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# Work-related sexual harassment and coping techniques: the case of Indonesian female journalists

DEBORAH N. SIMORANGKIR 

Female journalists make up only between five to 10 percent of the total journalists in Indonesia. Consequently, this often gives women little bargaining power in the workplace. This research analyzes the prevalence and nature of sexual harassment experienced by Indonesian female journalists, as well as their coping techniques. In doing so, in-depth interviews with 10 Indonesian female journalists were conducted. Results show that the majority of respondents have encountered some type of sexual harassment, ranging from unwelcome sexual advances, sexual jokes, offensive flirtations, or actual sexual assaults. Based on the in-depth interviews, there were six main coping techniques used by the respondents: 1. Denial; 2. Ignoring the harassment; 3. Relying on the protection of male coworkers; 4. Appearing more masculine; 5. Being friendly and approachable to others; and, 6. Confronting and reporting. Data is analyzed using a feminist perspective, specifically the sociocultural theory. Though the participants in this study have learned to cope with such treatment, the overall persistence of sexual harassment may lead to such negative implications as further decrease of the number of female journalists, lack of diversity in the media, and the inability for journalists to be watchdogs.

**KEYWORDS:** Female journalists; sexual harassment; Indonesia; feminism; sociocultural theory

## Introduction

In Indonesia, journalism is highly dominated by men. There are approximately 42,000 working journalists, and they are typically male who are in their mid-thirties and hold college degrees in journalism or communications (Mughtar & Masduki, 2016). Based on Alliance of Independent Journalists (AJI) (2012) survey, women make up only 10% of 14,000 journalists. This

number decreased in 2019 according to a survey by PWI (Indonesian Journalists Association), which shows that out of 15,000 journalists, only approximately 5% are women. Even though there are no official data on the exact number of journalists in Indonesia today, these findings, however, show that not only are women a small minority in the journalism field, but the number is also decreasing. This is contrary to Figaro (2018)'s argument that in

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most parts of the world, the number of woman journalists is increasing greatly in a variety of media outlets due to changes including urbanization, the growth of the female population, and increased university-level professional training among women (Figaro, 2018).

Moreover, female journalists in Indonesia often experience sexual harassment on the job, especially from male sources. A survey of 189 journalists shows that 14% have experienced sexual harassment (AJI, 2012). Other findings by AJI (2012) in regard to the experiences of female journalists in various Indonesian cities include the following:

- (1) Women only make up 18.6% of AJI's membership of 1868 journalists.
- (2) Women with children often have difficulties juggling child care, especially with uncertain working hours, making it hard for women to progress in their careers.
- (3) Several journalists claim that there is a wage discrepancy between women and men journalists. Men are considered breadwinners and therefore often receive higher remuneration. In Indonesia, many companies also do not give female employees health insurance, presuming that these women already receive health benefits from their husbands' employers.
- (4) Media companies often do not provide nursing rooms.
- (5) Numerous female journalists have experienced sexual harassment on the job.

These findings show evidence of inequality and gender discrimination that female journalists in Indonesia often encounter (AJI, 2012, p. 18–19).

When it comes to gender inequality and discrimination against women, journalism is no different from other professions: lower remuneration, subordinate positions, and problems obtaining promotions. Moreover, the study titled *Violence and harassment against women in the news media: A global picture* by International Women's Media Foundation (IWMF) and International News Safety Institute from around the world (South/Latin America, USA, Europe, Asia and the Pacific, Arab States, and Africa) found

disturbing testimonies of harassment and violence against female journalists. Among respondents aged between 18 and 34, who were journalists/reporters, editors, and producers working for newspapers or online media, 64.8% claimed to have had experienced "intimidation, threats and abuse" – most frequently, by government officials and police officers – while on the job. In addition, 21.6% have experienced physical violence while working; 14.3% have suffered sexual violence during their work; and 47.9% suffered sexual harassment at work (Barton & Storm, 2014; Figaro, 2018).

How pop culture has been portraying journalists may have also played a role to how journalism is perceived by the public (Ehrlich & Saltzman, 2015). "Both in real life newsrooms and as portrayed in television shows and the film industry, female journalists want to be seen as their male counterparts – tough, competitive, and ambitious. At the same time, they reinforce and fight stereotypical gender roles of being compassionate, nurturing, and caring" (Cvetkovic & Oostman, 2018, p. 92). Meanwhile, in a market-driven industry, the female body, physical attractiveness, and sexuality are exploited in the newsroom to attract both male and female audiences (Steiner, 2008).

Human capital is an essential resource and an important part in any organization. Sexual harassment is a grave violation on the employees' rights which makes the working environment hostile and intimidating for the victim, often resulting in psychological and emotional trauma. Consequently, such working conditions hinder productivity (Ramsaroop & Parumasur, 2007).

Initially launched by American activist Tarana Burke on social media in 2006, the MeToo movement – a movement against sexual harassment and sexual abuse in which people publicize allegations of sex crimes committed by powerful and/or prominent men (Strause, 2018) – today has reached almost every part of the world, largely thanks to prominent Hollywood actresses popularizing the #MeToo hashtag to tweet about the Harvey Weinstein sexual abuse allegations in 2017. The phrase and hashtag soon became an international

movement, and today, the viral hashtag #MeToo is regularly rotated in more than 85 countries (Stone & Vogelstein, 2019)

The 2016 Indonesian National Women's Life Experience Survey shows that "1 in 3 Indonesian women aged 15-64 years old have ever experienced physical and/or sexual violence perpetrated by their partner or non-partner in her lifetime" (UNFPA, 2016). In Indonesia, however, the #MeToo movement has not been so successful. Indonesian feminist Tunggal Pawestri, introduced #SayaJuga to encourage wider public discussion about sexual violence. However, in Indonesia, this movement is still limited to those who are social media literate and women in the upper middle class (Kartika, 2019).

Kartika (2019) posits that the combination of deeply entrenched patriarchal culture, conservative Muslim values, and gender-insensitive law enforcement practices is the reason why the #MeToo movement has not really gained momentum in Indonesia. The media also perpetuates the victim-blaming culture as well. Reports about sexual harassment often depict women as responsible for triggering men's desires. Women are often reluctant to report sexual harassment to law enforcement. In November 2017, National Police Chief General Tito Karnavian said investigators should ask women who report cases of sexual violence whether they were comfortable during rape (Kartika, 2019).

This study is important because it brings to light the fact that female journalists in Indonesia not only are a small minority, but often also face threats and intimidation, including sexual harassment. Even though many female journalists are able to cope with such experience, sexual harassment may lead to personal and professional problems, and eventually lead to such negative implications as further decrease of the number of female journalists, lack of diversity in the media, and the inability for journalists to be watchdogs.

### **Sexual harassment in the workplace**

Unwanted sexual attention and offensive gender-based conduct at work have occurred for

generations, reflecting the subordinate position of women in the hierarchy of work, often having to endure harassment as the price of getting accepted into the workforce (Cela, 2015). However only in the last three decades has this type of behavior been given a name (ILO, 2011, p. 7).

Workplace sexual harassment encompasses unwelcome sex-related acts in the workplace that are considered "offensive, exceeding their resources and threatening their wellbeing" by the targets (Hogh et al., 2016). It can also be a type of workplace bullying that uses gender or sexuality as a method of harassment. The most common workplace sexual harassment is gender harassment, which includes sexist behavior with the goal to demean or offend the victims based on their gender. The second most common is unwanted sexual attention, which is unwelcome and uncalled-for sex-related verbal and/or nonverbal behavior, including cornering, grabbing, and intrusive letters or phone calls. The third most common type of sexual harassment is sexual coercion (Hogh et al., 2016).

On the other hand, according to Cela (2015), sexual harassment can be categorized into four types:

- (1) Verbal forms: Verbal conduct of a sexual nature may include unwelcome sexual advances, propositions or pressure for sexual activity; continued suggestions for social activity outside the workplace after it has been made clear that such suggestion is unwelcome; offensive flirtations; suggestive remarks; innuendoes or lewd comments. Such behavior defines women's role as sexual object rather than a work colleague. Within the verbal forms of harassment, "sexual jokes" are most frequently experienced.
- (2) Nonverbal forms: Nonverbal conduct of a sexual nature refers to the display of pornographic or sexually suggestive pictures, objects or written materials; leering, whistling, or making sexually suggestive gestures. These behaviors may make women feel uncomfortable or threatened and undermine the position of a woman who seeks to deal with her fellow employees

with professional dignity. Within the nonverbal forms of harassment, “staring and whistling” are the most frequently reported forms of harassment.

- (3) Physical forms: Physical conduct of a sexual nature includes unwanted physical contact, ranging from unnecessary touching, patting, or pinching or brushing against another employee’s body to assault and coerce sexual intercourse. Within the physical forms of harassment, the most commonly experienced is “unsolicited physical contact, touching.”
- (4) *Quid pro quo*: Refers to a demand by a person in authority, such as a supervisor, for sexual favors in order to obtain or maintain certain job benefits, a wage increase, a promotion, training opportunity, a transfer, or a job. It forces an employee to choose between giving in to sexual demands and losing job benefits. Because *quid pro quo* harassment can only be committed by someone with the power to give or take away employment benefit, and this form of sexual harassment is considered an abuse of authority by the employer or by the employer’s agent to whom authority over terms and conditions is delegated. This type of sexual harassment is also referred to as “sexual blackmail” (Cela, 2015, p. 83).

Even though sexual harassment is not exclusively targeted at women or even limited to members of the opposite sex, according to Ramsaroop and Parumasur (2007), female employees are significantly more prone to harassment compared to male employees for two reasons: 1) Horizontal segregation – the act of grouping working women into a limited amount of traditionally women-associated job categories, e.g. teachers, secretaries, and nurses; and 2) Vertical stratification – the act of employing women in low-level positions that depend on the agreement and willingness of males for hiring, retention, and promotion (Ramsaroop & Parumasur, 2007).

According to IWFMF’s global study on female journalists’ experience with violence and harassment (Barton & Storm, 2014), 14.3% of female

journalists have experienced intimidation, threats, and abuse related to their job, with 50% having experienced sexual violence perpetrated by a co-worker or supervisor. However, many are reluctant to report these harassment cases, and their reasons include the following: The reporting authority is the perpetrator; Fear of not being considered for opportunities available to male colleagues; Fear of negative consequences; Not knowing to whom the report should be addressed; Being discouraged from making a report by a supervisor, colleague, or union representative (Barton & Storm, 2014).

### **Sexual harassment in Indonesia’s journalism industry**

Violence, threats, intimidation, and harassment against journalists can be reported to Indonesia’s Press Council. Under the Press Council Regulation number 05/Regulation-DP/IV/2008, “journalists are protected from acts of violence, from the taking, confiscation, or seizure of work tools, and must not be obstructed or intimidated by any party” (Komala, 2018). However, matters of women’s rights, including sexual harassment, are largely neglected in Indonesia, and the labor unions do not properly deal with the concerns of women journalists (Stellarosa & Silaban, 2019).

According to journalist and activist Luviana (2012), female journalists are often sexually harassed by their sources, who are sometimes police officers. Reporting these conducts, however, is often difficult as many companies do not have standardized procedures and channels for sexual harassment and intimidation complaints. This may be even harder when the perpetrator is the direct supervisor (Stellarosa & Silaban, 2019).

### **Research method**

Qualitative in-depth interviews with 10 female journalists were conducted between September and December 2018. Sampling was done using nonrandom snowball technique. The profiles of the respondents, including the media for which they presently work, their current position, and the number of years working as journalists, are as follows:

- (1) AS: TV; Producer of News & Current Affairs division; 13 years
- (2) AM: TV; Editor; 10 years
- (3) AW: TV; Reporter; 1 year
- (4) IT: Radio; Music Director and Producer; 22 years
- (5) LA: Online newspaper; Assistant Editor; 11 years
- (6) MR: TV; News Producer; 9 years
- (7) MS: Print newspaper; Editor; 15 years
- (8) SG: Radio; Program Producer; 1 year
- (9) SP: TV; Newscaster; 10 years
- (10) WW: TV; Producer; 13 years

All interviews were conducted face to face and were recorded for later transcription. All respondents initially received the same list of questions via email to help them prepare for the interview. The transcripts were then analyzed to explore the theme of sexual harassment and examine certain responses to it, particularly coping techniques.

## Results and discussions

All of the respondents have encountered some type of sexual harassment or know a colleague who has experienced it. Despite the so-called egalitarian atmosphere and the openness of the journalistic field, there are still female journalists who are mistreated professionally and experience sexual harassment. Inappropriate jokes and touches toward women are deemed acceptable conduct among colleagues, and female journalists often feel the need to convince themselves that such treatment is normal in order to survive in this profession.

All respondents agree that journalism is mostly a masculine profession:

I agree, because as I said earlier, journalism is most suitable for single people. So, if we look into media offices, we could compare the number of female journalists and male journalists, and I think that the numbers would be similar, or maybe more women than men. Because when it comes to interest, there are a lot of women who want to be journalists. But when we look into the top positions, it

would be difficult to find women... it is really difficult for women to successfully achieve a top position unless they remain unmarried or childless (AM).

However, they also have noticed a shift in the journalism profession:

In my opinion, things have changed, because there are now many camera women, which in the past were always men. I often see them on the field, and they carry their own cameras and equipment. There are also many female producers now, so I think that now their gender does not matter, as long as they are capable to lead or organize their work (MR).

Though the majority feel that *"now we live in a very different era where woman have wide opportunity to become journalist"* (AS), most agree that this assumption would be disadvantageous for female journalists. Indeed, many respondents seem to contradict their own answers by saying that women have the same opportunities as men do, yet claiming that the work of male and female journalists should be different:

It would be very difficult for women to advance their career. There should be a differentiation between men and women, there are some journalistic work that cannot be done by men. For example, interviewing the wife of the Thamrin suicide bomber, if you are a man, you cannot approach a woman who wears a *niqab*. It would be much easier if you were a woman. Women have their own roles and cannot be regarded equal to men's roles. There should be a balance. But that is not the case. For instance, if you're a woman and you want to investigate possible terrorist groups in religious schools, they're going to think you're trying to seduce them, calling them all day, even though what you're doing is purely professional. It's very difficult to be a woman because the work is actually very masculine (WW).

This is in line with the findings from Steele's (2011) study that show that Muslim journalists in

Indonesia and Malaysia generally adhere to the universal values of journalism but do so within the Islamic ideology. Hence, when asked whether they think that gender determines a journalist's ability to carry out certain journalistic tasks, their responses were split in half. Those who say yes claim that there are certain tasks that are more suitable for a certain gender:

Sometimes it is helpful to be a woman journalist when doing specific tasks, rather than being a man journalist, especially if we have to deal with institutions or organizations that are dominated by men, for example the military or police institution, they are more welcoming to female compared to male journalists (AS.)

It goes both ways. Some sources are nicer to women, some are really unfriendly towards women. It happens to both genders. What I also learned is that men do not have to look pretty, and yet women have to wear lipstick. Men can be sloppy and still get the job done, whereas women have to be professional all the time (AW).

It is more about safety...editors always discuss who gets to cover stories, and somehow, we always seek to place the female journalists in places we consider safer, with less conflicts, for example, the city hall. Meanwhile, male journalists may be sent to KPK (Corruption Eradication Commission) or the police station. Especially when the woman is married, this could become problematic if their husbands do not agree with their wives' assignments... though I know that the management in some media do not care about this (IT).

These responses portray Indonesia's patriarchal system. Those who do not agree that gender determines a journalists' ability to carry out certain tasks answer, among others:

These days we're equal. For example, even the host for an adventure TV show who goes to challenging remote areas are women... Now they try to do something

outside the norm, for instance, now they prefer male chefs instead of females, and female hosts for travel shows, instead of males... I see this as an opportunity for us, because sometimes women would really like to get a certain position, but traditionally only men would get that position, or vice versa, but now the standards have become blurred (SP).

Not really... as long as you have a strong passion for it, anything is possible (SG).

When asked if they think that gender determines the role (e.g. news anchor, manager, field reporter), all respondents except for two broadcast journalists say no, claiming that most popular news anchors are women because they are considered more visually attractive. This is because appearance and voice are important factors in broadcast media.

Interestingly, when asked whether they have experienced sexual harassment, all respondents initially claim that they have never encountered such conduct, claiming that they are feisty and know how to protect themselves; hence, the author considers denial as one of the coping techniques. However, such denial may also be due to not knowing what is considered sexual harassment. Many respondents seem to have thought that sexual harassment necessarily means sexual coercion, which, as discussed previously, is actually not as common as gender harassment and unwanted sexual attention. Denying the existence of sexual harassment will simply not solve the problem.

Some respondents even claim that when such harassment occurs, it is because the female journalist could not firmly reject the inappropriate advances, or because she could not protect herself, or even because she was actually "inviting" such conduct so as to advance in her career. This is a type of victim-blaming and will not lead to a solution. Instead, it may deter these women from wanting to continue their career path, and it may also deter young women from wanting to enter the journalism field.

Based on the interviews, all the types of sexual harassments – verbal, nonverbal, physical, *quid pro*



*quo* – mentioned previously on this paper have been experienced by the respondents:

As a sportscaster, dealing with the football world, the club owners are stupid rich. I was actually called by the personal assistant, saying that this guy (a football club owner) was looking for me, and he wanted to have dinner with me. I said, “O.K., I will be there with my team” because I thought that it was a dinner invitation for my team. But then the assistant asked me if she could come by herself, and that his boss was kind, and that I should just take advantage of him liking me. He literally said that! So I told him that I was busy and would call him back, but I didn’t ... Then there was this other guy who was willing to pay for my entire team to go to Thailand to cover his football team. But he requested that I be the host. So I respectfully discussed with my producer, I knew that this would be amazing for our program if we could report from abroad, and all expenses paid for ... but my producer understood the true intention behind all of this ... so we really have to communicate with our colleagues about what is acceptable and not acceptable. These approaches often happen. Some would even vulgarly stick their money out to you. Once again, it is up to you if you want to accept it, because as a TV presenter, every day there are newcomers who can replace you. But what do you want to be known as? I want to have a long-lasting career, but I want to be known for my achievements, my reputation, and I want to give a good influence with the work that I do (SP).

Truthfully neither women nor men journalists have problems working on the field ... So, it makes me sad when I am being told ‘you’re married with children, and that will hinder your career’. It shouldn’t be that way, work and family can be done simultaneously (AM).

Sexual harassment, including gender harassment, is one of the most offensive and demeaning experience an employee, including a journalist, can suffer. Such harassment not only harms the victims,

but also the institution and even the industry as a whole. Continued sexual harassment can have serious effects on a person’s ability to do her job. If the harassment led to resignation or loss of job, she may have difficulties finding another job, “Typically, women who have been sexually harassed and have left their job as a result, tend to apply for a post with lower salary, status and career prospects than the one they just left ... Unfortunately, some women believe that it is the employment context which brought on the harassment, rather than an individual male” (Cela, 2015, p. 85). Therefore, those who have decided to persevere in their careers as journalists have had to use coping techniques.

Based on the in-depth interviews, there were six main coping techniques used by the respondents: 1) Denial; 2) Ignoring the harassment; 3) Relying on the protection of male co-workers; 4) Appearing more masculine; 5) Being friendly and approachable to others; and, 6) Confronting and reporting:

Some respondents feel that sexual harassment has become a natural part of the job, and thus in order to survive, one must learn to simply ignore it:

Maybe I’ve gotten too used to this, so I take everything as a joke ... like for instance, if someone is catcalling me or whistling at me, I just let it be, and I know some may ruminate over it ... (SG).

The two respondents who suggested to ignore sexual harassment, however, have only been working as journalists for one year at the time of the interview. It is yet to be seen whether they could continue to simply ignore such continued harassment. Ignoring sexual harassment can have devastating effects as the problem will certainly not going to disappear and may even grow because no reprimands are established. In the meantime, the journalist may grow frustrated and even blame herself in the long run for not having taken any actions to stop the harassments.

On the other hand, the more seasoned journalists report other techniques. Respondent MR, for instance, has learned that she is safer when surrounded by male coworkers:



I've had an experience in Yemen, in which I was in a line to buy gasoline because in that place it was scarce. So, I got out of my car because I was bored of waiting. I got out but I didn't wear a *burqa*, I forgot, and the Yemeni really appreciate women, especially their mothers, so I was grabbed by a local, and many people saw him do it, and he just ran away while being chased by people. So, I do not even know if he made it out alive. My male coworkers immediately told me to get inside the car. And before that (in Indonesia), I was doing some investigative reporting and I was going to interview some government official, who later asked me to go to a *dangdut* club with him. Luckily I was with my Assistant Producer who was also the cameraman, so I forced him to come with me and sit by my side because I didn't want to be too close with the source... I was scared because I had never been in a place like that, and luckily my coworkers protected me (MR).

This coping technique may give a temporary feeling of safety, but as soon as she is no longer surrounded by male coworkers, the female journalist may feel scared again. This fear and feeling of helplessness are likely to prevent the female journalist from advancing in her journalistic career.

Other respondents have decided to blend in with the crowd in order to not stand out. Such coping technique includes being friendly and approachable to all the people surrounding her in order to minimize chances of being sexually harassed, or even avoiding looking too feminine, "joining the boys' club," with the intention to blend in with the men:

To minimize the chances of [sexual harassment], I equip myself with my surroundings...like being friendly to others so they would be more respectful to me...Because when someone is too aloof, it's going to boomerang to herself, and people will instead want to tease her...so I anticipate it by being friendly to others...Incidentally I saw in my campus that if a person cannot stand up for herself, she is more likely to be bullied.

The same thing goes in the workplace, even more so... (SG).

I'm more of a tomboy when I do field work so I don't have to experience those stuff...thankfully I've never had to experience sexual harassment...but the worst are the soccer fans...thankfully, so far nothing's happened (IT).

Again, this coping technique is not likely to stop sexual harassment. Instead, the female journalist simply tries to blend in with the male journalists and adopts their behavior. If the behavior adopted includes sexual harassment behavior, including sharing vulgar jokes, this would mean that not only is the problem not solved, but she is now part of the problem.

Finally, a more aggressive and arguably effective coping technique is simply confronting the harasser and reporting it to the supervisor if the harasser were a coworker:

Oh, never, I've been quite safe. I never encountered sexual harassment...But I remember very well, one time I had a source who made me angry because he was being sexist when talking about rape. There was a sentence which I did not like, and I confronted him about it. So, in the end I had to be rather unprofessional because I scolded him and left him. I no longer considered him as my source and found another one. It was spontaneous, I was firmly angry at his statement. I also heard something similar happened at [another newspaper], and he was fired. He was an editor who said something sexist to a reporter, and that reporter reported him to her supervisor... (YK).

This coping technique is the most promising because the action is reported to the authorities, and actions will be taken, and most importantly, the perpetrator realizes that victim is not silent. However, as mentioned before, women journalists who report work-related sexual harassment often find difficulties as their employers may lack a

standard operating procedure for sexual harassment complaints. Therefore companies, in this case media companies, must establish such procedures urgently.

The in-depth interviews results reflect the prevalence of sexual harassment in Indonesia's journalism industry. These findings are in line with Barton and Storm's (2014) study, which also mentions coping behaviors adopted by the journalists in their study. These behaviors include avoiding certain stories and beats, as well as seeking comfort from other journalists who have experienced sexual harassment. However, some simply give up on journalism entirely.

Though studies indicate that the majority of journalists cope well in spite of recurring work-related harassment, such experiences are likely to cause professional and personal challenges (Barton & Storm, 2014). While the participants in this study seem to have devised coping techniques for dealing with sexual harassment, prevention remains the most effective method for employers to deal with sexual harassment in the workplace (ILO, 2011, p. 11). Such preventive measures include voluntary action, including a sexual harassment policy that contains: "a policy statement, a complaints procedure, disciplinary rules, and a training and communications strategy" (Cela, 2015), as well as legal action.

In general, feminist theory considers sexual harassment as a sexist conduct with the purpose of suppressing and disempowering women and penalizes them for trying to compete with men in the workplace. According to Hani Henry (2017), "This theory challenges the idea that sexual harassment is a sexual act and invites scholars to see it from a gender-based angle that reflects male dominance and women's subordination, which are constantly condoned by society."

Sociocultural theories, which are feminist-oriented, analyze the wider social and political context of sexual harassment. These theories view sexual harassment as a logical consequence of the gender inequality and sexism that already exists in society. Thus, regardless of its form, sexual harassment is

connected to patriarchy, and it exists because of the perception that women are the inferior sex, and to maintain the currently established gender stratification by highlighting sex role expectations. Therefore, women's inferiority in the workplace and society is both a consequence and a cause of sexual harassment (Pina et al., 2009).

Pina et al. (2009) revisit various literatures on sexual harassment and explain that according to the sociocultural theories, male dominance in society also reaches organizations, and members of these organizations also contribute their already existing gender roles, beliefs, and stereotypes into the workplace. Therefore, both men and women are socialized in such a fashion that stereotyped interactions happen, and are expected to happen, "men are expected to be aggressive and dominant, and females are expected to be passive and accepting."

It can be concluded that according to feminist theory, men consider their behaviors to be justified, while women resent themselves for being victims. Sexual harassment, then, is deemed an unescapable result of cultural experiences that apply to every aspect of society, including the workplace.

## Conclusions

While journalists all over the world are working under high risks, female journalists must endure additional threat due to their gender. Gender-based attacks and the fear of future harassment not only endanger female journalists physically but can also greatly affect them psychologically and professionally. For the number of female journalists in Indonesia to rise, the environment should be free from sexual harassment. It affects many working women's professional lives and professional functioning, hence deterring them from advancing in the workplace, and disrupting one of their essential human rights, which is to work with dignity.

As the #MeToo global movement successfully persuaded people worldwide to talk about sexual harassment, this has not really happened in Indonesia. Most women are silent, or asked to be silent, in a patriarchal culture that is deeply

entrenched and supported by conservative religious values. Many women are trapped in a system that prevents them from fighting or talking because they are in an environment that tends to blame the victims. Working in such an allied field as journalism does not guarantee the women journalists in Indonesia to be protected from sexual harassment. The main factors causing this persisting problem are Indonesia's highly patriarchal culture, ultra-conservative religious values, gender-insensitive law enforcement, and the male-dominant nature of the profession itself.

Based on the in-depth interviews, all female journalists participating in this study report to have experienced some type of sexual harassment. This study concludes that there are six main coping techniques used by the respondents: 1. Denial; 2. Ignoring the harassment; 3. Relying on the protection of male co-workers; 4. Appearing more masculine; 5. Being friendly and approachable to others; and 6. Confronting and reporting. Nevertheless, the ability to cope with sexual harassment does not eradicate the main problem, which is the existence of sexual harassment itself. Persistence of sexual harassment toward journalists may lead to censorship, which may prevent important stories from being reported as journalists may avoid certain stories or beats they deem too risky. Another implication of sexual harassment is lack of diversity in the media, as female journalists may opt to retreat from this male-dominated profession. Female journalists in Indonesia are already a very small minority in the journalism profession, and women's voices may become even fewer due to sexual harassment. Most importantly, if sexual harassment toward journalists is not handled properly, journalists may not be able to be the watchdogs that they are supposed to be. Letting the sexual harassment perpetrators go unpunished means silencing the journalists, and thus, the powerful are not held accountable.

However, both journalists and their employers must understand what is considered acceptable behavior at the workplace, what sexual harassment is and how it occurs, what the consequences are

(both personal and organizational), and most importantly, how to effectively deal with sexual harassment.

The author recommends that news organizations establish a protocol for educating and addressing harassment. Reports and claims of sexual harassment must then be taken with the utmost seriousness and be investigated comprehensively by management, law enforcement, and others.

However, such mechanism may not apply to freelance journalists, and some news organizations are not experienced in effectively dealing with sexual harassment cases. It is then recommended that such news organizations collaborate with organizations such as The IWMF and TrollBusters, which offer practical resources for journalists to plan for potential online threats and to react properly when these happen.

Three decades of research on the topic of sexual harassment have brought awareness to people. The initial step is to understand what sexual harassment is. More research should focus on how to effectively handle the sexual harasser to prevent and regulate unwelcome sexual conduct at the workplace.

## Disclosure statement

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