in the FFP, that focuses on how harassment or any type of misconduct is subjective and specific. This is to say that these behaviors are specific to women and the factors that affect the relationship between genders.

Research Question 3

What are the factors that prevent men and women from reporting? Is it cultural and/or societal? Is it organizational?

Moreover, there are several barriers that impedes women from coming forward and speaking out. One barrier that prevents female academics from reporting is how professors are viewed as honorable and respectable, which affects females' believability. Thus, they avoid reporting to protect themselves and their work because "societies and universities are not ready to accept any claim that shows that university professors make mistakes like other humans." (Harsey and Freyd, 2020; as cited in Mousa and Abdelgaffar, 2022; Bergenfeld et al., 2021). Around one-third of faculty members have stated that they were not aware of the university's code of ethics, in response to ethical issues they were being asked about at an American university in the Middle East (Tabsh et al., 2012).

Additionally, a study targeting Egyptian female academics, with the aim of identifying the barriers to reporting sexual harassment incidents at the workplace, Mousa and Abdelgaffar (2022) stated, in the Egyptian context of workplace sexual harassment, over 17 cases of sexual harassment were reported across public universities in 2017. Despite the efforts of the government in amending the penal code articles and viewing sexual harassment as a crime, as well as the Supreme Council of Universities urging all universities to establish units for anti-harassment and violence against women; the social stigma with the support of the society and even legal forces remain powerful and discourage women from reporting because of fear, intimidation and victim-blaming (Hassan et al., 2021).

In such conservative societies, another barrier that prevents women from speaking out is protecting the family's honor and avoiding bringing any form of scandal upon the family name, as it is mainly linked to the female's behavior (Abalkhail, 2017). This idea of victim-blaming is used to justify men's actions when they harass women because it is perceived that the woman is the one who provoked the perpetrator to harass her. Despite the progress towards women's participation in the workforce in the Arab world, they still face many barriers which include the influences of socio-cultural and patriarchal norms on their status in the workplace (Karam and Afiouni, 2014).

Ward and Siegert (2002) state that

A comprehensive explanation of any human phenomenon is likely to be multifactorial in nature and involve a variety of different causal mechanisms. These may include factors associated with our early evolutionary history as well as cultural, developmental, physiological, and psychological causal mechanisms (as cited in McPhail, 2016, p.11)

This means that we must consider multiple factors that affect the human development and behavior in order to examine the prevalence or causes behind an issue understudy. In this case, in the FFP, the Plus refers to these factors that are psychological, environmental, developmental, situational, and biological. Not only can these factors be examined at the individual level, but also at a societal level where we can identify some factors in these conservative cultures that lead men to harass women and lead everybody else to normalize it. As the findings stated the role of family's honor and victim-blaming, these situational and environmental factors are important to consider. When you are

raised on these values and principles, in countries like Jordan and Egypt, that link honor with women and their behavior – in terms of how they address, behave, or even their sexual experiences, it can be easily translated in a male-dominated society that women deserve to be treated this way if they choose to work and leave their houses because they chose not to honor their family, for example. Consequently, this negatively impacts the psychological factors for both men and women, in which it leads some men to believe it is normal to harass women, if not, should harass them, and some women would victimize themselves and excuse the men for their behaviors without comprehending the physical, mental, and emotional consequences they will endure because of such behaviors and assertion of dominance and masculinity.

Research Question 4

Why do incidents of sexual harassment still occur and/or are not reported despite the existence of anti-harassment policies? Is it different between universities that have policies and those that do not?

In an attempt to investigate the existing sexual harassment prevention policies, a study was conducted on the prevalence of these policies in higher education institutions in Kuwait, which are partners to Western universities that implement such policies. It is important to note that due to the high demand of higher education in Kuwait, private institutions of higher education are required to partner with a foreign university, that is established and reputable, in order to ensure quality (Mills, 2009). In their study, Fusilier and Denny argue the criticality of the need for sexual harassment prevention with the increase of women's participation in the Kuwait workforce (2014). Kuwait does not have

any specific law pertaining to the prohibition of sexual harassment or protection from sexual harassment in the workplace (ibid.). The results of this study showed that Kuwait state schools do not provide access to the sexual harassment policy through websites, calls, or e-mails. The study did a comparison between the Kuwait schools and Foreign partner schools that have policies, and all policies in all schools include the characteristics that are related to the definition of sexual harassment and sanctions of harassing. However, there is a significant difference between the characteristics provided and stated in the policies between the Kuwait and Foreign partner schools, particularly in the Kuwait schools:

> None of the Kuwait school polices mentions an option for informal complaints of harassment, require supervisors to report complaints, provide a timeline for policy processes, provide specific procedures for reporting the outcome of the investigation to the complainant and accused, or mention consideration of supervisor handing of complaints in evaluations. These five characteristics are completely absent from the Kuwait school policies (ibid., p. 205)

Supplementarily, Magaji et al. (2020) examined, in their study, the attitudes and perceptions of university students of sexual harassment and sexually harassing behaviors in a culturally diverse university in North Cyprus (Calisir and Korhan, 2020, p. 40). The differences in perceptions reported were as follows: (1) female students were more likely than male students to consider looking at other students in a sexual way as a form of sexual harassment; (2) perceptions of behaviors differ with age as older participants were more likely to view behaviors as a sexual harassment than younger participants – such

behaviors included calling other students using profanity and curse words (e.g., whore) as well as students forcing other students to have sex; (3) it was shown perceptions are different based on nationalities. For instance, students from Turkey and Cyprus perceived non-verbal behaviors (e.g., showing sexual pictures, grabbing other students, touching of private parts) as a form of sexual harassment more than international students did.

Research Question 5

How can a feminist reading of the sexual harassment literature inform our understanding on how sexual harassment is perceived and the reasons of its occurrence?

There are several theories that researchers have adopted in the existing literature mentioned in the previous chapter; these theories include *Social Norms Theory, Emancipation Theory,* and *Social-Ecological Model.* Table 5 gives a summary of the brief definitions of each of the preceding theories.

Table 5

Definitions of Theories

Theory Name	Definition
Social Norms Theory	This theory examines the informal rules governing individual behavior within groups. It has been a useful framework for understanding and developing interventions against GBV globally (Bergenfeld, 2021).
Emancipation Theory	This theory is used to address women's status, engagement and representation in the composition of board members in corporations and for-profit organizations. It considers human empowerment and/or freedom are outcome of Action Resources, Emancipative Values, and Civic Entitlement (Mousa and Abdelgaffar, 2022).
Social-Ecological Model	This model is a framework to understand the contextual factors —the social networks, communities, institutions, and norms —that influence human development and behavior. It categorizes the perceived causes of sexual harassment within the university context into individual, interpersonal, organizational, and societal factors (Bergenfeld, 2022).

However, these theories do not consider the same factors that the Feminist Framework Plus adopts, most important of which are the cultural and societal factors as well as the developmental, biological, psychological, and situational factors. Through reading and analyzing the findings above from a new and different perspective, the feminist lens, it has informed my understanding of sexual harassment as a societal problem that should not only be attributed to individual characteristics in people that drive them to behave in certain inappropriate behaviors. Instead, it should focus on the external factors that negatively impact individuals and the internal factors – be it social norms,

patriarchy, power and control, and/or gender inequality. Most importantly, society should not be encouraging perpetrators to freely behaving regardless of how it may impact other people, particularly in this case women.

The Feminist Framework Plus allowed me to understand the phenomenon of sexual harassment as it dissects its prevalence and existence in the form of multiple factors that play a vital role, albeit negative, into molding a society that normalizes sexual harassment. Not only does it reflect this phenomenon in the form of a sexual act per se, but also as sexual entitlement, hostility towards women, traditional gender roles, overemphasis on heterosexuality, prevalence of patriarchy, and gender inequality.

Moreover, conducting this research study using a theoretical perspective to analyze the issue allow me to have a better understanding of its existence, which in turn, brought insightful information related to its intervention, treatment, education and advocacy. The feminist reading identifies multiple socio-cultural factors that inform our understanding on how sexual harassment is perceived and the reasons behind its occurrence. Consequently, this aids researchers in contributing positively to the existing literature through providing helpful and useful recommendations to practitioners in order to adopt in their awareness and prevention programs. If we keep recommending and implementing programs that are only focused on psychological or biological aspects while disregarding cultural factors then these programs will keep on failing and the prevalence of sexual harassment will presume – be it in higher education or other fields.

Therefore, in the following chapter, I will be discussing how this research study and the findings have further contributed to the existing body of literature, in addition to providing recommendations for future research, implications of Human Resource

Management, derived from my understanding of the feminist perspective, and the limitations of the study.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Previous research studies have tapped into the topic of sexual harassment as a phenomenon and sexual harassment in higher education in the global context, as well as few studies focusing on the Middle East. These studies have adopted various theories in exploring the numerous factors that affect the prevalence of sexual harassment and its causes along with the ineffective implementation of policies to prevent it, at an organizational level. The feminist reading of the findings of this research study has introduced a new perspective on these factors that permit the prevalence of sexual harassment and are used to analyze the issue, particularly focusing on sexual harassment in higher education in the Middle East.

The findings of the research study have showed that sexual harassment is highly prevalent in the Middle East, in higher education, and scholars have not yet focused their research efforts on this context as much as it is needed. The five core dimensions of the theory are reflected in the findings in multiple layers. Almost all the participants' answers to the surveys and interviews conducted represent the predominant social norms in the conservative cultures, this in turn, reflects on the Patriarchal power and control, "Doing" gender and masculinity, as well as the Embodied Sexual Practice. Clearly, most men in these societies do not value women's participation in the workforce as they still believe in the notion of women being housewives and care workers. This goes against the feminist perspective that values the contribution women hold to society. The aggression and hostility that men showed in their answers towards women represent their attitudes towards them as they do not view them as equal, rather they view women as unworthy

competitors who are taking away opportunities from them, and for that, they deserve to be punished. Consequently, this correlates to the core dimension of the Embodied Sexual Practice in which men intentionally harass women who chose to work, and in their beliefs, it is the price that women must pay. Also, through my research and analysis of the findings, I saw how studies that are done in the Global context portray a completely different experiences of women who are White, who live in developed countries, which are not the same in the Middle Eastern context. Thus, this takes us to the lived experiences and reality of Arab women who are experiencing forms of sexual harassment that white women in the West might never experience in their lives. It is important to note that studies need to tap into the perception of policy-makers and decision-makers who are responsible for combatting sexual harassment and to see how their perception is being reflected in the policies that are being developed and implemented.

Analyzing the existing literature review through the framework tell us that institutions of higher education have a long way to go to combat sexual harassment and create a safe working and learning environment for women and gender minorities. The FFP identified both internal and external factors that pose a major influence on the prevalence of the phenomenon and on the perceptions of people in academia towards it. All the scholars of the previous research used for this research study agree on the existing gap in literature on the topic, yet not many seem to have jumped on the bandwagon. More so, not so many have used complex frameworks and theories to analyze it (e.g., FFP) that take into consideration socio-cultural factors (external) that result in the occurrence of sexual harassment, as well as other factors including psychological, biological, situational, developmental and environmental – which can be both external and internal

factors. The factors identified by the FFP are crucial for organizations to adopt in order to combat sexual harassment and protect the rights of their employees and students.

Therefore, in the following parts of this chapter, I will provide some recommendations for HRM practice, insights related to future research, and how this research has further contributed to the existing body of literature.

A. Recommendations for HRM Practice

The findings of this research study and the gap in the existing literature on sexual harassment in higher education yield various implications and recommendations that must be implemented by HR managers, in higher education, in order to combat the phenomenon and protect the survivors. To do this, it is not an individual effort, and one cannot diminish such misconduct especially at a large scale as a university.

There are five stages to develop a policy including *agenda-setting, policy formulation, decision-making, policy implementation, and policy evaluation* (Bailey, 2020). It is crucial that managers adopt a feminist perspective in the preceding stages of developing policies through adopting an intersectional perspective and reduce patriarchal perspectives. Table 6 below provides some recommendations on how this can be done. The below are additional recommendations that universities must apply to achieve the desired value, too.

First, the Title IX offices are developed at universities that receive federal funding from the U.S., yet this should not be the case. In other words, universities should all implement an office that fight sexual harassment and other behaviors irrespective of

funding or law regulations. In fact, they should develop and communicate policies that reflect the organization's responsibility towards protecting their students and staff through preventing sexual harassment, which in turn, diminishes a culture permissive of harassment.

Second, when it comes to reporting, the underreporting of sexual harassment, it cannot be attributed to the absence of organizational policies only, because even with the existence of such policies underreporting takes place. This could be due to the improper communication of policies and the parameters of such policies. According to Lichtwark et al., institutions of higher education must have a context-appropriate framework of interrelated sexual harassment policies and procedures "to prevent, identify, record, and respond" to such behaviors of misconduct (2020). Hence, interrelated policies must be implemented including:

(1)   Stand-alone sexual harassment policies and procedures,

(2)   Code of conduct/behavioral policies,

(3)   Misconduct policy and procedure,

(4)   Policy regulating staff and student relationships,

(5)   Student wellbeing policy,

(6)   Special consideration policy,

(7)   Reporting or complaints policy and procedure, and

(8)   Critical incident policy and procedure.

With the understanding of the Feminist Framework Plus and the factors it attributes sexual harassment to, it is vital to include all the socio-cultural factors that may cause incidents of sexual harassment and integrate them in their awareness and prevention

programs, as "organizational policies can affect employee perceptions." (Fusilier and Penrod, 2015). Not only that, but universities must also make these policies easily accessible to their students and staff and provide multiple options to tackle the issue, most important of which are informal complaints and bystander interventions. Universities must also communicate training for sexual harassment prevention in their policies and across the universities' portals and websites.

In addition, studies have reported the higher risk and chances of experiencing sexual harassment is for gender minorities such as the LGBTQIA+ community than heterosexuals. Thus, in alignment with the intersectionality dimension of the feminist framework, universities must be aware of creating a culturally sensitive policies, programs, and resources in order to protect members of the LGBTQIA+ community. More importantly, faculty members, staff, and even graduate students must be educated on such risks that the community face. This awareness might help in increasing people's willingness and encouragement in intervening and helping survivors if they suspect they are being harassed or to provide support to those who have reported before – "Resource centers on campus could provide a sense of solidarity with other students facing similar difficulties." (Sutton et al., 2021). It may also bring light to the power dynamics that some members, at the university, hold over graduate students.

It is important to note that policies must include clear and specific provisions related to the consequences that peers and faculty members, who harass graduate students, would face. It should be made clear, as part of the university's values, that these forms of behaviors are not tolerated and/or ignored in academia.

In her research, Todorova (2018) suggests that in order to fight the dominant patriarchal system, organizations must develop prevention programs that are "in the university but not of it." What she is suggesting is that the development, implementation, and monitoring of preventive measures should not be administered and controlled by people who are part of the university, rather an external party (e.g., NGO) that can help in monitoring its effective execution.

Lastly, the below table represents an overview of my recommendations derived from the five core dimensions of the framework that can be applied to the context of the Middle East based on the findings of the research study. All dimensions are grouped together except for the intersectionality dimension as it requires additional efforts to take into consideration.

Table 6

Recommendations for Practice

Dimensions	Recommendations
Patriarchal Power and Control	• Prioritize raising awareness on the power and control dynamics that exist in the patriarchal societies of the Arab world, and how it manifests itself in the behaviors of employees at the workplace.
Normative Heterosexuality	• Ensure that policies and procedures are not developed from a patriarchal and male perspectives and acknowledge that biases and socio-cultural factors that put women at a disadvantage.
"Doing" Gender and Masculinity	• Urge faculty members to discuss issues of hegemonic patriarchal society, gender inequality, and issues related to intersectionality and lived experiences of women and gender minorities to educate students.
Embodied Sexual Practice	• Provide training and intervention programs to faculty and staff members to ensure their awareness on the issues related to conservative cultures, most important of which are patriarchal power and control, normative heterosexuality, intersectionality, "doing" gender and masculinity, and embodied sexual practice.
	• Hold top management accountable for leading by example and adopting a safe work and learning environment as a core value.
Intersectionality	• Include women and gender minorities in the decision making process of the development, implementation, and execution of policies and procedures.
	• Provide "Resource Centers" for women and gender minorities to give support to survivors and encourage reporting and speaking out.
	• Ensure safe recruitment of survivors of harassment to serve as counsellors, facilitators, auditors, and community liaisons.
	• Invite feminist community members, activists, and survivors to speak to all members of the university about sexual harassment in the university and all the preceding issues related to it.

It is important to note that these recommendations aim to initiate change, and with that comes resistance. Universities need to consider the readiness of faculty, staff, and students before implementing the preceding recommendations in order to achieve effective implementation. For instance, professors can discuss issues related to the patriarchal power and control and gender through incorporating interactive tools in their teaching methods such as case studies that provide real life examples of the topic. This way they raise awareness on the topic, at the same time, provide examples that students could relate to based on the context they are in, rather than just being theoretically educated. It is crucial for faculty members to be allies in the prevention of sexual harassment in universities in order to positively influence students and their perception of the phenomenon.

In addition, in light of the Training and Development pillar of Human Resource Development, when it comes to providing training and prevention programs it should be implemented at multiple levels – individual, team, and organizational.

At the individual level, universities need to train each person – faculty, staff, and students, and must focus on those who are at the top level in the university because they hold the position of responsibility and authority and are required to demonstrate the core values of the university and lead by example. By training them on the issues pertaining to sexual harassment and other forms of it, this would be contributing to creating a safe atmosphere and a step forward towards creating an inclusive culture.

At the team level, it is crucial that team trainings to be conducted frequently and it should not be a one-time event, rather it must be an ongoing learning process to continuously highlight the issue of sexual harassment and what it constitutes and how it takes place in the university. Moreover, it is important to teach them how to act if they

experience or witness any form of sexual harassment. Consequently, this encourages university members to report and speak out and the continuous trainings would reinforce the university's core values that protect its members.

Lastly, at the organizational level, the university should ensure effective reporting mechanisms are in place that support survivors as well as highlight the importance of bystander interventions. The university must ensure access to these tools for everyone and encourage them to utilize the tools exist to create a safe learning environment and a safer access to the academic institution.

B. Contribution to Future Research

Due to the lacuna of existing literature on the topic, using the Feminist framework gave a different perspective on the prevalence of sexual harassment and what needs to be done in order to prevent it. It is crucial for future research to focus on examining the profile of the perpetrators and take gender into consideration as well as the experiences of gender minorities in order to have a culturally sensitive environment, specifically in the Middle East. Also, future research needs to further support or challenge the framework as well as more research on elements related to broader understandings of factors related to sexual harassment. But, at the same time, if practitioners adopt this framework and put it into practice as recommended, then the implications for advocacy, education, and service provision will be tested and hopefully, further developed. Future research must consider the relationships between organizations' environment, parameters of the policies, sexual harassment, and its outcomes to obtain a fuller understanding of the process. The development of a formal policy and its parameters should also be linked to perceptions of organization members.

C. Limitations of the Study

This research study adopted a narrative literature review on the topic of sexual harassment in higher education in the Middle East, in which I adopted the Feminist Framework Plus that is based on the Feminist theory to analyze the findings of the existing literature on the topic understudy. There are several limitations that are included in this study. First, due to the lack of research on this particular topic in the context of the Middle East, conducting this study using the qualitative research methodology through in-depth interviews would be an added value. Conducting interviews with people in

higher education in any of the MENA region countries gives an insight on the lived experiences of women and men who have been harassed or experienced any form of sexually harassing behaviors in the context of higher education. Second, the Feminist Framework Plus is a highly complex model because it offers multiple factors in examining any issue and does not attribute the prevalence of an issue (e.g., sexual harassment) to power and control only, rather it provides insights on other factors that play crucial roles in adding motives such as race, class, and other identities. However, the topic of sexual harassment itself is a complex one and examining it, particularly in the Middle East, is not easy and requires a detailed and interrelated model like the FFP. Third, there is a huge gap in the existing literature on the topic and it would have been more beneficial if more data were available in order to have a better understanding and a better analysis through examining different aspects of sexual harassment in higher education in the Middle East. Fourth, the findings of the research study assume that sexual harassment is perpetrated by men against women, and in some, the gender of the perpetrator was not identified.

D. Conclusion

In conclusion, this research study adds to a growing body of literature on the experiences of people of sexual harassment in the context of higher education in the Middle East using the feminist framework. The Feminist Framework Plus adopted builds on the feminist understanding of sexual harassment by knitting multiple feminist theories together to have a clearer explanation. The framework bridges theory and research, contributing to evidence-based practice. It also gives a strong foundation for advocates,

educators, and activists who interested in the topic, as well as a useful way to organize existing theories and research.

At the university levels, human resources managers and other relevant stakeholder, should aim to (1) develop a sexual harassment policy if this has not already been done, (2) disseminate sexual harassment policies online to increase accessibility and ease of access, (3) improve the quality of sexual harassment policies, (4) communicating the availability of training on the university website to increase awareness and participation.

Lastly, by exploring the relationships between sources of power, and analyzing how they affect the scope and manifestations of harassment in higher education, it might be possible to develop prevention initiatives that are not based on a patriarchal perspective that support the subordination of women and dominance of men, in order to have spaces where all learners pursue their educational goals freely and equally.

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