

**UNDERSTANDING SEXUAL HARASSMENT EXPERIENCE AMONG  
UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS' IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION  
IN MALAYSIA**



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Finally, may Allah bless all of us.

Aminn.

## **5. Report**

### *5.1 Proposed Executive Summary*

This study is conducted to gain an understanding of the issue of sexual harassment in the academic setting. Specifically, the objectives of this study are to examine the awareness of sexual harassment experienced among students, identify the effects of sexual harassment and the risk factor contributed to the act. A modified self-administered questionnaires designed by the DEOC Task Force on Discrimination and Sexual Harassment, USA was used as the main data collection instrument in this study. The questionnaires were distributed to Bachelor Degree and Diploma students from all faculties in Universiti Teknologi MARA Terengganu (Dungun, Bukit Besi and Kuala Terengganu campus). This study applied stratified random sampling. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as mean, frequency and percentage. It is expected through the findings obtain from this study, the need for having proper policy or sexual harassment safety guidelines for students, lecturers and other academic staffs could be identified in order to protect themselves from the incident anytime and anywhere.

### **5.2 Enhanced Executive Summary**

Gender violence and sexual harassment in higher education have been studied and reported for the past decades. This study intended to identify the problem of sexual harassment in the academic background. Specifically, the objectives of this study tend to look at the awareness of sexual harassment among students, identify the effects of sexual harassment and examine the risk factors contributed to the occurrence. Questionnaires were distributed to 351 undergraduate students in UiTM Terengganu comprises of three campuses with the return rate of 78%. The findings revealed that 58.6% of the respondent have been harassed at least once and majority of them were female. The most common form of sexual harassment experience by the respondents was offensive behavior. Majority of the respondents agreed that sexual harassment experienced affected their emotional greatly compared to education and productivity. Unprofessional learning environment shown to be the most risk factor associated to the incidents of sexual harassment.

### 5.3 Introduction

Sexual harassment in the academic setting is quite universal. The incident has become a main issue in higher education setting across the nation since it obtained media coverage and this has create public awareness intensely. The existence of cases of sexual harassment in educational sector in Malaysia had been disclosed by several local researchers in their empirical studies (Ahmad Shamsul, 2005). Another study had also been conducted on sexual harassment at Universiti Sains Malaysia in order to examine the understanding and experiences of sexual harassment among undergraduate students. The findings revealed that the incidents of sexual harassment reported high occurrence on campus with more female students become the victims (Noraida et al, 2011). The series of sexual harassment incident reported within an academic setting is a growing problem, however very few data presented and most cases of sexual harassment in the universities are not reported.

Universities establishments around Malaysia seem to be turning a blind eye towards the incidents of sexual harassment within their institutions and only limited cases of sexual harassment has been reported within Malaysian universities. Referring to the article appear in Malaymail online (Kumar, 2017), a foreign exchange student reported that he was suspected assault by other students. Regrettably, university has done nothing about the after multiple complaints has been made by the victim due to protect its reputation. As compared to male, more female are reported to experience sexual harassment and it does influence their education performance for instance trouble focused on their studies, anxiety and lower self-esteem. Deputy Vice Chancellor, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia who acknowledged that lecturers easily take advantage on students but there are many female students especially who feel embarrassed to report the incident of sexual harassment (Noor, 2016).

The frequent incident of sexual harassment on campus is due to a lecturer who takes advantage on students who need help such as adjustments of class timetable or during academic consultation session. She further stated that there is a lecturer who requests for sex rewards which the act violates the university ethics. Likewise, many victims of sexual harassment do not know the actual or proper channel to complaint about their problems and some even decided not to express it because of shame and fear. Students are ashamed of being dishonored and feel afraid because of the perpetrator is a lecturer who has the power to approve and frustrate their grades. Little effort was done by the authorities of higher education institutions in Malaysia in the way of educate students and staff to avoid the issues though the policy and sexual harassment regulations exist in the institution. Studies of sexual harassment have been largely led in the workplace, still very limited studies relating to sexual harassment in education environment was identified thus far. Hence, this study aims to examine the sexual harassment experience among the undergraduate students', the effects of sexual harassment to the victim and the potential risk factor associated to the incident.

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