

The Attitudes of Sexual Harassment in the Views of Gender Ideology and Bystander Effect

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Abstract

Sexual harassment is still a concerning issue worldwide due to its adverse effects on victims' physical and mental health along with their apprehension of societal judgement. The scope of this research is to explore the differences and association between gender ideology, bystander effect and attitudes of sexual harassment that exist among Malaysians. Methodologically, 406 Malaysian participated through either online or paper surveys to assess their perspectives on gender ideology, bystander intention to help and tolerance towards the attitudes of sexual harassment. The findings indicated that males were more prone to have higher attitudes of gender ideology and tolerance towards the attitudes of sexual harassment as compared to females, while females had higher bystander intention to help. The research also suggested that there was an association between gender ideology and bystander intention to help ($r = -0.635$, $p = 0.000$), gender ideology and attitudes of sexual harassment ($r = 0.642$, $p = 0.000$) and between bystander intention to help and attitudes of sexual harassment ($r = -0.507$, $p = 0.000$). In conclusion, the findings obtained may serve as a reference for further interventions in preventing sexual harassment cases as well as for in-depth research in the future.

Keywords: Sexual Harassment, Gender Ideology, Bystander Effect, Unwanted Sexual Nature, Sexual Acts

Introduction

The United States (US) Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) defined sexual harassment as the conduct of sexual natures that are unwelcome and unwanted. Sexual harassment could come in the form of verbal, physical, psychological, gestural and visual. Some examples of verbal harassment include offensive or suggestive sexual remarks, making cat calls, sexual comments, jokes, sounds as well as asking someone about sexual histories, preferences or fantasies. Physical form could be in the form of inappropriate touching, kissing

or hugging without consent, looking at someone up and down and attempted rape. On the other hand, psychological harassment involves repeated unwanted social invitations such as relentless proposals for dates or physical intimacy as well as unwanted constant texting while gestural harassment usually consists of showing hand signals, leering or holding objects with sexual nature. Lastly, visual form of sexual harassment is shown as showing unwanted pornographic materials and illustrations or writing sex-based letters. According to sexual harassment statistics by Royal Malaysia Police (PDRM), number of sexual harassment reported cases in the year 2017 is 267 cases, 226 cases for females and 41 cases for males. A law against sexual harassment was enacted by the Parliament of Malaysia as Anti-Sexual Harassment Act 2022 (Act 840) and is enforced by the Women, Family and Community Development Ministry in phases starting March 2023. The motives for this act include protecting individuals who had and/or has been harassed sexually and to spread awareness of sexual harassment sheltering all individuals regardless of their gender and age.

Gender ideology on the other hand talks about the attitude concerning appropriate roles, rights and responsibilities of men and women in society or the view or idea that people have based on gender roles (Davis and Greenstein, 2009). According to Somech and Zahavy, there are three types of gender ideologies consisting of traditional, transitional and egalitarian. Traditional views occur when an individual believes that certain attitudes or behaviour should be based on what is taught or practised in their culture, whereby for example, men are more engaged in breadwinning activities while women focus more on household labour and parenting activities (Brewster and Padavic, 2000). Transitional views refers to the view betwixt and between traditional view and egalitarian view. In the egalitarian views, roles are not divided by gender, therefore, both men and women should have equal roles and responsibilities in the working and household environment. Proceeding to the next variable of this study, the bystander effect is a phenomenon of how an individual is less likely to intervene or help when there is presence of other people (Ganti & Baek (2021)). Bystanders are individuals who are present before, during and/or after an event between a perpetrator and a victim. Bystander effect could differ based on the location, number of people as well as the circumstance of the situation. Diffusion of responsibility is a common phenomenon that contributes to the bystander effect to occur. This phenomenon takes place when a group of individuals assume that someone else in the situation will take action, therefore, leading to diffusion of personal responsibility to help. As a result, each person feels less personally accountable for the event or harassment occurring since accountability is dispersed over a number of individuals. Besides that, since no one decides to take action and help or react, people may interpret the situation as non-threatening or conclude that help is not needed.

Sexual harassment is still an ongoing issue occurring in Malaysia, let it be within school compounds, working environment, in public or even in own houses. The researcher theorised that attitudes towards sexual harassment might occur more in places upholding gender hierarchy or in places where one gender dominates the place, creating possibilities of gender inequality. Research by Feldblum and Lipic (2016) suggested that power imbalance in workplace occurs when there are unequal power dynamics between male and female, whereby those with higher power or economy status may use their authority status against victims to engage in sexual harassment related behaviour. For instance, sexual harassment has a higher probability to occur in male dominated working environment such as construction, transportation or utilities (Folke et al., 2020) where women are the minority workers and are four times more likely to file claims of sexual harassment (Hersch 2011). The

current researcher also brought up the issue that sexual harassment might occur due to objectification, misogyny or stereotype of a certain gender. In apparent cases, women are often seen to be objectified and reduced to mere objects of desire, leading to a devaluation of women's autonomy, consent, and bodily integrity, making them more susceptible to sexual harassment and assault. Misogyny and objectification could contribute to a culture where harassment is normalised or excused, perpetuating harmful beliefs about gender roles and making this issue a taboo. Normalisation of sexual harassment related behaviours tend to be mis-overlooked creating a society where sexual harassment is tolerated or disregarded, producing a vicious cycle of injustice and withdrawing the probability of bystanders to intervene to help.

Hence, this current research focuses on the following research objectives:

- To explore the level of attitudes of gender ideologies, bystander effect and attitudes of sexual harassment that exist among Malaysians
- To determine the differences between gender ideology, bystander effect and attitudes of sexual harassment among Malaysians based on demographic information
- To investigate the association between gender ideology, bystander effect and attitudes of sexual harassment among Malaysians.

Literature Review

Studies suggested that more women as compared to men had reported to be a victim of sexual harassment (Taylor et al., 2020) and in most cases, males are usually the perpetrators of sexual harassment (Burn, 2018). However, men are also fallen to be victims of sexual harassment due to person-by-situation-perspective whereby these differences by noting that personal predisposing factors combine with situational factors, such as male dominating cultures and sexually objectifying environment in order to determine whether sexual harassment will happen or not. In the context of sexual harassment based on gender in Malaysia, a study suggested that both male and female are sexually harassed but more women are reported to be harassed as compared to men in Malaysia (Mohamed et al.) and males are reported to more likely to ignore sexual harassment cases (Yee et al. (2015). Based on age factor, Mumford et al., (2020) found that younger age group, particularly in their study, age 18 to 29 years old had higher experience of sexual harassment and sexual assault as compared to those aged 30 years old and above.

Spence and Hahn (1997) studied the attitude toward women scale and attitude changes in college students. They found that women were significantly less traditional in their attitudes as compared to men. This means that women in that study had more of an egalitarian view, whereby men and women have equal roles in the workplace and household environment. On top of that, individuals working in fields that are considered to be atypical for their gender and individuals who challenge gender norms through their work field had more of egalitarian attitudes towards the role of gender (Treleaven, 2015). Wade and Brittan-Powell (2001) suggested that individuals with conservative or traditional views towards the idea of gender ideology prefer following the gender roles norm and are often recognised as “masculine sex-typed individuals”.

Moving on to bystander effect, McMahon (2010) conducted a research to study the association of bystander attitudes and rape myths among 2 338 college students. It was found that rape myths have higher acceptance among males, who are a part of sorority, athletes, those without rape education and those with no knowledge that someone was sexually

assaulted. On the other hand, females are reported to have higher willingness to intervene as a bystander to sexual harassment and sexual assault. Katz et al. (2014) also suggested similar results whereby men were more likely to intervene and help sexually harassed victims because they were more likely to blame and expressed less empathy for alleged party rape victims. John et al. (2022) added that women are more expressive and supportive when it came to intervening sexual harassment related situations as compared to men.

According to a study by Fuwa (2004) that studied how household labour was divided among various nations, the division of chores was more balanced in nations with more egalitarian gender ideologies. This shows that gender ideology may be influenced by a person's age, as older age groups may maintain more traditional ideas on gender roles and the allocation of tasks in the home. Palmer et al. (2015) study looked at how children and teenagers establish prosocial bystander intentions. The results showed that bystander prosocial intentions decreased with age, which may mean that younger people are more likely than older people to demonstrate bystander prosocial intents. This corroborates the theory that bystander intention to assist is influenced by age.

Study by Yule and Petranu (2022) found that there is an association between gender ideology or attitudes towards women and bystander intervention to help. Moreover, in this study, it was found that an individual's beliefs about gender ideology affect how likely they are to intervene in situations of violence against women. It was further elaborated that higher levels of acceptance of rape myths were associated with a failure to perceive responsibility for intervening, particularly among female participants. Other study by Zheng and Shi (2020) investigated the perception and tolerance of sexual harassment through the examination of feminist identity, sexism and gender roles in the sample of Chinese working women. It was found that there is a positive correlation between feminism and women's perception of sexual harassment. Zheng and Shi (2020) proposed that feminist identity decreases the tolerance of sexual harassment related behaviour among Chinese women.

Moving on, according to a study by Burn (2009), there is an association between bystander effect and sexual harassment, whereby individuals are more likely to intervene and help a victim of sexual harassment if they do not face any barriers or obstacles in the way of helping. These barriers are explained to be the five steps of The Situational Model of Bystander Behaviour by Latané and Darley (1970) which are (1) noticing that a problem or issue is occurring, (2) understanding and clarifying the situation as problematic, (3) seeing oneself as responsible to take action, (4) knowing how to intervene and which action to take and (5) taking action in the situation. Burn (2009) suggested that these barriers were found to negatively affect intervention behaviour and addressing these barriers can improve sexual assault prevention programs and encourage more people to intervene and help in such situations. Therefore, the current researcher came up with a hypothesis of sexual harassment is associated with gender ideology and bystander effect among Malaysians.

McMahon (2010) conducted a research to study the association of bystander attitudes and rape myths among 2 338 college students. It was found that rape myths have higher acceptance among males, who are a part of sorority, athletes, those without rape education and those with no knowledge that someone was sexually assaulted. On the other hand, females are reported to have higher willingness to intervene as a bystander to sexual harassment and sexual assault. Hence, those with higher acceptance of rape myths had lower willingness to intervene a sexual assault or sexual harassment cases. Similarly, the findings of Gennari (2021) indicated in her study that transit users with victim blaming beliefs had lower

willingness to help. It was further elaborated in the study that bystander would reduce willingness to intervene when they had a belief that a woman is somewhat responsible for sexual violence when they're wearing revealing clothing, which is a form of gender harassment.

Research Method

Design and Sample

According to the demographic statistics of Malaysia in the first quarter of 2023 by the Ministry of Economy Department of Statistics Malaysia, Malaysia currently had a population of 30.4 million of Malaysian citizens. In this study, the target population was inclusive to both male and female Malaysians that are 18 years old and above. Therefore, only the population of Malaysian citizens were taken into consideration and the number of samples (n) was estimated by using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) Table Sampling Method. An estimation of 350 to 400 participants from different states in Malaysia were collected within the time frame of two months.

In support of this quantitative analysis, this current correlational study was distributed physically through a printed questionnaire as well as an online survey through Google Form. Moreover, this research also prepared the survey in English and Malay. The translation was done through the method of Back translation which involved an individual translating the original source of the questionnaire from English to Malay. Then another independent individual, without any knowledge of the original copy, was required to translate the Malay translated version of the questionnaires back into the original language. These methods were proposed after considering the flexibility of the participants to answer the questionnaire due to age restrictions, access to internet and gadgets as well as language proficiency. Hence, the participants had an option to choose to fill up the questionnaire depending on their preference of either on paper or Google Form and using the language of English or Malay. This survey was structured by four sections comprising of Demographic information, Gender Ideology, Bystander Effect and Sexual Harassment.

Instrument

Attitudes Towards Women Scale

Gender Ideology was assessed by using the short version of Attitudes Towards Women Scale by Spence, Helmrich and Stapp (1978). Originally, there were 25 items in the questionnaire and approximately half of the items present an egalitarian attitude. However, in this present research, one question, particularly question 17 (*Women should be encouraged not to become sexually intimate with anyone before marriage, even their fiancés*) was excluded from the questionnaire due to cultural or religion bias reasons. Besides that, in question eight, the word "sex" is changed to "gender". Hence, question eight was seen and read as "there should be a strict merit system in job appointment and promotion without regard to gender" instead of "There should be a strict merit system in job appointment and promotion without regard to sex" in the current study. The reliability of Attitudes Towards Women Scale for the 25-item scale is 0.89 (Daugherty & Dambrot, 1986). In the original questionnaire with 25-item scale, the scale was labelled from strongly agree to strongly disagree and low score indicated traditional attitude while high score indicated egalitarian attitude. However, in this current study, the scales were reverse scored, therefore, each item was accompanied by a four-point response scale whose extremes are labelled disagree strongly, disagree mildly, agree mildly

and agree strongly. In scoring the items, a low score indicated a pro-feminist, egalitarian attitude while a high score indicated a traditional, conservative attitude.

Bystander Intention to Help Scale

Bystander effect was examined by the short version of Bystander Intention to Help by Banyard and Cross (2008) with 12 items. The scale concerns about behaviours in which individuals could engage to intervene before, during or after the event of a sexual assault occurring on another individual (McMahon, 2010). The items were measured with a six-point Likert scale with following scale from point one as extremely unlikely to point six as extremely likely (Banyard & Cross, 2008). The higher the score of an individual, the more likely the individual had the intention to help. The reliability of the original scale (Banyard et al., 2005) was 0.94 (N = 389).

Sexual Harassment Attitude Scale

Sexual Harassment was evaluated by 19 items of Sexual Harassment Attitude Scale (SHAS) by Mazer and Percival (1989) with a five-point Likert scale ranging from one as strongly disagree to five as strongly agree, measuring tolerance of sexual harassment. Items in the scale include "One of the problems with sexual harassment is that some women can't take a joke" and "A man must learn to understand that a woman's "no" to his sexual advances really means "no"". Higher scores of the scale indicated more acceptance and tolerance of sexual harassment as well as less agreement with contemporary feminist descriptions about its causes (Angelone, Mitchell and Carola, 2008). Greater tolerance of sexual harassment indicated that the individuals identify fewer behaviour as sexual harassment (Evanson, 2017). Sexual Harassment Attitude Scale (SHAS) had shown good internal consistency which was 0.84 (Mazer & Percival, 1989) and 0.80 (Angelone et al., 2008).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations of the participants were strictly considered in this study. The researcher stressed on the principles of voluntary participation, informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, and potential from harm. Voluntary participation means that the participation in this study was voluntary, and the participants were not obligated to fill in the questionnaire if they did not wish to do so and can stop whenever they wished. To protect the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants, none of the data were shared with any third party and were disposed of after the end of this study. Besides that, since the questionnaire touched on a few subjects that may be seen as sensitive to some individuals, the researcher included a few mental health services available in Malaysia if any of the respondents experienced emotional discomfort while answering the questionnaire and required additional support.

Analysis

Data collected were analysed after an estimated 350 to 400 participants were collected by using statistical analysis software, particularly Statistical Package for Social Sciences 26 (SPSS Version 26). Data were presented using Descriptive Analysis, Independent sample t-test analysis, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) respectively and Pearson Correlation.

Findings

Descriptive Analysis

The sample (n = 406) Malaysians were used in all analyses in this study. Of this sample, for the gender group, 51.5% (n = 209) were male and 48.5% (n = 197) were female. For the age group, 44.1% (n = 179) were in the age category of 18 to 39 years old, indicating early

adulthood, 32.8% (n = 133) for age group of 40 to 64 years old showing middle adulthood and remaining 23.2% (n = 94) were 65 years old and above, living in their old adulthood.

To satisfy the first objective, the Malaysian sample (n = 406) were used to analyse the levels of attitudes of variables in 4 levels which include low tendency, low inclined, high inclined and high tendency. Of this sample for the level of attitudes of gender ideology, it was found that 20.9% of Malaysians (n = 85) had a low tendency of gender ideology, 47.3% (n = 192) had low inclination for gender ideology, 26.8% (n = 109) Malaysians were in the level of high inclination towards gender ideology and 4.9% (n = 20) of Malaysians had a high tendency towards gender ideology. As for the level of bystander intention to help, based on this study, there weren't any Malaysians belonging to a low tendency towards bystander intention to help. 4.7% (n = 19) Malaysians were low inclined towards bystander intention to help, 20.9% (n = 85) were highly inclined towards helping others and remaining 74.4% (n = 302) had a high tendency of bystander intention to help. Besides that, for the level of attitudes of sexual harassment, based on this study, there weren't any Malaysians belonging to a low tendency group. 12.1% (n = 49) Malaysians had low inclined of attitude towards sexual harassment, 57.1% (n = 232) and 30.8% (n = 125) had high inclined and high tendency towards sexual harassment related attitudes.

Inferential Analysis

The first inferential analysis was conducted through Independent Sample T-test to satisfy the second objective of this study. According to the results of group statistical analysis in Table 2, there was a statistically significant difference between attitudes of gender ideology according to gender group of Malaysians, whereby males (M = 38.96, SD = 13.17) and females (M = 20.86, SD = 10.76), as determined by the Independent Sample T-test with $t(404) = 15.111$, $p = 0.000$, $p < 0.05$. Results showed that Malaysian males were more prone to have attitudes of gender ideology as compared to Malaysian females. Besides that, there was a statistically significant difference between bystander intention to help according to gender group of Malaysians, whereby males (M = 48.22, SD = 12.71) and females (M = 58.10, SD = 10.66), as determined by the Independent Sample T-test with $t(404) = -8.464$, $p = 0.000$, $p < 0.05$. Results indicated that Malaysian females were more prone to have bystander intention to help as compared to Malaysian males. Lastly, there was statistically significant difference between attitudes of sexual harassment according to gender group of Malaysians, whereby males (M = 55.49, SD = 10.41) and females (M = 48.34, SD = 10.45), as determined by the Independent Sample T-test with $t(404) = 6.903$, $p = 0.000$, $p > 0.05$. Results indicated that male participants are more likely to have higher score of attitudes of sexual harassment as compared to female participants.

Table 2 Independent Sample T-test Comparing Variables and Gender

Variables	Gender	N	M	SD	t	p
Attitudes of Gender Ideology	Male	209	38.96	13.17	15.111	0.000
	Female	197	20.86	10.76		

Bystander Intention To Help	Male	209	48.22	12.71	-8.464	0.000
	Female	197	58.10	10.66		
Attitudes of Sexual Harassment	Male	209	55.49	10.41	6.903	0.000
	Female	197	48.34	10.45		

In this study, one way ANOVA was conducted to compare the differences between gender ideology by age group. There was a statistically significant difference between gender ideology according to the age group of Malaysians ($F(2, 403) = 90.737, p = 0.000$), $p < 0.05$. Since the result was significant in one way ANOVA, post hoc comparison was further conducted using Tukey HSD test which showed mean score for 18 to 39 years old ($M = 23.53, SD = 12.27$) had statistically significant differences as compared to 40 to 64 years old ($M = 28.72, SD = 13.48$) and 65 years old and above ($M = 44.89, SD = 11.65$). From the results, it can be seen that respondents in the age category of 65 years old and above had more traditional views of gender ideology than those in 18 to 39 years old and 40 to 64 years old age categories.

Moving on, there was a statistically significant difference between bystander intention to help according to the age group of Malaysians ($F(2, 403) = 81.762, p = 0.000$), $p < 0.05$. Since the result was significant in one way ANOVA, post hoc comparison was further conducted using Tukey HSD test. The comparison revealed that there were statistically significant differences between 18 to 39 years old ($M = 59.03, SD = 10.19$) and 40 to 64 years old ($M = 53.06, SD = 11.96$) and 65 years old and above ($M = 41.48, SD = 10.07$). From the results, it can be seen that respondents in the age category of 18 to 39 years old had more intention to help as compared to other age groups of 40 to 64 years old and 65 years old and above.

As for attitudes of sexual harassment according to age group of Malaysians, there was a statistically significant difference ($F(2, 403) = 51.772, p = 0.000$), $p < 0.05$. Since the result is significant in one way ANOVA, post hoc comparison was further conducted using Tukey HSD test. According to the post hoc results, there were statistically significant differences between the age group of 18 to 39 years old ($M = 49.01, SD = 10.88$) and 65 years old and above ($M = 61.06, SD = 7.86$). There were statistically significant differences between the age group of 40 to 64 years old and 65 years old and above. However, there weren't any statistically significant differences between the age group of 18 to 39 years old as compared to 40 to 64 years old ($M = 49.68, SD = 9.64$). From the results, it can be seen that respondents in the age category of 65 years old and above had higher tolerance towards the attitudes of sexual harassment as compared to individuals in the age groups of 18 to 39 years old as well as 40 to 64 years old.

This study also demonstrated that there was a statistically significant moderate negative correlation between gender ideology and bystander intention to help. Results of correlation indicate that higher gender ideology scores were associated with lower bystander intention to help ($r = -0.635, p = 0.000$), $p < 0.05$. On the other hand, there was a statistically significant moderate positive correlation between gender ideology and attitudes of sexual harassment.

Results of correlation indicate that higher gender ideology scores were associated with higher tolerance towards sexual harassment related behaviour ($r = 0.642$, $p = 0.000$), $p < 0.05$. Lastly, there was a statistically significant moderate negative correlation between bystander intention to help and attitudes of sexual harassment. Results of correlation indicate that lower tolerance towards sexual harassment related behaviour were associated with higher bystander intention to help score ($r = -0.507$, $p = 0.000$), $p < 0.05$.

Table 2 Pearson Correlation

		(1)	(2)	(3)
Gender Ideology (1)	Pearson Correlation	1	-.635**	.642**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000	0.000
	N	406	406	406
Bystander Intention to Help (2)	Pearson Correlation	-.635**	1	-.507**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		0.000
	N	406	406	406
Attitudes of Sexual Harassment (3)	Pearson Correlation	.642**	-.507**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	
	N	406	406	406

Discussion

In this study, it was revealed that in general, the majority of Malaysians had low inclination for gender ideology, meaning that they were more prone to lean towards an egalitarian attitude towards roles between gender. Attitudes that embrace egalitarianism prioritise equality and fair treatment across different dimensions like gender, age, culture, and socioeconomic status. Individuals with an egalitarian mindset place less importance on traditional gender roles and are less likely to endorse sexist beliefs. They recognize the value of equal opportunities and reject discrimination based on these factors. Such attitudes foster an inclusive and diverse society, where individuals are judged based on the person they are rather than societal stereotypes. The majority of individuals in this level may be due to a growing recognition of challenging power imbalances, promoting social justice, and encouraging a more inclusive and equitable environment for Malaysian communities.

According to the results in the study, Malaysians had a majority score in a high tendency group of bystanders' intentions to help. Hence, Malaysians were more likely to intervene towards helping others when sexual harassment related behaviour were occurring. The majority frequencies of gender ideology and bystander intention to help scores may be affected by the advancement of technology and the higher usage of social media. This has expanded opportunities for individuals to access, share, and engage in discussions about

gender ideology. These platforms have the potential to provide diverse perspectives, promote inclusivity, and contribute to a more informed and nuanced understanding of gender. People can interact with like-minded people and have debates about gender equality, gender roles, and social norms which can also make it possible for underrepresented groups and marginalised voices to be heard, resulting in a wider variety of ideas on gender ideology. Bringing up such issues can increase the likelihood of individuals to step in and intervene in situations that may be perceived as an issue.

Finally, majority of Malaysians were in the level of highly inclined whereby more of the behaviours stated in the study were not seen as sexually related behaviour. Although awareness of sexual harassment has increased significantly in recent years, there can still be a gap between awareness and knowledge when it comes to understanding the complexities of sexual harassment related behaviour, indicating such results in current study. In Malaysia specifically, the comprehensive education on the forms of sexual harassment is still lacking as the topic of sexual harassment may be perceived as a taboo still for certain individuals. For instance, Teo Nie Ching, the Deputy Education Minister shared sex education is a part of a component of the Physical Education and Health subject that is taught in school to address the rise and danger in sex crimes against children and to teach appropriate and inappropriate contact. Teo added that sexual education is a part of the Physical Education and Health subject because it remains a taboo among Malaysians and still seen as a sensitive topic to discuss. Therefore, although awareness has escalated, cultural and societal norms may influence the perception of sexual harassment, leading to misconceptions and stereotypes. These barriers could hinder knowledge development from fully comprehending the seriousness of this issue, as a consequence, may perpetuate the belief of victim blaming, causing higher tolerance of such behaviour.

This study revealed that Malaysian males were more prone to have higher scores of attitudes of gender ideology as compared to females, indicating that males were more likely to have a traditional mindset or attitude. One significant factor is the adherence to and desire to maintain traditional gender roles norms among individuals. These individuals, often referred to as "masculine sex-typed individuals," are more likely to hold conservative views on gender roles and are less tolerant of those who deviate from these norms (Wade & Brittan-Powell, 2001). Spence and Hahn (1997) also mentioned similar results and suggested that women in that study were more comfortable when males and females had equal or fair roles and treatments in the workplace and household environment.

When data were analysed, it was revealed that Malaysian respondents in the age category of 65 years old and above had higher scores of gender ideology, showing more traditional views of gender ideology. Older people in Malaysia were brought up with culture or daily routines where gender conventions and expectations were more traditional. They grew up with expectations for men and women's behaviour and gender roles were more tightly established according to the norms and beliefs, which had led them to think that certain things were counted as a taboo. Older individuals may have had personal experiences that supported traditional gender norms or continued gender stereotypes, as compared to newly generational differences. These events may have an impact on their thoughts and support ingrained gender ideologies in workplace or household environments. This is consistent with a study by Fuwa (2004) who examined the division of household labour in various countries. It was found that older age categories had more traditional beliefs on gender roles and division of labour within the household.

Not just that, Malaysian respondents in the age category of 18 to 39 years old were more likely to intervene sexual harassment situations as compared to older age groups, showing similar results with Palmer et al. (2015). Younger generations were raised at a time when education and knowledge about consent, sexual harassment, and gender equality were on the rise. This increased awareness equips younger individuals with the knowledge and understanding necessary to recognize sexual harassment and take action. This has led to changes in social norms regarding gender roles and expectations whereby respect and consent are advocated, encouraging a society of active intervention and supporting victims of sexual harassment. The study found that individuals in the 65-year-old age group exhibited higher scores in attitudes of sexual harassment, indicating a greater tolerance towards sexual harassment-related behaviour compared to younger age groups, similar to the research conducted by Katz et al. (2014). One possible explanation for this higher tolerance towards sexual harassment-related behaviour among older individuals is the influence of cultural norms and societal taboos. Historically, discussions around sexual harassment were often considered taboo or inappropriate, particularly within older generations. As a result, these issues were not openly discussed or addressed, leading to a lack of awareness and understanding among older individuals. Consequently, certain behaviour associated with sexual harassment may have been normalized or perceived as acceptable, thereby contributing to a higher tolerance towards such behaviour.

This study discovers that the results of correlation indicate that higher gender ideology scores were associated with lower bystander intention to help. Those with traditional attitude are less likely to have intention to help others which in this study refers to victims of sexual harassment. The reason behind it could be due to their personal belief, misogyny or stereotype of a certain gender which may have impacted their belief of sexual harassment related behaviour to be seen as a normal behaviour. Following these societal norms and expectations as to what gender ideology is can hinder their motivation to intervene and help as bystanders in situations of sexual harassment. As a whole, the analysed data is similar to the study by Yule and Petranu (2022) who shared similar findings. This consistency suggests that an individual's beliefs about gender ideology play a role in shaping their likelihood of intervening and assisting in situations of sexual harassment.

The result of this study also highlight a significant correlation between gender ideology and tolerance towards sexual harassment related behaviour. Individuals with lower score of gender ideology, indicating that they have egalitarian attitude, demonstrated to more likely to have lesser tolerance towards sexual harassment related behaviour. Hereby, those with an egalitarian mindset tend to have lower expectations of gender roles and sexism. This finding aligns with research conducted by Zheng and Shi in 2020, whereby, there is a positive correlation between feminism and women's perception of sexual harassment in their study, which further elaborated that a stronger feminist identity decreases the tolerance of sexual harassment related behaviour among Chinese women. This supports the notion that individuals who identify with stronger feminist values or egalitarian attitude advocate for gender equality, therefore are more likely to reject and condemn acts of sexual harassment.

Last but not least, the correlation analysis revealed that individuals with lower attitudes towards sexual harassment score had higher scores in bystander intention to help. This further suggests that when an individual has lesser tolerance towards sexual harassment related behaviour, the likelihood of intervening sexual harassment situations becomes higher. The increased awareness of the forms of sexual harassment in Malaysia may contribute to

this trend, hereby, Malaysians are more cognizant of behaviours that can be identified as sexual harassment and importance of preventing such issues. Burn (2009) similarly found that there is an association between bystander effect and sexual harassment, whereby individuals are more likely to intervene and help a victim of sexual harassment when there are no barriers hindering them from helping. The barriers highlighted the five steps of The Situational Model of Bystander Behaviour (Latané and Darley, 1970) which were found to negatively affect intervention behaviour by impeding intervention behaviour (Burn, 2009). In accordance with the theory, the Situational Model suggests that when people understand the barriers or factors that prevent them from intervening in cases of sexual harassment, their tolerance for such behaviour decreases. As a result, the decreased tolerance is associated with an increase in the likelihood of taking action and intervening in situations involving sexual harassment.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study revealed that there is an association between attitudes of sexual harassment with gender ideology and bystander intention to help. At the same time, the findings of objectives one and two obtained throughout this research may serve as a reference for further interventions in preventing sexual harassment cases as well as for in-depth research in the future since research studies in this field were quite limited. The present study has several limitations that need to be taken into account and could set several directions for future researchers to take further. The major limitation of the present study is that this study is fully self-reported data, meaning that findings of the data analysis were retrieved fully from the respondents. Therefore, individual subjective bias was likely to exist in this study, whereby the respondents' personal beliefs or attitudes might affect their views on the interpretation of the information in the questionnaire. Future research is suggested to study similar topics in their study while considering to include the perspectives of victims, perpetrators and bystanders as demographic variables get more insight on their relationships with variables similar to current research. Besides that, it should be noted that prior research studies that are relevant to this topic is limited especially in Malaysia, giving restricted access to data. At the same time, the data collection for this study, especially for ethnicity categories of others, was limited because the study was only carried out in a few months and the manuscript had to be written with time constraints, which may have impacted this study. Therefore, it is suggested for future researchers to conduct longitudinal study for better overcoming of identical limitations.

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