

Sexual Harassment and Its Impact on Employees

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Abstract Sexual harassment remains a prevalent type of mistreatment of employees that frequently transpires within the confines of the workplace. The present study endeavors to address the lacuna in prior research and examine the effects of sexual harassment on employee depression, employee satisfaction, and turnover intention. The research employs a quantitative methodology utilizing structural equation modeling (SEM) to scrutinize the gathered data. The study's sample comprises 406 employees who have encountered incidents of sexual harassment in Indonesia. The SmartPLS 3 program was utilized to analyze questionnaires that were distributed to 406 employees via Google Forms. The results show that sexual harassment affects depression ($p = 0.000$), sexual harassment does not affect job satisfaction ($p = 0.209$), depression affects job satisfaction ($p = 0.001$), depression affects turnover intention ($p = 0.000$), and job satisfaction affects turnover intention ($p = 0.001$). The implication of this research is that organizations must take action to prevent sexual harassment in the work environment and reduce its negative effects by making sexual harassment prevention training and rules related to sexual harassment.

Keywords Sexual Harassment, Depression, Job Satisfaction, Turnover Intention

1. Introduction

According to research, sexual harassment remains a prevalent type of workplace harassment, affecting almost 50% of female employees throughout their professional careers [1]. Scholars in the field of management have commonly focused on two distinct forms of sexuality, namely workplace romance and sexual harassment. The phenomenon of workplace romance pertains to a voluntary and mutually sought-after romantic relationship between two individuals who are employed within the same organization. Conversely, sexual harassment denotes unwelcome sexual advances or requests for sexual favors in exchange for benefits or outcomes. Additional forms of sexually inappropriate conduct, whether physical or verbal in nature, contribute to the development of a hostile work environment [2].

Despite all measures to prevent sexual harassment to create a friendly work environment, this problem of sexual harassment is enduring and never-ending [3]. According to the 2017 Service Academy Gender Relations Survey, a notable proportion of female cadets (12.2%) and male cadets (1.7%) reported experiencing unwanted sexual contact, while a significant percentage of female cadets (48%) and male cadets (12%) reported experiencing sexual harassment in the year prior to the survey [4]. According to a research conducted in Europe, it has been estimated that approximately half of the female workforce in European Union nations have encountered incidents of sexual

harassment [2].

In Indonesia, perpetrators of sexual harassment can be charged using the obscenity article as stipulated in Articles 289 - 296 of the Criminal Code or Article 414 - 422 Law 1/2023. Nevertheless, the legal system operates as a document. It is commonly assumed that male perpetrators will carefully consider the consequences before engaging in any form of harassment towards women. However, it is widely acknowledged that legal measures alone may not be entirely effective in preventing such behavior [5]. In fact, the phenomenon that is occurring in Indonesia is increasingly massive in relation to female employees being forced to stay with their leaders as a condition for extending work contracts [6].

Prior research has indicated that workplace sexual harassment is associated with adverse outcomes, including diminished job satisfaction, prolonged absences due to illness, and psychological distress such as depression and anxiety [7]. Sexual harassment is a persistent stressor that can lead to significant mental and physical health issues for the affected employee, causing stress and hindering their workplace performance [3]. According to a scholarly source, it has been found that the implementation of this practice results in a decrease in job satisfaction and productivity, while simultaneously leading to an increase in turnover, absenteeism, and health-related issues [8]. According to reports, female nurses who encountered sexual harassment were found to be at a higher risk of experiencing depression, with estimates ranging from three to eight times higher compared to their non-harassed counterparts [3], [9]. The undeniable truth is that women who are empowered possess great strength. However, in the context of the workplace, instances of sexual harassment may deter them from reporting the perpetrator due to various factors such as apprehension of job loss and the shame associated with being harassed [5].

Instances of sexual harassment have negative impacts not only on the individual who experiences it, but also on the overall functioning of the institution. According to data obtained from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, American employers disbursed a sum of \$52 million as settlements for claims of sexual harassment in the year 2014. Employers expend a significant amount of financial resources annually on sexual harassment awareness training due to the substantial expenses associated with harassment lawsuits [10].

Various phenomena and previous studies show how dangerous cases of sexual harassment are. Nonetheless, this study has identified empirical deficiencies pertaining to several phenomena, specifically the inclination in certain workplaces to perceive sexual harassment from clients or customers as an inherent aspect of work, rather than a potentially detrimental encounter [7]. Furthermore, sexual violence was previously associated with women as victims [9]. However, research by Bastiani et al. [11], found that male respondents were more affected than female. The association between most of the sexual abuse

items and depression was stronger for boys than for girls.

The present investigation endeavors to address this void by examining the effects of sexual harassment on employee depression, employee satisfaction, and turnover intention. This study develops previous research that focuses on the hospitality industry [12] and health [10].

2. Literature Review

2.1. Sexual Harassment

In organizational settings, sexual harassment is commonly characterized as sexual conduct that is not desired by the recipient. Specifically, this may entail solicitation of sexual favors as a prerequisite for job opportunities, or solicitation for romantic engagements, remarks, humor, or other conduct that collectively generates an unwelcoming work atmosphere for the recipient of such conduct [13]. The act of sexual harassment falls within the purview of abusive conduct, which may also encompass acts of violence, be it verbal, interpersonal, or physical in nature [14]. Sexual harassment not only poses immediate financial threats and harm to female employees who are victimized, but also has the potential to inflict long-term damage on their professional trajectories, including impeding career advancement and reducing earnings [15].

Sexual harassment is a multifaceted phenomenon that encompasses four distinct dimensions, namely gender harassment, abusive and offensive behavior, unwanted sexual attention, and sexual coercion. Gender harassment pertains to both verbal and nonverbal conduct that communicates prejudice against individuals based on their gender, including gender-based discrimination directed towards women or men. The term "violent and offensive behavior" pertains to actions that exhibit sexist animosity towards individuals of a particular gender, including but not limited to verbal, physical, and symbolic conduct, such as the telling of sexual jokes. Unwanted sexual attention pertains to unsuitable sexual conduct that lacks reciprocation from the recipient, including uninvited physical contact. Sexual coercion pertains to instances where an individual employs sex-related propositions, such as inducements or explicit intimidations, to elicit sexual compliance from the victim in exchange for work-related benefits [12].

2.2. Sexual Harassment, Depression, Job Satisfaction, and Turnover Intention

Depression is a psychological state characterized by a range of symptoms, including but not limited to feelings of sadness, indifference, and loss of interest. These symptoms may manifest as occasional lightheadedness in daily life or as persistent and intense manifestations that meet the diagnostic criteria for a depressive disorder. The

occurrence of sexual harassment in the workplace can be evaluated as a severe and threatening workplace event, which can lead to negative emotions such as humiliation and depression, ultimately causing the victim to experience depressive symptoms [12]. Instances of sexual harassment within an organization have the potential to negatively impact both physical and psychological well-being, potentially leading to the development of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) [15]. A separate investigation demonstrated that individuals who have experienced sexual abuse exhibit symptoms of depression. Furthermore, the long-term effects on their work-related outcomes include reduced motivation to perform job duties, decreased job satisfaction, a propensity to resign, financial difficulties, and a range of emotional responses such as major depression [3]. Studies conducted in the area of sexual harassment have revealed that individuals who have been subjected to such behavior undergo a variety of psychological effects. These effects include depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, externalizing symptoms such as substance abuse and antisocial behavior, as well as difficulties in academic and social adaptation [9].

The concept of job satisfaction can be broadly characterized as the general positive disposition of employees towards their work, as stated in reference [16]. There exists an inverse correlation between turnover intentions and job satisfaction. Consequently, in cases where employees experience job dissatisfaction, there is a tendency for them to exhibit elevated levels of turnover intentions. Sexual harassment reduces job satisfaction by infiltrating the work environment. Empirical evidence from Pakistan suggests that a negative association exists between the organizational environment, employee job satisfaction, and turnover intention. Sexual harassment has been observed to result in higher employee turnover rates, leading to significant financial costs. In fact, research

conducted in the United States has revealed that turnover expenses constitute the most substantial portion of the total costs associated with sexual harassment [17]. Sexual harassment within a professional setting can lead to a work environment that is uncomfortable, hostile, offensive, or intimidating, ultimately impacting the morale and performance of employees. Additionally, it has been observed that this phenomenon leads to a decrease in job satisfaction and productivity, while simultaneously resulting in increased rates of turnover, absenteeism, and health-related challenges [8].

The concept of Turnover Intention pertains to an employee's inclination to discontinue their employment with an organization, and has the capacity to serve as a reliable indicator of subsequent turnover conduct [18]. Prior studies have indicated that workplace sexual harassment has negative consequences on work-related conduct, attitudes, and the overall welfare of employees. These consequences include diminished productivity, withdrawal from job duties, decreased commitment to the organization, reduced job satisfaction, dissatisfaction with life, mental health issues, and heightened stress levels [12]. One of the primary ramifications of workplace sexual harassment is the loss of career advancement opportunities or voluntary termination of employment by affected employees [19]. Sexual harassment costs not only victims, it costs organizations millions of dollars each year, exceeding legal costs, due to absenteeism, reduced productivity and job turnover [1]. The research model is depicted in Fig. 1.

- H1: Sexual Harassment affects Depression
- H2: Sexual Harassment affects Job Satisfaction
- H3: Sexual Harassment affects Turnover Intention
- H4: Depression affects job Satisfaction.
- H5: Depression affects Turnover Intention
- H6: Job Satisfaction affects Turnover Intention

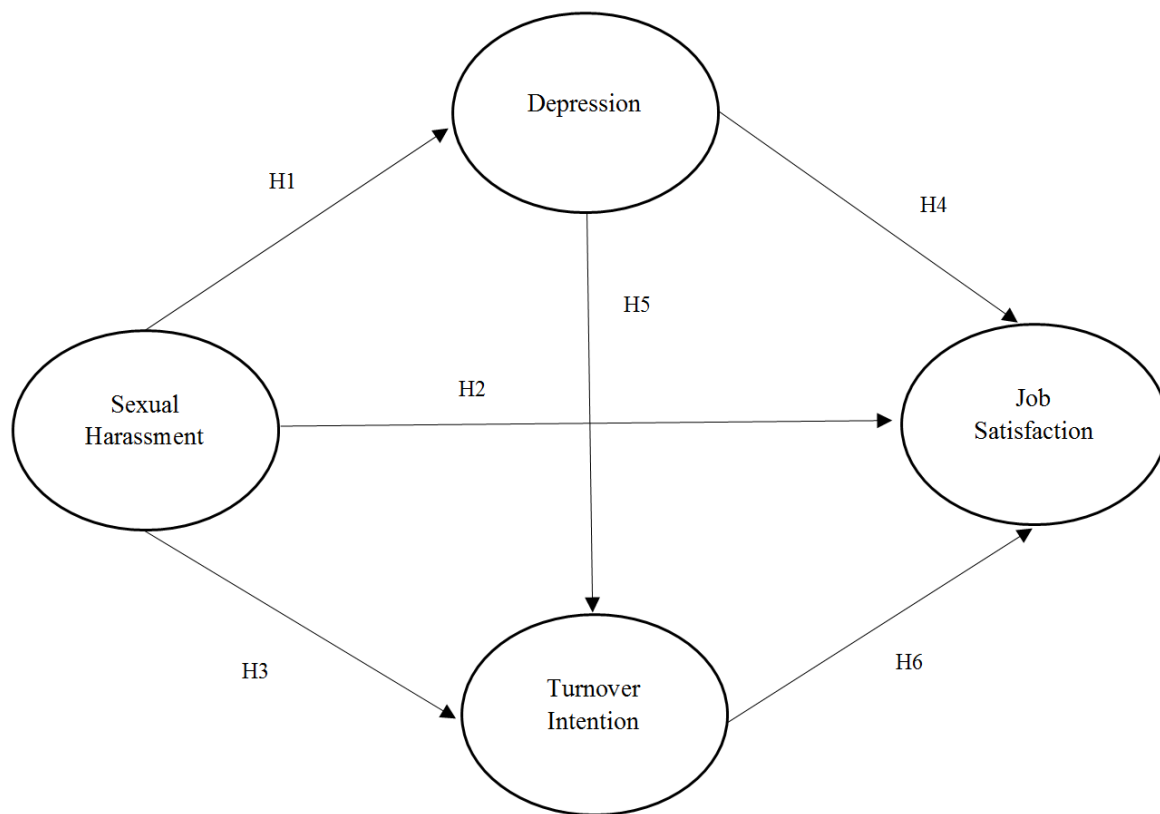


Figure 1. The structural model

3. Methods

The investigation was carried out in Indonesia. The background for choosing a research location in Indonesia was due to an increase in cases of sexual harassment from year to year, even in 2021 as many as 1,164 cases occurred [20]. The probe was conducted between March 2023 and May 2023. The present investigation utilized a quantitative methodology, utilizing a survey instrument and structural equation modeling (SEM). This study's participants are Indonesian workers who have encountered workplace sexual harassment. Researchers used a purposive sampling approach through a non-probability sampling method. The number of samples used in this research was 406 respondents. Before distributing the questionnaire, the researcher submitted a survey consent form to respondents as a form of respondent agreement. After the respondents agreed, the researcher distributed the questionnaire using Google Forms. To ensure the confidentiality of respondent data, this study received formal approval from the university's study ethics office on February 1, 2023. This division has the responsibility to ensure that the consent form effectively conveys the purpose of the study, motivates participants to participate of their own accord, and protects the privacy of their answers as fully as

possible.

This investigative questionnaire consists of 20 questions, each of which was responded to and returned by individuals participating in the research. Next, the SEM-PLS application is used to get the desired results. The items were measured using a five-point Likert scale, one point representing strong disagreement and five points representing strong agreement for the job satisfaction and turnover intention variables; one represents very rarely and five represents very often for the sexual abuse and depression variables [21].

In measuring various variables, we use various questionnaires adapted from previous studies. This study uses a 5-item scale developed by [16] for measuring sexual harassment. An example of a question is, "I got an offensive sexist comment." To test the depression variable, this study uses the Depression Self-Rating Scale [9], [22] modified by using a 5-item scale. An example of asking a question is, "I don't think life is worth living." To test job satisfaction, this study uses a 5-item scale developed by [16] for measuring job satisfaction. An example of a question is, "I find my job interesting." To test turnover intention, this study uses a 5-item scale developed by [23] for measuring job satisfaction. An example of a question is, "I often think about quitting my current job."

4. Results

4.1. Distribution of the Respondents

The distribution of respondents is shown in Table 1 depending on their social standing as well as their demographic characteristics. A total of 42 (or 10%) of the responders are male, while approximately 364 (or 90%) are female. In addition, 145 (or 36%) of the respondents are married, whereas approximately 219 (or 54%) of them do not have a partner, while approximately 42 (or 10%) are divorced.

Table 1. Distribution of the respondents concerning their social status

Profile	Frequency	Percent	
Sex	Male	42	10
	Female	364	90
Marital Status	Married	145	36
	Single	219	54
	Divorce	42	10
Age	<26	49	12
	26–30	203	50
	31–35	131	32
	36–40	18	4
	>40	5	1
Level of Education Has Been Completed	Junior High School	8	2
	Senior High School	173	43
	Diploma	50	12
	Undergraduate	152	37
	Graduate	19	5
	Post-Graduate	4	1

Similarly, the age range of respondents ranged from 26 years for 49 (12%) of them, 26-30 years for 203 (50%) of

them, 31-35 years for 131 (32%) of them, and 36-40 years for only 18 (4%) of them, >40 years for 5 (1%) of them. Furthermore, the data reveals that 8 individuals indicated attainment of education up to the level of junior high school, while 173 individuals reported completion of education up to the level of senior high school. Additionally, 50 individuals reported completion of education up to the level of a diploma, whereas 152 individuals completed their education up to the level of an undergraduate degree. Moreover, 19 individuals reported completion of education up to the level of a graduate degree, and 4 individuals reported completion of education up to the level of a post-graduate degree.

4.2. Validity and Reliability

When examining the measurement model, scholars must evaluate convergent validity, which refers to the degree of agreement among multiple items that measure the same construct. According to Hair et al., [24] it is recommended to evaluate convergent validity by taking into account factor loading, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE). The suggested loading value is 0.5. Table 2 shows that the model is adequate with all acceptable reliability values. This is evidenced by the loading value, composite reliability, and the AVE value greater than 0.5 [24], [25].

Discriminant validity refers to the extent to which an item distinguishes between constructs or gauges distinct concepts, as noted in sources [24], [25]. The assessment of discriminant validity was conducted by examining the correlation between the construct and the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) for that particular construct [24], [25]. Table 3 presents the findings pertaining to the discriminant validity of the study, wherein the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) is observed to be greater than the correlation value in both rows and columns. Thus, the measurement model is deemed acceptable as it satisfies all the requirements of convergent and discriminant validity.

Table 2. Result of measurement model

Construct	Items	Loading factors	Composite reliability	AVE	Adapted from
Sexual Harassment	I got offensive sexist comments (SH1)	0,749	0.876	0.541	[16]
	I was repeatedly told sexual jokes (SH2)	0,671			
	I get sexual comments, in public or private (SH3)	0,735			
	I got a discussion about unwanted sex (SH4)	0,717			
	I got offensive sexual gestures (SH5)	0,770			
	I'm being stared at in a sexual way (SH6)	0,766			
Depression	I feel like crying. (DE1)	0,757	0.887	0.567	[9], [22]
	I feel like running away (DE2)	0,723			
	I don't think life is worth living. (DE3)	0,768			
	I have nightmares. (DE4)	0,743			
	I feel very lonely. (DE5)	0,734			
	I felt so sad that I could barely bear it. (DE6)	0,794			
Job Satisfaction	I feel my work is valuable (JS1)	0,813	0.882	0.654	[16]
	I feel that I am doing something worthwhile in the work I do (JS2)	0,694			
	I find my work interesting (JS3)	0,858			
	I feel my work is satisfying (JS4)	0,857			
Turnover Intention	I often think about quitting my current job (TI1)	0,809	0.860	0.607	[23]
	I may leave this organization and work for another in the next year. (TI2)	0,745			
	I do not plan to stay in this organization developing my career for a long time. (TI3)	0,721			
	I may not have a good future if I stay with this organization (TI4)	0,835			

Table 3. Discriminant validity of constructs

	Depression	Job Satisfaction	Sexual Harassment	Turnover Intention
Depression	0,753			
Job Satisfaction	-0,319	0,809		
Sexual Harassment	0,637	-0,247	0,735	
Turnover Intention	0,249	0,142	0,194	0,779

4.3. Hypothesis Testing

The statistical significance of the impact of the independent variable, specifically sexual harassment, on the dependent variables of depression, job satisfaction, and turnover intention is depicted in Figure 2 through the t statistics. Table 4 presents a summary of the t statistics findings.

Table 4 displays the findings of the investigation that

supported hypothesis 1, sexual harassment affect depression ($p = 0.000$), hypothesis 2 shows that sexual harassment does not affect job satisfaction ($p = 0.209$), hypothesis 3 shows that sexual harassment does not affect turnover intention ($p = 0.135$), hypothesis 4 shows that depression affects job satisfaction ($p = 0.001$), hypothesis 5 shows that depression affects turnover intention ($p = 0.000$), and hypothesis 6 shows that job satisfaction affects turnover intention ($p = 0.001$).

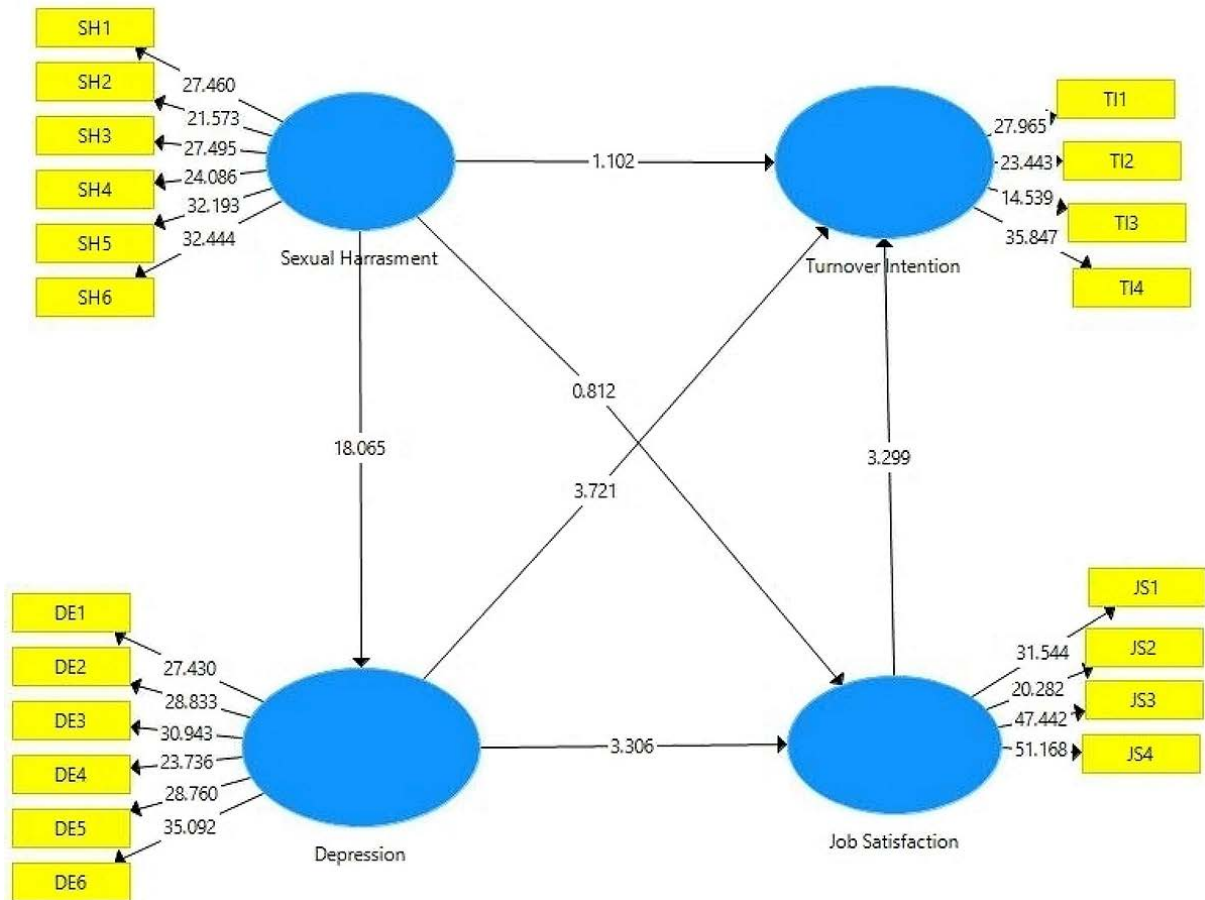


Figure 2. Structural Model

Table 4. Path coefficients among latent variables

No	Path	β	T Statistics	P-Value	Significance
1	Sexual Harassment → Depression	0.637	18.065	0.000	Significance
2	Sexual Harassment → Job satisfaction	-0.073	0.812	0.209	Not Significance
3	Sexual Harassment → Turnover Intention	0.007	1.102	0.135	Not Significance
4	Depression → Job satisfaction	-0.272	3.306	0.001	Significance
5	Depression → Turnover Intention	0.280	3.721	0.000	Significance
6	Job satisfaction → Turnover Intention	-0.250	3.299	0.001	Significance

5. Discussion

As per the results of the initial hypothesis, it can be inferred that sexual harassment has a favorable impact on the manifestation of depression. The findings align with prior studies that have established a robust and affirmative correlation between workplace sexual harassment and the onset of depression among employees [1], [15]. Unwelcome and offensive sexual-related behavior can push employees to experience psychological stress that can lead to depression [12], [15]. Depression is a common experience among employees who perceive themselves as powerless and dependent on the individual engaging in

harassment [19].

According to recent research, a noteworthy correlation exists between online sexual harassment among adolescents and the consumption of alcohol and drugs, as well as the presence of depression and anxiety [9]. According to the study conducted by Friberg et al., [7] there was a discernible pattern indicating that employees who experienced harassment from their colleagues, superiors, or subordinates exhibited significantly higher levels of depressive symptoms compared to those who were harassed by clients or customers.

The results of this study also fill in the gaps in the research conducted by Bastiani et al., [11] and Guerra et al.,

[9] where not only women experience the negative impact of sexual harassment, but male employees also experience it, although the percentage obtained is small, namely 10% (Table 1). This of course illustrates that sexual harassment does not see gender and can have a negative impact on the victims.

The findings pertaining to the second and third hypotheses indicate that there exists no significant impact of sexual harassment on both job satisfaction and turnover intention. The findings of this investigation diverge from prior research that posited sexual harassment as a significant obstacle, exerting an adverse influence on employees' career advancement, job contentment, and propensity to depart [14], [26], [27].

Our analysis of the results of this study is that first, even though employees experience sexual harassment, employees are still satisfied with their work because employees feel that their work is a part of life and the job that employees aspire to. Second, employees stay at work and do not leave the organization due to economic necessity, and difficulty getting a new job, and there is embarrassment if cases of sexual harassment experienced by employees become known to the wider public. Our analysis is in line with recent research from Diez-Canseco et al., [19] namely those who are victims of sexual harassment do not want to leave their jobs or face harassment but because of work dependency and threatened socioeconomic status they experience symptoms of depression.

The findings pertaining to the fourth and fifth hypotheses indicate that depression exerts an adverse influence on job satisfaction, while simultaneously exerting a favorable influence on turnover intention. The findings of this investigation are consistent with prior scholarly inquiry, which suggests that workers who suffer from depression are likely to exhibit job dissatisfaction and influence their inclination to depart from their employment [1], [28]. The fifth hypothesis reveals that turnover intention is adversely impacted by job satisfaction. The findings of this investigation are consistent with prior scholarly inquiry, which posits that contented employees are less inclined to contemplate voluntary turnover [14], [27].

From the results of the fourth to sixth hypotheses, we analyze that it is important for companies to create a culture of retention, policies related to sexual harassment, and having a healthy organizational climate are among the most important determinants to avoid cases of sexual harassment. This of course will affect employee job satisfaction, employee depression levels, anxiety and physical health which will actually reduce the quality of work life and cause turnover intentions [29].

Apart from the results of hypothesis testing, descriptively based on the results of the questionnaire obtained, it can be explained the impact of sexual harassment that occurs from employees regardless of gender. This is proven that the respondents who

experienced sexual harassment were not only women, but men too. Sexual harassment experienced by employees mostly occurs at the age of 26-35 years and in the high school-graduate education range. Researchers analysed that new employees are more at risk of experiencing sexual harassment because they do not know how to deal with and act when sexual harassment occurs. The researcher's analysis is in line with previous research which explains that new employees are vulnerable to sexual harassment [9]. In fact, the sexual harassment that occurs includes both married and unmarried employees.

6. Conclusions

The results of this investigation indicate that the effect of sexual harassment on depression was direct and on job satisfaction and job leaving was indirect and showed itself through the variable of depression. This research has academic significance because it shows that even though employees are targets of sexual harassment, it takes a process for the employee's job satisfaction and turnover intention to emerge due to depression. One of the triggering factors that was analyzed by researchers was economic factors and employees' intrinsic desire to work. From a practical point of view, it is advisable for organizations to implement measures aimed at preventing sexual harassment in the workplace and reducing its harmful effects. This can be achieved through 1) Policy regulations for efforts to prevent, handle and recover cases of violence and harassment in the workplace, 2) establishing a complaint post for cases of sexual violence and harassment in the company, 3) forming a response team for sexual harassment, 4) creating comfortable and safe work environment for all employees.

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