Araştırma

EFFECTS OF THE SOCIO-CULTURAL FACTORS IN THE PERCEPTION OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN THE WORKPLACE: A CROSS-CULTURAL STUDY AT TURKISH AND YAKUT-SAKHA SOCIETIES[1]

İşyerinde Cinsel Tacizin Algılanmasında Sosyo-Kültürel Faktörlerin Etkisi: Türk Ve Yakut-Saha Toplumları Üzerine Kültürlerarası Bir İnceleme

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ABSTRACT

Perception of sexual harassment in the workplace is closely related to a person's socio-cultural background. This study aims at contributing to the sexual harassment literature by a cross-cultural empirical study in the field of effects of socio-cultural factors on perception. In the first part of the study, a comprehensive literature review on sexual harassment is presented. In the second part, by conducting a field study, the differences in the perception of sexual harassment in the workplace between Turkish and Yakut-Sakha (a member of the Russian Federation) participants were investigated. Findings of the research demonstrate statistically significant differences between Turkish and Yakut-Sakha groups.

Key words. *Sexual harassment, socio-cultural factors, perception*

ÖZET

İşyerinde cinsel tacizin bireyler tarafından algılanması, sosyo-kültürel geçmişleri ile yakından ilgilidir. Bu çalışma, cinsel taciz algısında sosyo-kültürel faktörlerin etkileri konusundaki literatüre, kültürlerarası bir araştırma ile katkıda bulunmayı amaçlamaktadır. İlk bölümde konuya ilişkin literatür, kapsamlı bir şekilde sunulmuş, ardından Rusya Federasyonu'na bağlı bir devlet olan Yakut-Saha Cumhuriyeti ve Türkiye'de gerçekleştirilen bir alan araştırması ile işyerinde cinsel tacizin algılanmasındaki farklılıklar araştırılmıştır. Çalışma bulguları, Türk ve Yakut-Saha katılımcıları arasında istatistiksel açıdan anlamlı farklılıklar olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler. *Cinsel taciz, sosyo-kültürel faktörler, algı.*

INTRODUCTION

Sexual harassment is one of the most critical problems in the workplace. Sexual harassment at work is a complicated phenomenon, because it cannot be explained as solely the result of individual psychopathology or faulty communication (Koss et al., 1994). During the past two decades, there has been a growing interest in the topic of sexual harassment. It has emerged as a crucial social problem having critical implications for the society at large and for organizations in particular. This increased interest has stimulated research on many aspects of sexual harassment. Research has focused in the study of the sexual harassment phenomenon; its causes, extent in the workplace, and consequences and management of sexual harassment in organizations (Gutek, 1985; Gutek and Koss, 1993; DiTomaso, 1989: 71-90; Gutek, Cohen, and Konrad, 1990; Hesson-McInnes and Fitzgerald, 1997; Fitzgerald et al., 1994; Fitzgerald, 1993; Fitzgerald et al., 1988; Schneider et al., 1997). Findings related to the consequences of sexual harassment have shown that sexual harassment may have serious negative consequences for victims such as career interruption, lower productivity, lesser job satisfaction, lower self-confidence, loss of motivation, deterioration of interpersonal relationships, and loss of commitment to work and employer. Another interesting finding is that a majority of those who experienced sexual harassment are doubly victimized, either being forced to leave their organizations or being fired if they refuse to obey the harasser's sexual demands (Maypole and Skaine, 1982; Coles, 1986; Terpstra and Cook, 1985).

Despite its widespread occurrence, sexual harassment remained an under-reported and understated social problem. Nevertheless, the number of sexual harassment complaints escalating to litigation has increased daily and employers are forced to pay millions of dollars to the victims. Since individual and organizational costs of sexual harassment continue to increase, it will become all the more important to achieve a better understanding of this phenomenon and its various causes.

Sexual harassment against women takes place in a socio-cultural context (Koss et al., 1994). Therefore, it is impossible to understand gender relations and violence towards women, without understanding the socio-cultural context in which harassment behavior occurs. This study focuses on the effects of socio-cultural factors in the perception of sexual harassment in two different countries: Turkey and Yakut-Sakha Republic (a member of the Russian

Federation). The study investigates the socio-cultural dimension of sexual harassment to help in developing an insight into this highly complicated phenomenon.

Definition and the nature of sexual harassment

Defining sexual harassment is a difficult task. There are two different perspectives that may be helpful when defining sexual harassment: Psychological/subjective and legal/objective. From a subjective/psychological perspective, sexual harassment at work can be defined basically as all kinds of sexual attitudes and behaviors of the other sex that are "unwanted", "repeated", and "disturbing". However, from an objective/legal perspective, the definition is explicit and identifies two types of sexual harassment: "Quid pro quo" and "hostile environment". "Quid pro quo" occurs when a perpetrator requests sexual activity from the victim in exchange for workplace benefits, and "hostile environment" occurs when a perpetrator creates an offensive or intimidating environment for the victim (Lengnick-Hall, 1995). Since this study mainly focuses on the perception of sexual harassment in the workplace, a psychological approach is preferred in the following sections.

From a psychological perspective, sexual harassment in the workplace

covers the following: A threat with sexual aims; sexual slur; comments about the victim's body; unwanted and repeated verbal and physical sexual advances like sexual notes; invitations for dates; phone calls and gifts; and inappropriate acts such as touching, grabbing, and impeding. This expression includes all kinds of sexual aggression from verbal harassment to sexual assault.

Perception of sexual harassment refers to the degree in which a person perceives an attitude or behavior as an act of sexual harassment. Since in most cases, harassment occurs between two persons, it is difficult to identify the true nature of the situation through the perceptions of the people involved. Therefore, sexual harassment is a very difficult issue to prove in practice, due to differences in perception. These different perceptions may result from many factors, including socio-cultural background, gender differences, etc. For example, asking a co-worker out on a date or complimenting someone on her or his appearance does not generally constitute sexual harassment. Neither does discussing personal sexual experiences with willing co-workers or engaging in sexual behavior with another consenting adult (Kurz, 2002). What is important here is the perception of the targeted employee. In other words, a remark that some people

might consider to be innocent - such as, "you look fine in that dress today" - may be perceived and treated as sexual harassment by another person to whom the comment is directed (Baroni, 1992). In those circumstances, identifying whether sexual harassment occurred rests on a subjective perception. Thus, an action may seem to be acceptable for one person, or it may be an act of harassment for another.

Harassers generally describe their action as a compliment, an expression of an attention, or a normal action, but not as aggression. This may mean that people perceive an action as either harassment or normal according to their gender. However, sexual harassment is always an act of violence. This violence may vary from "disrespect towards [disrespecting] a person's physical, psychological and sexual integrity" to making this person into [a] slave. Due to sexual harassment, victims are reduced to simple sexual objects. Their personalities are seriously damaged. Moreover, the harasser violates the victim's personal boundaries, wounds his/her physical and psychological integrity and pride, and ruins his/her self-esteem and confidence as well. Therefore, sexual harassment is one of the basic types of aggression towards a human being and one of the funda-

mental violations of basic human rights.

Types of sexual harassment in the workplace

Sexual harassment in the workplace has become an extremely sensitive and high profile topic in recent years. Sexual harassment issues escalating to litigation have been rising in number and employers have paid high amounts of compensations to victims in some cases. For example in the United States, a female attorney in 1994 won a $7.2 million judgment against her employer, a prominent Chicago law-firm. Again, women at two Ford Motor Company plants won nearly $8 million. Further, Ford Company agreed to increase the number of women in supervisory jobs by thirty per cent within three years (Gross-Schaefer et al., 2003).

Moreover, complaints filed with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in the United States have increased dramatically in the 1990s (Laband and Lentz, 1998). Despite the growing public policy focus on sexual harassment in the workplace, a universal agreement over the definition of sexual harassment does not presently exist. Therefore, classifying various forms of sexual harassment may help to improve understanding. A well-known framework of sexual harassment is Till's (1980) five-level struc-

ture, which categorizes behavior based on a "continuum of severity". This framework includes the following (Defour et al., 2003: 31-45; Knapp et al. 1997):

- Gender harassment: Sexist remarks and behavior that is not designed to elicit sexual cooperation but rather to convey insulting, degrading, or sexist attitudes;

- Seductive behavior: Inappropriate, offensive but sanction-free sexual advances;

- Sexual bribery: Solicitation of sexual activity or other sex linked behavior by promise of reward (e.g., high grade, letter of recommendation, salary increase);

- Sexual coercion: Coercion of sexual activity by use of threats or punishment (e.g., failure to give the grade earned, failure to grant a promotion, low performance appraisal);

- Sexual imposition: Gross sexual imposition, assault, or rape.

In the United States, the Department of Defense used another classification (Gruber, 2003):

- Crude/offensive behavior: Sexual jokes, stories, whistling, or staring;

- Sexist behavior: Insulting, offensive, and condescending attitudes based on the gender of the person;

- Unwanted sexual attention: Touching, fondling, or asking for dates even though rebuffed;

- Sexual coercion: Sexual bribery or quid pro quo;

- Sexual assault: Attempted or actual sexual assault or rape.

As cited above, sexual harassment in the workplace covers a wide range of behaviors. However, it is crucial to understand it in all aspects in order to reduce the negative effects and prevent sexual harassment from occurring in the work environment. A review of the literature on the socio-cultural and gender differences is indispensable to gain an insight on the issue.

Socio-cultural differences

As Hofstede (2001: 34) stated, "culture" is learned and not inborn and national cultures become extremely stable over time. Some dimensions of culture in the literature include a range of variables. For example, Schwartz (1994) cited some variables like conservatism, hierarchy, mastery, affective autonomy, intellectual autonomy, egalitarian commitment, and harmony (Hofstede, 2001: 33). Gregg and Banks (1965)

also cite a set of variables, that can be used in cross cultural analysis, including "access" (multiparty or one-party systems), "differentiation" (old/western or young/ex-colonial nations), and "consensus" (stable or unstable regimes). Two clusters of social and political conditions associated with wealth are "differentiation in society" and "the existence of plu-ralistic political systems" (Adelman and Morris, 1967). For psychological dimensions of national character, "neuroticism" and "extraversion" are identified (Lynn and Hampson, 1975). Hofstede related Gregg and Bank's (1965) dimension and Adel-man and Morris' (1967) clusters of social and political conditions to "power distance", and Lynn and Hampson's neuroticism to "uncer-tainty avoidance" (Hofstede, 2001: 33). Those dimensions were two of the Hofstede's (1980) famous di-chotomies: "Individualism-collecti-vism"; "masculinity - femininity"; "power distance"; and "uncertainty avoidance". However, there are few research findings in the literature relating to Hofstede's dimensions and perceived harassment in the workplace. For instance, Bursik (1992) found that masculinity and femininity scores were not signifi-cantly associated with any of the harassment measures. Voronov and Singer (2002) questioned the validity of the individualism-collectivism di-chotomy and found no satisfying

results. Hofstede (2001: 32) pro-posed that "political orientation" fac-tor is trivial in cross cultural analysis. This study also tries to demonstrate the effects of the socio-cultural fac-tors on the perception of sexual har-assment[1].

Gender differences

Research on sexual harassment depicts the perception discrepancy between women and men. For ex-ample the findings of Blumenthal (1998) demonstrated that gender differences in perceptions of and reactions to sexual harassment tend to be small in scale but rather con-sistent. Gutek (1995) claimed that gender can influence people's inter-pretations of the cues in sexual har-assment circumstances and this gender effect may account for up to 10 per cent of the variance in evaluations of sexual harassment. Many other researchers states that women appear to be less tolerant of sexual harassment than men and have a broader definition of what constitutes unacceptable behavior; thus research in general show that men and women do differ in their perceptions of what is and what is

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[1] For cross cultural studies comparing Tur-key and other countries from a socio-cultural perspective, please see Wasti et al., 2000: 766-78; Wasti and Cortina, 2002: 394-405; Cortina and Wasti, 2005: 182-192; Glick et al., 2000: 763-775; Glick et al., 2002: 291-296; Bakırcı, 2000.

not sexual harassment (Abbey, 1982; Jensen and Gutek, 1982; Terpstra and Baker, 1986; Valentine-French and Radtke, 1989; Baker, Terpstra, and Cutler, 1990; Fitzgerald and Ormerod, 1991; Tata, 1993).

Women view a greater number of behaviors to be sexual harassment than men (Lengnick-Hall, 1995). In addition, Gutek (1995) found that women may respond more negatively than men towards sexual harassment when the harassment is more ambiguous and less severe. Bem (1974) suggested that women are more concerned with politeness, socio-emotional issues, providing face support and maintaining relationships; perhaps because their identities are focused on connections to others to a greater extent than men (DuBrin, 1991; Forsyth et al., 1985). Women are more likely than men to view descriptions of potential sexual harassment occurrences as actual harassment when they include touching, are accompanied by a negative comment about their work, and are initiated by a man or a person of higher status (Lengnick-Hall, 1995). However, men are more likely than women to perceive any social interactions between men and women as sexual. Men also perceive fewer descriptions of potential sexual harassment incidents to be real harassment than women when exposed to the same stimuli.

Research findings also indicate that some acts of sexual harassment may be a consequence of men misperceiving simple, friendly behavior as sexual incitement. Those men who then act on their misperception may discover that their behavior is perceived by women as sexual harassment (Lengnick-Hall, 1995). In a more recent study covering nine countries including Turkey, Sigal et al. (2005) concluded that attitudes towards sexual harassment between women and men demonstrate statistically significant differences in general throughout those countries.

An empirical study on the effects of the socio-cultural factors in the perception of sexual harassment

Perceptions play a crucial role in sexual harassment in the workplace; since they are affected by the extent to which individuals interpret signals as offensive or threatening. It is possible to conceptualize causal inference and perception as social processes by which people receive signals from other people and send their interpretations to others (Tata, 2000). The perception of sexual harassment as a social process is closely related to the socio-cultural background and the gender of the working people.

Purpose

The aim of this study is to test the

effects of socio-cultural background and gender differences in the perception of sexual harassment. Thus, the study investigates the differences in the perception of sexual harassment in the workplace between Turkish and Yakut-Sakha societies in relation to culture and gender.

Given the purpose above, the study was conducted in Turkey and Russian Federation's Yakut-Sakha Republic. The following are the hypotheses under investigation:

H_1 Perception of sexual harassment differs across countries.

H_2 Perception of sexual harassment differs between women and men.

Sampling and data collection

Yakut-Sakha Republic is a Turkic society located in north East Asia. Respondents were selected from a list of public and private organizations in Ankara (capital of Turkey) and Yakutsk (capital of Yakut-Sakha Republic). Education level of 205 respondents (101 from Turkey and 104 from Yakut-Sakha) is more than average, because all respondents have at least a high school diploma and their age varied from 18 to 50. The questionnaire was prepared in two languages: Turkish and Russian. The method of back translation was used to prevent any possible errors that could arise from language differences. A pilot study in Ankara was conducted with thirty people and a satisfactory reliability score (α= .79) was obtained. Respondent feedbacks were used to revise the questions.

The questionnaire was composed of eleven Likert-type questions. Respondents rated the questions on a 5-point scale (1 = *strongly agree*, 5 = *strongly disagree*). The instrument that is used was developed by making use of the framework of sexual harassment designed by Till (1980). However, the questionnaire does not follow a severity continuum unlike Till's 5 level structure (gender harassment, seductive behavior, sexual bribery, sexual coercion and sexual assault), instead it only focuses on "Seductive Behavior". The perception of seduction as a harassment behavior is assumed to change due to differences arising from culture and/or gender. Thus the questionnaire excludes four categories of Till's (1980) framework and includes only the "seductive behavior" category. This is the most controversial one, since it is directly related to the perceptions. "Sexual bribery", "sexual coercion" and "sexual imposition" categories are rather obvious and are considered as harassment regardless of the socio-cultural differences (however, the questionnaire

also included a sexual bribery related test question). When the severity of the harassment increases cultural differences vanish; behaviors like bribery, coercion and assault are judged as a crime in legal terms in every country. In addition Till's "gender harassment" category was also left out in order to limit the scope of the research, because "gender discrimination at the workplace" is a vast field that needs to be examined separately.

In conclusion the questionnaire mainly focuses on the "problematical category" of "Seductive Behavior", since it is not easy to distinguish whether a behavior is seductive or not when culture and gender dimensions are involved. The questionnaire comprises of eleven items (ten items pertain to seductive behavior/hostile environment and one question pertains to sexual bribery/quid pro quo):

- Unwanted and excessive personal attention is sexual harassment.

- Suggestive words and jokes in the workplace are sexual harassment

- Staring at a person's body in the workplace is sexual harassment.

- Comments with a sexual implication on clothing are sexual harassment.

- Unwanted and repeated compliments are sexual harassment.

- Invitations for spending spare time together out of the workplace are sexual harassment.

- Unwanted physical contact is sexual harassment.

- Sending e-mails with obscene content is sexual harassment.

- Clothing that may provoke sexual desires in the workplace is sexual harassment.

- Provocative attitudes and behaviors are sexual harassment.

- Sexual requests in exchange for workplace benefits are sexual harassment (test question related to sexual bribery/quid pro quo).

Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS FOR WINDOWS Release 10.0. *One-way ANOVA* and *Independent Sample t test* were used to determine statistical significance on the questions based on the Likert scale.

Findings and Discussion

The questionnaire was distributed to a sample of 275 people and 205 (75 %) responded.

Table 1 *Sample distribution for returned questionnaires*

Gender	Turkey		Yakut-Sakha		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Female	50	47	57	53	107	52
Male	51	52	47	48	98	48
Total	101	49	104	51	205	100

An interview was also performed with 85 of those 205 respondents. The average length of each interview was 30 minutes (since sexual harassment is a kind of taboo for many people, informal interviews were performed whenever possible to attain a more accurate information about the attitudes of the respondents). The reliability was found to be highly satisfactory (α= .86).

Differences in the perception of two cultures

The first hypothesis of the study is related to the effects of cross-cultural differences in the perception of respondents. In order to test this hypothesis, sexual harassment factors were weighted with an arithmetical mean of all responses and thus, each had a measurement score over five. Then, they were given in a descending order. *One-way ANOVA* test was used to test the first hypothesis of the study. The rating of factors was significantly different in statistical terms for both cultures except "sexual requests in exchange for workplace benefits" (Table 2).

Table 2 *Perception differences between Turkey and Yakut-Sakha on harassment factors*

Harassment Factors	F	Turkey		Yakut-Sakha	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Sexual requests in exchange for workplace benefits	,046	4,4752	1,0639	4,4423	1,1306
Unwanted physical contact*	20,625	4,1287	1,1284	3,3269	1,3826
Provocative attitudes and behaviors*	62,176	3,7426	1,2054	2,3942	1,2418
Staring at one's body*	117,094	3,7129	1,2833	1,8750	1,1464
Obscene e-mails*	39,486	3,6139	1,3636	2,4615	1,2612
Unwanted and repeated compliments*	36,399	3,5248	1,1366	2,4615	1,3719
Suggestive words and jokes*	57,415	3,3366	1,4784	1,9327	1,1597
Provocative clothing*	62,750	3,1485	1,4310	1,7596	1,0566
Comments on clothing*	72,957	3,0099	1,1269	1,7115	1,0490
Unwanted and excessive personal attention**	4,357	2,6139	1,2488	3,0000	1,3935
Invitations for dates**	5,738	2,5446	1,4250	2,0769	1,3702

* p< .01
** p< .05

The results indicate that the likelihood of given behaviors to be accepted as harassment is higher in Turkish group. Except for the first one, all the harassment factors demonstrate a statistically significant difference. This finding strongly supported the first hypothesis of the study claiming that "perception of sexual harassment differs across countries".

Since gender relations have their roots in socio-cultural factors, effects of those factors may be seen in the perceptions of men and women. In the following part of the study, differences in the perceptions of men and women are examined.

Differences in the perception of women and men

The second hypothesis of the study is related to perception differences between women and men. In this study, sexual harassment factors were weighted with an arithmetical mean of all responses and thus, each had a measurement score over five. *One-way ANOVA* test was used to test the second hypothesis of the study.

Table 3 *Perception differences of women and men respondents on harassment factors (rating of the factors in a descending order for men and women)*

Men				Women		
Harassment Factors	F	Mean	SD	Harassment Factors	Mean	SD
Sexual requests in exchange for workplace benefits*	5,351	4,2755	1,2500	Sexual requests in exchange for workplace benefits*	4,6262	,9062
Unwanted physical contact*	4,900	3,5102	1,3335	Unwanted physical contact*	3,9159	1,2894
Provocative attitudes and behaviors	1,633	2,9286	1,2702	Provocative attitudes and behaviors	3,1776	1,4972
Obscene e-mails	2,122	2,8776	1,4378	Obscene e-mails	3,1682	1,4175
Unwanted and repeated compliments	2,235	2,8367	1,3675	Unwanted and repeated compliments	3,1215	1,3578
Staring at one's body	2,908	2,5918	1,4419	Unwanted and excessive personal attention*	3,1121	1,2762
Unwanted and excessive personal attention*	12,109	2,4796	1,3256	Staring at one's body	2,9533	1,5804
Suggestive words and jokes**	3,966	2,4082	1,4275	Suggestive words and jokes**	2,8224	1,5407
Provocative clothing	1,262	2,3265	1,4053	Invitations for dates**	2,5888	1,4791

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| Comments on clothing** | 6,888 | 2,11221,1387 | Comments on clothing** | 2,57011,3396 |
| Invitations for dates** | 9,232 | 2,00001,2763 | Provocative clothing | 2,55141,4552 |

*p< .01
**p< .05

Table 3 demonstrates that there are significant differences with regard to the perception of harassment between men and women. Possible reasons for these differences are given below in relation to specific harassment factors:

The modern business life has limited the opportunities for both women and men for meeting and selecting a mate. Due to their busy schedule, these men and women do not have time to go out and meet other people. However, this creates a phenomenon called "sexualisation of the workplace". In a sexualized environment, the frequency of harassment arising from misperceptions may increase. A finding from our study with respect to the variable "unwanted sexual attention" is an example of those misperceptions. While most women stated that the "unwanted special attention" is sexual harassment, men generally saw this as flirtation. It is not so difficult to foresee that sexual harassment cases will soar in such a sexualized environment due to this perception difference between men and women.

Another interesting example is related to "the invitations for dates". Most men thought that this is only an innocent invitation, because the women have the choice of accepting or rejecting. However, women generally did not feel free to refuse, because invitations frequently came from their supervisors who are in a higher position in the organizational hierarchy. In addition, refusal of such an offer may mean risking their business careers.

Women are more sensitive in terms of "unwanted physical contact". Those behaviors may cause women to be disgusted with their bodies. In contrast, during the interviews some of the male participants stated that they would be glad to receive a caress or physical contact from a woman. Physical contact with a woman increases a man's ego, since this makes him think that he is attractive. Women generally feel dirty after such a behavior; this is one of the most striking contrasts between women and men. When sexuality is involved in a workplace, women have a greater difficulty in performing their jobs without being affected by that atmosphere.

Men traditionally feel obliged to take the first step in initiating relationships with women. Women generally pre-

fer not to speak or make jokes to stop the sexual advance, since they do not want to damage the relationship, upset the other side or cause tension. When women do not explain their refusal explicitly, men think that they still have a chance and may interpret this response as a positive signal. Although not efficient, these responses are most preferred by the victims.

Men express their sexual requests in an overt manner, whereas women generally prefer an indirect way. In this indirect style, while women wear revealing or striking clothes, consciously or unconsciously, they put forth their feminine characteristics. During the interviews, some of the Turkish male respondents stated that such behaviors may lead them think about "women" and "sexuality" obsessively. According to these men, this situation prevents them from focusing on their jobs and decreases their productivity. Thus, seductive attitudes and behaviors of women may have effects on the productivity of young males, especially, in the workplace.

General comparison

Finally, in order to see the differences more sharply, we summed up the eleven items in the scale to create a "Total Harassment" factor. Total Harassment factor represents the total perception of sexual harass-

ment by the participants. *One-way ANOVA* test was conducted with a post hoc analysis to see the detailed differences among four sub-groups of respondents (Turkish women, Turkish men, Yakut-Sakha women and Yakut-Sakha men).

Table 4 *Perception differences among all sub-groups on total harassment factor*

Sexual Harassment*		
Sub-groups	Mean	SD
Turkish Women	41,64	6,45
Turkish Men	34,14	7,87
Yakut-Sakha Women	28,44	8,72
Yakut-Sakha Men	26,23	8,27

$F(3,201)=37,919$

* All the comparisons between sub-groups are statistically significant (p<0,01) except the one for Yakut-Sakha Women and Yakut-Sakha Men (p>0,05)

Table 4 shows that the Total Harassment factor rating was significantly different in statistical terms for all sub-groups except "Yakut-Sakha women" and "Yakut-Sakha men".

Independent Sample t test results, for Total Harassment factor between women and men in general (regardless of nationality), produced a statistically significant difference $[t(203)=-3,174, p<0,01]$. Women (M = 34,61; SD = 10,16) had higher

scores than did men (M = 30,35; SD = 8,95). In addition, *Independent Sample t test* results comparing Turkey and Yakut-Sakha (regardless of gender) on Total Harassment factor produced a statistically significant difference [(t(203)=8,944, p<0,01] as well. Turkey (M = 37,85; SD = 8,09) had higher scores than did Yakut-Sakha (M = 27,44; SD = 8,55). These findings demonstrated that the effect of the socio-cultural background in perception is more powerful than the effect of gender.

An additional question in the interview (experience of harassment)

While conducting the interviews, a specific question outside the questionnaire was also asked: "Have you ever been sexually harassed in the workplace?" A chi-square test was conducted to assess the difference. Answers were closely similar to the results of Total Harassment factor among sub-groups and statistically significant [x^2(3, N = 205) = 9,3; p<0,05]. Among those who said "yes" to this question, Turkish women had the highest percentage (44%). Other groups had lower percentages; Turkish men (35,3%), Yakut-Sakha women (26,3%) and Yakut-Sakha men (17%).

Conclusion

This study revealed a statistically significant difference in the perception of sexual harassment in Turkish and Yakut-Sakha societies. The findings indicated that the Turkish group is more sensitive with respect to sexual harassment. The Yakut-Sakha society rated all harassment factors significantly lower than the Turkish respondents except for the variable "sexual requests in exchange for workplace benefits". The study, in general, contributes to the current understanding by demonstrating the effects of socio-cultural factors in the perception of sexual harassment. Another contribution is that this is the first comparative study conducted between the Turkish and Yakut-Sakha societies and thus, techniques that are used in our study may be helpful for further research. While preparing a cross-cultural questionnaire, researchers should sensitively concentrate on the wording of survey items, back translation, and suitable sampling techniques, and investigate unique behaviors that are peculiar to the two cultures. Although it is not easy to compare two societies with a sample of 205 people, we believe that our sensitivity in the wording and sampling stages and high reliability score of the study strengthens the results. We hope that this study contributes to the understanding of socio-cultural roots of gender relations and differences of perception between men and women. Moreover, we hope that it provides an inspiration for future

studies and helps to accumulate a source of data on the socio-cultural roots of violence against women. It is impossible to understand gender relations and violence towards women, without understanding the socio-cultural context in which the harassment behavior takes place. However, it is apparent that a considerable amount of research remains to be done in the investigation of the socio-cultural dynamics of sexual harassment in the workplace.

Implications for public policy in Turkey: A public committee

Sexual harassment in the workplace is a multi-faceted issue negatively affecting the victim, the organization, and the society. The "Beijing Platform for Action", which was adopted at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, calls on Governments to take strategic action in prevention of sexual harassment in the workplace (EU, 2005). European Union member states have also taken some steps in terms of prevention of harassment in the workplace[2]. There-

fore, it has become clear that some measures have to be taken in terms of public policy in Turkey as well. At this point, a public committee may prove helpful to see the current picture more objectively and to propose a legislative reform.

In this framework, this public committee should focus on;

1. research on harassment to understand how women become victims of workplace violence and why they respond in the ways they do;

2. develop an understanding of the options that women have legally, what happens when they exercise these options and the consequences of doing so;

3. the costs of workplace violence to the Government, both social and economic,

4. to enable the development of a legislative reform.

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[2] For European Union (EU) acquis please see Directive 2002/73/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 September 2002 on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women as regards access to employment, vocational training and promotion and working conditions. Directive 2002/73/EC provides definitions of "harassment" and "sexual harassment". It also makes provi-

sions in relation to the prevention of sexual harassment (Article 2(5)), the establishment of procedures for enforcement purposes; the compensation for victims of discrimination and harassment, as well as providing for the putting in place of the necessary arrangements for a body or bodies for the promotion, analysis, monitoring and support of equal treatment of all persons without discrimination on the grounds of sex (Article 8).

Since the perception of sexual harassment changes cross-culturally (our findings point out that socio-cultural effects are more powerful than the gender effects in the perception of sexual harassment), measures against it should avoid drawing out a universal definition of sexual harassment. Instead, the measures should focus more on organizational procedures for preventing sexual harassment and complaints of sexual harassment should be accepted valid and seriously taken into account in a socio-cultural context. In this framework, we could conclude that "sexual harassment is relevant to perception but measures against it have to go beyond perception."

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