

## **Perception of Sexual Harassment among Female Hotel Employees in Malaysia**

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Malaysians from diverse ethnic backgrounds interpret verbal and nonverbal cues in relation to sexual harassment differently. This arises from differences in religious and socialisation practices despite a shared commonality of a Malaysian culture (Li and Lee-Wong, 2005). The study investigates perceptions of female hotel employees in Malaysia concerning sexual harassment. It explores how age, race, marital status, educational level, occupational position, department, and the number of years employed influence perception of sexual harassment. Understanding hotel employees' perceptions of sexual harassment will help managers prepare appropriate sexual harassment policies and know what areas of the issue to focus on during training and in the long run, help reduce sexual harassment lawsuits (Agrusa and others, 2002).

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### **INTRODUCTION**

In Malaysia, sexual harassment is an issue experienced by many companies on a regular basis and the problem is fast becoming a matter of increasing concern (The Star, 2006).<sup>1</sup> According to Ismail and Lee (2005), the nature and frequency of sexual harassment in Malaysia does not differ too much from the situation found in the United States. Past studies and news reports have indicated that up to 70 percent of women in Malaysia have experienced at least one form of sexual harassment at work (Lim, 2008; Ismail, Lee and Chen, 2007; Ismail and Lee, 2005; Sabitha, 2008, 2005, 2001; Lekha and others, 2003; Zarizana, 2003 and Barathi, 2003).

Women in Malaysia comprise 47.3 percent of the nation's workforce and the government is working towards increasing this to 55 percent by 2015 (Gomez, 2011). The hospitality industry is particularly vulnerable to sexual harassment (Lin, 2006; Poulston, 2008). The existing empirical evidence indicates that sexual harassment is more widespread in the hospitality industry than in society at large (Cho, 2002).

Sexual harassment in the hospitality/restaurant industry is not clear-cut (Agrusa and others, 2002) as the nature of the service involves close relationships between employees and customers (Poulston, 2008). The number of lawsuits on sexual harassment filed by women employed in the hospitality industry has become a matter of great concern (Coats, Agrusa and Tanner, 2004). The first reported and filed case of sexual harassment in the Malaysian hotel industry involved a general manager of Copthorne Orchid Hotel in Penang. In 2000, four female employees filed a complaint against the General Manager, a German National, for verbal and physical harassment. The women were summarily dismissed from the organisation. They then approached the Industrial Court for wrongful dismissal. In 2007, the Industrial Court finally ruled in favour of them and awarded them a total of MYR 308,642 as arrears in wages and compensation in lieu of reinstatement.<sup>2</sup>

Sexual harassment has a negative impact on work performance, psychological health and physical health. A study of sexual harassment in the hotel industry in Korea by Cho (2002) revealed that the negative impact of sexual harassment as reported by respondents was manifested as decreased psychological health (for example, tension, nervousness, persistent anger and fear of an unfair situation with few good solutions available); increased absenteeism; reporting late for work; uncertainty regarding their own skills and reduced accomplishments; and employee turnover, all of which may lead to decreased productivity; followed by physical health problems (for example, tiredness, headaches and nausea).

Despite education and awareness, resource professionals believe that the biggest problem is that the majority of employees and managers are still unsure as to what constitutes sexual harassment (Agrusa and others, 2002). An important issue that arises when trying to define sexual harassment is to identify which behaviours are harassing (Rotunda and others, 2001).

Malaysians from diverse ethnic backgrounds interpret verbal and nonverbal cues in relation to sexual harassment differently. This no doubt arises from differences in socialisation and religious practices (for example, Islam, Buddhism, Christianity or Hinduism) despite a shared commonality (Li and Lee-Wong, 2005) of a Malaysian culture.

Also, Malaysia traditionally follows the patriarchal system (Sabitha, 2008). In this sociocultural context, men are seen as the dominant group. (Sakalli-Uğurlu and others, 2010; Sabitha, 2008). According to available literature, patriarchal values and attitudes towards women pose great challenges in the resolution and prevention of sexual harassment (Sabitha, 2008).

A study by Roziah and others (2006) of Malaysian public administrators found that male respondents showed low awareness of psychological (47.8 percent) and visual (37.3 percent) sexual harassment. The nature of sexual harassment varies according to the culture of the organisation (Roziah and others, 2006). This is especially true as the inherent characteristics of service organisations create a prime breeding ground for sexual harassment (Gilbert, Guerrier and Guy, 1998). The informal environment of the hotel industry and close contacts with co-workers and customers, offers female employees an opportunity for increased socialisation and interaction with their male colleagues.

Sabitha and Sharifah's (2008) study had indicated that management could play a major role in controlling sexual harassment at the workplace, that is, management can act as a role model in providing a climate that discourages sexual harassment. Hence, it is important for managers to realise the importance of a sexual harassment-free work environment and understand how employees feel about the issue (Agrusa and others, 2002).

Thus far, sexual harassment studies in Malaysia have been mainly conducted among government employees and workers in manufacturing industries (Mano and Kamarul, 2008; Ismail, Lee and Chen, 2007; Ismail and Lee, 2005; Lekha and others, 2003; Barathi, 2003); no studies relating to the hospitality industry have been identified to date. The purpose of this study is to examine the perception and understanding of sexual harassment among female employees in the hotel industry.

### **History of Sexual Harassment in Malaysia**

Recognising that sexual harassment is a widespread problem, the Ministry of Human Resources, Malaysia, launched the 'Code of Practice on the Prevention and Eradication of Sexual Harassment in the Workplace' in August, 1999. This was the first attempt by the government to define and address sexual harassment in the work place. It is the only official definitive document by the Malaysian government to address the problem of sexual harassment.

The Code of Practice acts as a guideline to employees, trade unions and other relevant parties on the protection of the dignity of men and women at work. However, adopting the Code of Practice is voluntary for employers and the Ministry of Human Resources does not have the legal force to pressurise all companies to adopt sexual harassment policies (NST, 29/3/2009, p20). The effectiveness of the Code of Practice relies heavily on the persuasive power of the Ministry of Human Resources and the compliance of management (NST, 21/11/2005:18).

Asian countries have only now started to recognise the significance and consequences of sexual harassment in the workplace (Cho, 2002). At present, there is no Act in Malaysia that specifically deals with sexual harassment in the workplace. Although the Ministry of Human Resources has proposed a specific law be enacted to regulate sexual harassment at the workplace, this has been met with resistance from certain quarters such as the Malaysian Employers Federation. The Malaysian Employers Federation was of the view that sexual harassment is a form of misconduct and as such, issues pertaining to sexual harassment need to be handled by way of disciplinary action (NST, 19/08/2004:2 and 23/08/2004:10) and the Code of Practice on the Prevention and Eradication of Sexual Harassment in the Workplace and the Penal Code are sufficient.

In September 2008 the Human Resources Minister, Dr. Datuk S. Subramaniam announced that sexual harassment would be deemed an offence after its incorporation into the Employment Act 1955. In July 2010, it was announced that the sexual harassment bill would be incorporated into the Employment (Amendment) Act 1955 (NST, 20/07/2010:19). This is a landmark amendment because currently there is only a code of guidelines to deal with sexual harassment (NST, 10/07/2010:18). Additionally, if it is found to be adequate, the ministry is also looking at making it a regulation for all employers to adopt the Code of Practice on the Prevention and Eradication of Sexual Harassment in the Workplace (NSUNT, 9/11/2008:29). Regrettably, the introduction of the Employment (Amendment) Bill 2010 was withdrawn after it was tabled for second reading in the parliament in October 2010.

As there are no constitutional guidelines on sexual harassment in Malaysia, sexual harassment as a term can lead to widely differing explanations (Li and Lee-Wong, 2005). Thus, it is important to determine the classification of sexual harassment and the variables that affect the perception of sexual harassment of Malaysian women employees.

### **Definition of Sexual Harassment as per the Malaysian Code of Practice**

The Malaysian Code of Practice on Sexual Harassment (Malaysia: Ministry of Human Resources, 1999) in the workplace has defined sexual harassment as:

Any unwanted conduct of a sexual nature having the effect of verbal, non-verbal, visual, psychological or physical harassment:

(i) that might, on reasonable grounds, be perceived by the recipient as placing a condition of a sexual nature on her/his employment.

or

(ii) that might, on reasonable grounds, be perceived by the recipient as an offence, humiliation, or a threat to her/his well-being, but has no direct link to her/his employment.

Based on the above definition sexual harassment may be viewed as comprising two parts—sexual coercion and sexual annoyance.

(i) **Sexual Coercion:** is sexual harassment that results in some direct consequence to the victim's employment. An example of sexual harassment of this coercive kind is when a superior who has the power over salary and promotion, attempts to coerce a subordinate to grant the former sexual favours. If the subordinate accedes to the superior's sexual solicitation, job benefits will follow. Conversely, if the subordinate refuses, job benefits are denied.

(ii) **Sexual Annoyance:** is sexually-related conduct that is offensive, hostile or intimidating to the recipient, but nonetheless has no direct link to any job benefit. However, the annoying conduct creates a non-conducive working environment, which the recipient has to tolerate in order to continue working. Sexual harassment by an employee against a co-employee falls into this category. Similarly, harassment by a company's client against an employee also falls into this category.

Within the context of this code, sexual harassment in the workplace includes any employment-related sexual harassment occurring even outside the workplace as a result of employment responsibilities or employment relationships. A situation under which such employment-related sexual harassment may take place includes, but is not limited to:

(i) at work-related social functions; (ii) in the course of work assignment outside the workplace; (iii) at work-related conferences or training

sessions; (iv) during work-related travel; (v) over the phone; and (vi) through electronic media.

The Code of Practice outlines five possible forms of sexual harassment and provides examples of such a behaviour. These are:

1. Verbal harassment—offensive or suggestive remarks, comments, jokes, jesting, kidding, sounds, questioning.
2. Non-verbal/gestural harassment—leering or ogling with suggestive overtones, licking lips or eating food provocatively, hand signals or sign language denoting sexual activity, persistent flirting.
3. Visual harassment—showing pornographic materials, drawing sex-based sketches or writing sex-based letters, sexual exposure.
4. Psychological harassment—repeated, relentless and unwanted social invitations.
5. Physical harassment—inappropriate touching, patting, pinching, stroking, brushing up against the body, hugging, kissing, fondling, sexual assault.

### **Sexual Harassment in the Hospitality Industry**

In a study by Ng and Pine (2003) on Hong Kong's hotel industry, where female and male managers were asked to perceive factors related to career success and obstacles, both female and male managers agreed that factors such as sexual harassment, being married and childcare responsibility were the least of the obstacles in their career development. Poulston (2008) explained that among the mature hospitality academics, there is a strong ethos of 'it's just part of the industry', when it came to issues of sexual harassment.

Poulston's (2008) study on levels of sexual harassment in New Zealand hospitality workplaces found that sexual harassment was most common in front-of-house positions such as food and beverages, and the front office, particularly affecting casual and part-time female staff. Most of the harassment was caused by guests, peers, junior and senior staff. The study also indicated that harassment from peers was greater when compared to harassment from seniors, suggesting that the traditions of sexual behaviour in the hospitality industry may be more due to influence and socialisation patterns rather than power relationships. The study identified managers as responsible for 23 percent of the sexual harassment, peers for 26 percent, customers for 39 percent, and juniors 11.5 percent.

Lin's (2006) study on incidence of sexual harassment encountered by students during their practical training in the Taiwanese hospitality industry found that incidences of sexual harassment was very common; about 97 percent of the respondents indicated that they had experienced sexual harassment at least once. The study looked at the frequency of 19 types of harassment experienced by the students. Gender harassment and seduction were the most frequently reported situations. The study identified supervisors to be the largest group of harassers for both the male and female victims.

Cho's (2002) study of sexual harassment in Korean hotels found that the most common type of sexual harassment was verbal, followed by physical, visual, and the display of sexual photographs or drawings. Employees faced harassment not only from supervisors, but also from co-workers and clientele. The findings of this study corroborates with Poulston's (2008) study that sexual harassment was more an influence than power relations.

When it came to dealing with harassment, the respondents said that they were more assertive in voicing their displeasure. They asked the harasser to stop or apologise, sought counselling, or filed an internal/external report. Also, the respondents found that the most effective way to prevent sexual harassment was by tackling the issue through unions or women's associations, use of institutional prohibition, and education to reinforce internal inhibitors. Significantly, only 7.4 percent of the respondents believed that education could help prevent sexual harassment. The majority preferred a more direct and restrictive prevention method.

### **Differences in Perception of Sexual Harassment**

A study comparing male and female responses on perception and attitudes of restaurant employees in Hong Kong (Coats, Agrusa and Tanner, 2004) stated that females perceived comments on appearance, leering at co-workers, and telling jokes with explicit sexual content as sexual harassment. On the other hand, males did not consider the same as sexual harassment.

Agrusa and others' (2002) study on the difference in perception among restaurant employees in Hong Kong and New Orleans found some significant differences between the two groups. The New Orleans respondents agreed with the statement that vendors asking employees for dates in the workplace and commenting on appearances was indeed sexual harassment while respondents from Hong Kong disagreed. This perceptual difference is significant. Also, a significantly larger number of New Orleans



respondents working in restaurants said the establishments had sexual harassment policies. They agreed that sexual harassment occurred more frequently in their work environment than in other industries, and that such behaviour is more accepted in the restaurant industry as compared to other industries. The study concluded that these differences in perception could be culture-specific.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

Sexual harassment is experienced predominantly by women (Terpstra and Cook, 1985). Therefore, in this study, it is assumed that women are the victims and men are the perpetrators. Moreover, Asian respondents tend to be more conservative in their sexual behaviour and that a substantial minority of women felt flattered by the attention that the researchers defined as sexual harassment (Powell, 1983). Also, Kennedy and Gorzalka's (2002) study revealed that Asian students were significantly more conservative in attitudes towards sexual behaviour, that is, more tolerant of rape myths and more accepting of sexual harassment.

The aim of this study is to determine the demographic variables that affect the perception of sexual harassment among female hotel employees in Malaysia: a) age; b) race; c) marital status; d) level of education; e) job position; f) department; and g) years employed in the hospitality industry.

To carry out the study, the following research questions were addressed:

- 1) What are the determinant variables that shape the perceptions of female workers towards sexual harassment?
- 2) Are the perceptions of female Malaysians significantly different from those in other countries?

As this study may be the first in the Malaysian hospitality industry, the findings will help determine the perception of female hotel employees regarding sexual harassment.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **Sample**

Malaysian female employees working in hotels in the state of Pulau Pinang (Penang) and Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia, participated in this research. The participants of this study were selected through the convenient sampling technique, that is, employees of hotels willing to participate in the study. Ten hotels (five, four or three star) participated in the study, five from each state.



### **Tools for Data Collection**

The purpose of the study was explained to the personnel managers of the selected hotels. Each hotel was given 50 questionnaires with attached cover letters. The personnel managers were asked to hand out the questionnaires to female employees only, keeping in mind the various variables of age, race, job position, department, and length of employment. The completed questionnaires were to be returned within three weeks.

As this was a voluntary activity, no employee was compelled to fill the form. Moreover, the participants were not required to disclose their name. As the questionnaire took about 10 -15 minutes to complete, most employees filled the data during their break time and were given a small token of appreciation for participating in the study. Of the 500 questionnaires distributed, only 299 were usable, representing a response rate of 59 percent.

### **Instrument**

Literature shows that measuring sexual harassment is not a simple task. The different measures generally fall under two distinct approaches: (a) the direct query survey, which allows the respondent to define sexual harassment, and (b) the behavioural experiences survey, which provides the respondent with a list of experiences defined by the researcher to constitute sexual harassment (Ilies and others, 2003).

In his meta-analytic review of studies using both direct query approach and behavioural experiences approach, Ilies and others (2003) found that the direct query approach had produced lower sexual harassment estimates than the behavioural experiences approach. The behavioural measure has the advantages of reducing perceptual bias of respondents and allowing meaningful comparisons across studies and time. This explains the choice of using a questionnaire rather than asking the female employees to state their understanding of sexual harassment.

This study was undertaken using the instrument developed by Popovich and others (1986), which included a list of ten behaviours considered to be possible examples of sexual harassment. The instrument was in line with the definition of sexual harassment provided in the Malaysian Code of Practice on Sexual Harassment.

Participants were asked to rate the degree to which they considered specific behaviours to be sexual harassment, and a 5-point likert scale ranging from definitely sexual harassment to definitely not sexual

harassment was used. A value of 5 was assigned to 'definitely sexual harassment', 4 to 'probably sexual harassment', 3 to 'don't know', 2 to 'probably not sexual harassment', and 1 to definitely not sexual harassment. Respondents were asked to give their level of agreement that most closely corresponded with their perception of these statements (Coats, Agrusa and Tanner, 2004).

The research questionnaire developed for this study included questions pertaining to demographics, that is, age, race, ethnicity, marital status, educational level, occupational position, department, and years employed. Such demographic characteristics have been shown to have influenced the perception of sexual harassment for women in past studies (Poulston, 2008; Ohse and Stockdale, 2008; Li and Lee-Wong, 2005; Coats, Agrusa and Tanner, 2004; Cho, 2002; Foulis and McCabe, 1997; and Popovich and others, 1986). It is important to see if similar demographic variables influence the perception of Malaysian women employees in the hotel industry.

To measure the validity and reliability of the research instrument, the questionnaire was tested by administering a sample of 30 administrative employees. A convenient sampling of 10 Malay, 10 Chinese and 10 Indian employees was used. The questionnaire was in both English and Malay because it was anticipated that some respondents might not be conversant in the English language. The research instrument was revised on the basis of the comments and suggestions made by the respondents and the Ministry of Human Resources, Malaysia (1999) on the usage of appropriate sexual terms in Malay and English. The reliability test of the revised instrument obtained a value of Cronbach's alpha 0.79, which is slightly higher than the recommended threshold value of 0.7 (Nunnally, 1978).

In analysing the data, the use of inferential statistics such as mean rating, independent T-test (Anova) and F Value for analysis of variance was performed to test any significant differences in the perception of sexual harassment by different groups based on the given demographic variables.

### **Limitations**

The study, however, has several limitations that need to be taken into consideration when interpreting the findings. First, the sample only consisted of a group of hotels from two states only. Second, the participants used in this study were considered convenient samples based on the

hotel's willingness to participate and as such were susceptible to sampling bias. Third, the relatively short length of the questionnaire also limited the inclusion of more behavioural items. Fourth, the grouping within the demographic characteristics did not provide a relatively even number of respondents in each group and as a result there may be some exceptions to the results.

## **RESULTS AND ANALYSIS OF DATA**

Due to the lack of research on sexual harassment in the hospitality industry of Malaysia, the results of this study were compared with studies done in other Asian countries. In particular, three studies were used in making comparisons:

- (a) Hong Kong and New Orleans: A Comparative Study of Perceptions of Restaurant Employees on Sexual Harassment (Agrusa and others, 2002);
- (b) Sexual Harassment in Hong Kong: Perceptions and Attitudes of Restaurant Employees (Coats, Agrusa and Tanner, 2004); and
- (c) A Study on Singaporeans' Perceptions of Sexual Harassment from a Cross-cultural Perspective (Li and Lee-Wong, 2005).

The results of the current study support the findings of these three studies.

The definition of sexual harassment by The Malaysian Code of Practice on Sexual Harassment indicates that all the behaviours listed in the questionnaire are regarded as sexual harassment.

The demographic characteristics of the respondents are shown in Table 1. Most (56.5 percent) of the respondents were Malays, the Indians made up 27.5 percent of the sample and the Chinese 16 percent. With respect to marital status about 50 percent of the respondents were single, 40 percent were married and the remaining 10 percent were divorced, separated or widowed. The respondents were more or less within the age group of 20–29 years (42 percent) and 30–39 years (36 percent), 13 percent were aged 40 years and above, and 8 percent were below the age of 20 years. More than 60 percent of the respondents' level of education was SPM (Malaysian Certificate of Education) which is equivalent to "O" Levels and 24 percent had a diploma, 0.9 percent had STPM (Malaysian Higher School Certificate) which is equivalent to "A" Levels and 0.7 percent were degree holders.

**TABLE1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

<i>Variable</i>		<i>Below 20</i>	<i>20-29</i>	<i>30-39</i>	<i>40-49</i>	<i>Total</i>
<b>Race</b>	Malay	12	71	65	21	169
	Chinese	4	22	18	4	48
	Indian	9	33	25	15	82
	<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>299</b>
<b>Marital Status</b>	Single	25	92	32	2	151
	Married	0	29	62	29	120
	Separated	0	3	5	0	8
	Divorced	0	2	8	3	15
	Widowed	0	0	1	6	7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>299</b>
<b>Level of Education</b>	SPM/MCE and below	22	77	48	32	179
	STPM/HSE	2	14	9	3	28
	Diploma	1	26	41	4	72
	Degree	0	9	10	1	20
	<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>299</b>
<b>Job Position</b>	Managerial	0	0	7	2	9
	Supervisors	2	22	25	8	57
	Entry Level	23	104	76	30	232
	<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>299</b>
<b>Department</b>	House keeping	7	17	12	25	61
	Food and Beverages	14	55	33	6	108
	Front Office	2	27	37	3	69
	Others	2	27	26	6	61
	<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>299</b>
<b>Length of employment (years)</b>	1 – 2	23	57	6	4	90
	3 – 5	2	65	76	5	148
	5 – 10	0	3	24	19	46
	10 years above	0	1	2	12	15
	<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>299</b>

*Note:* SPM (Malaysian Certificate of Education).

STPM (Malaysian Higher School Certificate).

The majority of the respondents (78 percent) were in job positions that can be classified as entry level jobs, 19 percent were supervisors, and 0.3 percent held managerial positions. Department-wise, 36 percent of the respondents were from the food and beverages department, followed by 24 percent from front office positions, 20 percent were in housekeeping and the remaining 20 percent worked in other departments of the hotels. As for the length of employment in the hotel industry, 49 percent of the respondents were working for three to five years, 30 percent for one to two years, 15 percent for five to ten years and 6 percent for ten years and above.

Table 2 shows the mean scores of the respondents' perception for each of the behaviours mentioned as indicative of sexual harassment according to age. As indicated in the table, significant differences in perception by age groups were revealed.

**TABLE 2: Mean Rating for the Perception of Sexual Harassment Behaviour by Age**

<i>Sexual Harassment Behaviour</i>	<i>Age (Means)</i>					<i>F-Value</i>
	<i>Below 20 years</i>	<i>20-29 years</i>	<i>30-39 years</i>	<i>40-49 years</i>	<i>Total</i>	
Eyes me up and down	4.40	4.29	4.45	4.30	4.36	0.704
Makes sexual remarks	4.52	4.47	4.44	4.63	4.48	0.479
Tells sexual jokes	3.88	3.60	3.11 <sup>+</sup>	3.73	3.46	5.836*
Kisses me on the cheek	4.80	4.71	4.73	4.78	4.73	0.219
Asked me to have sex	4.88	4.97	4.93	4.93	4.94	1.281
Touches me on arm/back	4.64	4.45	4.60	4.53	4.53	0.497
Asks me on dates after I have refused	4.16	3.83	3.79	3.93	3.86	0.972
Touches me on chest/thigh/buttocks	4.88	4.96	4.91	4.93	4.93	0.986
Treats me as sex object	4.72	4.89	4.82	4.80	4.84	1.455
Comments on my physical appearance/attractiveness	3.00	2.63	2.35 <sup>+</sup>	2.90	2.60	2.969*

Note: Higher mean values denote agreement that the behaviours are indicative of sexual harassment; lower mean values denote disagreement.

\*significant at 0.05 level

<sup>+</sup> cause of difference

All age groups agreed that telling sexual jokes is a form of sexual harassment, but those who were in the age group of 30–39 years showed a

statistically significant lower agreement, that is, the behaviour was probably sexual harassment. This could be explained by Lameiras-Fernandez and others, 2004 (cited in Ohse and Stockdale, 2008) who were of the view that those in the age range of 23 to 42 years had the least sexist attitude. Nonetheless, this is in line with the findings of the study by Coats, Agrusa and Tanner (2004)<sup>3</sup> on Hong Kong Chinese, where the age group of 26 years and older found the telling of sexual jokes as a form of sexual harassment.

Regarding comments on physical appearance/attractiveness, the younger age group (below 20 years) was not sure if this behaviour constituted sexual harassment while the other age groups disagreed. The findings also showed that there is a significantly lower disagreement from the age group (30–39 years) concerning comments on physical appearance/attractiveness as sexual harassment. Popovich and others (1986) reported that generally women did not find the behaviour “comments on my physical appearance/attractiveness” as sexually harassing. Coats, Agrusa and Tanner’s (2004) study also found that “comments on my physical appearance/attractiveness” was not considered to be as sexual harassment.

For all the other behaviours in the table, all four age groups showed the same level of agreement, that is, there was no significant difference by age group on any of these behaviours.

Table 3 shows the scores of the respondents’ perception of each behaviour as indicative of sexual harassment according to job position. A significant difference in perception according to job position was revealed in the behaviour descriptors “eyes me up and down”, “kisses me on the cheek” and “touches me on the arm/back”.

For the behaviour descriptor “eyes me up and down”, all three groups agreed that this behaviour was sexual harassment, but those who were in the supervisory group showed a statistically significant lower agreement. This could also be explained by the fact that it is part of a supervisor’s job to check the physical appearance of the entry staff, that is, if they were neatly dressed.

However, this contradicts Li and Lee-Wong’s (2005) study, if “eyes me up and down” is equated to staring as stated by Li and Lee-Wong (2005:702) “what is agreed upon is that coarse language, flirting and staring are generally not considered harassment”.

For the descriptor behaviours “kisses me on the cheek” and “touches me on the arm/back” all three groups agreed that this was deemed as sexual harassment. However, those in the managerial group showed a

statistically significant lower agreement, that is, that these two behaviours were probably sexual harassment.

This difference may be explained by the fact that sexual harassment is widely accepted in the hospitality industry (Poulston, 2008:239). Poulston states that “amongst mature hospitality academics, there is a strong ethos of ‘get over it’ and ‘it’s just part of the industry’, echoing comments from hospitality employees. Additionally, at the managerial level one has more work experience and maturity in handling sensitive issues (Ohse and Stockdale, 2008), which may have altered the perception of sexual harassment of managers.

For all the other descriptors cited in the table, all three job positions showed the same level of agreement—that these behaviours should be considered as sexual harassment, that is, there was no statistically significant difference by job position on any of these behaviours.

**TABLE 3: Mean Rating for the Perception of Sexual Harassment Behaviour by Job Position**

<i>Sexual Harassment Behaviour</i>	<i>Job Position (Means)</i>				<i>F-Value</i>
	<i>Managerial</i>	<i>Supervisory</i>	<i>Entry Level</i>	<i>Total</i>	
Eyes me up and down	4.22	4.12 <sup>+</sup>	4.42	4.34	4.66*
Makes sexual remarks	4.22	4.44	4.50	4.48	0.52
Tells sexual jokes	3.44	3.47	3.45	3.46	0.63
Kisses me on the cheek	4.11 <sup>+</sup>	4.68	4.77	4.73	13.91*
Asked me to have sex	4.89	4.95	4.94	4.93	0.11
Touches me on the arm/back	3.56 <sup>+</sup>	4.28	4.63	4.53	15.85*
Asks me on dates after I have refused	3.56	3.67	3.91	3.86	2.4
Touches me on chest/thigh/buttocks	4.56	4.95	4.94	4.93	0.66
Treats me as sex object	4.89	4.89	4.82	4.84	0.96
Comments on my physical appearance/attractiveness	3.11	2.42	2.61	2.60	0.81

Note: Higher mean values denote agreement that the items are considered as sexual harassment; lower mean values denote disagreement.

\*significant at 0.05 level

<sup>+</sup> cause of difference



Table 4 lists the mean scores of the respondents' perception of each of these behaviours as indicative of sexual harassment according to ethnicity. As the table shows, significant differences in perception by different ethnic groups were revealed on four of the behaviours.

**TABLE 4: Mean Rating for the Perception of Sexual Harassment Behaviour by Ethnicity**

<i>Sexual Harassment Behaviour</i>	<i>Ethnic (Means)</i>				<i>F-Value</i>
	<i>Malay</i>	<i>Chinese</i>	<i>Indian</i>	<i>Total</i>	
Eyes me up and down	4.44	3.95 <sup>+</sup>	4.42	4.36	5.55*
Makes sexual remarks	4.53	4.29	4.48	4.48	1.77
Tells sexual jokes	3.35	3.39	3.72	3.46	2.77
Kisses me on the cheek	4.78	4.43 <sup>+</sup>	4.80	4.73	5.46*
Asked me to have sex	4.95	4.87	4.95	4.94	1.90
Touches me on the arm/back	4.59	4.08 <sup>+</sup>	4.67	4.53	8.32*
Asks me on dates after I have refused	3.88	3.60	3.95	3.85	1.82
Touches me on chest/thigh/buttocks	4.95	4.87	4.90	4.93	1.88
Treats me as sex object	4.83	4.83	4.85	4.83	0.06
Comments on my physical appearance/attractiveness	2.39 <sup>+</sup>	2.47 <sup>+</sup>	3.09	2.59	8.77*

*Note:* Higher mean values denote agreement that the items are indicative of sexual harassment; lower mean values denote disagreement.

\*significant at 0.05 level

<sup>+</sup> cause of difference

For the behaviours “eyes me up and down”, “kisses me on the cheek” and “touches me on the arm/back”—although all three ethnic groups agreed that these behaviours as sexual harassment, the Chinese respondents showed a statistically significant lower agreement. This minor difference in perception could be explained perhaps by the cultural differences of the Malaysian Chinese. Fontaine and Richardson (2005) explain that the Chinese are more ambitious, influential, capable, and more success-oriented as compared to the Malays and the Indians.

Even so, this is in line with the findings of Coats, Agrusa and Tanner (2004) on Hong Kong Chinese, where the behaviour “touches me on the arm/back” was considered to be as sexual harassment. This is also supported by Li and Lee-Wong's (2005) study where the Singaporean Chinese view “touches shoulder” as sexual harassment. Leong, 2000 (cited in Agrusa and others, 2002) reports that in Chinese culture, touching, patting, or hugging co-workers is not part of social life and is clearly considered as sexual harassment.

For the behaviour “comments on my physical appearance / attractiveness”, while the Indian ethnic group was not sure if this behaviour constituted sexual harassment, the Malay and Chinese respondents showed a statistically significant stronger disagreement as compared to the Indian respondents. This corroborates with Agrusa and others, (2002) study in which the Hong Kong Chinese respondents disagreed with the statement that “comments on my physical appearance/attractiveness” constituted sexual harassment. This could also be explained by the fact that such comments could be viewed as compliments, and in the hospitality industry a comment on physical appearance/attractiveness is seen as a compliment and an approval of appearance.

On the other hand, this contradicts the study by Coats, Agrusa and Tanner (2004), where the behaviour “comments on my physical appearance/ attractiveness” was considered to be as sexual harassment.

For all the other descriptor behaviours in the table, all the three ethnic groups showed the same level of agreement, that is, that these behaviours should be considered as sexual harassment. There was no statistically significant difference by ethnic groups on any of these behaviours.

**TABLE 5: Mean Rating for the Perception of Sexual Harassment Behaviour by Marital Status**

<i>Sexual Harassment Behaviour</i>	<i>Marital Status (Means)</i>					<i>F-Value</i>
	<i>Single</i>	<i>Married</i>	<i>Separated</i>	<i>Divorced</i>	<i>Total</i>	
Eyes me up and down	4.29	4.48	4.50	4.14	4.36	1.49
Makes sexual remarks	4.44	4.58	4.38	4.32	4.48	1.00
Tells sexual jokes	3.46	3.46	3.88	3.32	3.46	0.43
Kisses me on the cheek	4.66	4.83	4.75	4.73	4.73	1.32
Asked me to have sex	4.94	4.95	5.00	4.86	4.94	0.88
Touches me on the arm/back	4.47	4.58	4.63	4.68	4.53	0.60
Asks me on dates after I have refused	3.81	3.88	4.38	3.82	3.86	0.79
Touches me on chest/thigh/buttocks	4.93	4.93	4.88	4.91	4.93	0.13
Treats me as sex object	4.83	4.88	4.88	4.64	4.84	1.22
Comments on my physical appearance/attractiveness	2.70	2.51	2.63	2.41	2.60	0.63

*Note:* Higher mean values denote agreement that the items are indicative of sexual harassment; lower mean values denote disagreement

The above table (Table 5) lists the mean scores of the respondents' perception of each of these descriptor behaviours as sexual harassment according to marital status. As shown in the table the results revealed no significant differences among the different categories. The mean scores for all the items were high indicating that all these behaviours were perceived as sexual harassment by the different groups with the exception of the behaviour "comments on my physical appearance /attractiveness" where all four groups disagreed that this behaviour constituted sexual harassment.

Table 6 lists the mean scores of the respondents' perception of each of these items as sexual harassment according to the level of highest education. The table shows significant differences in perception by level of highest education groups in two of the behaviours. For the descriptor "touches me on the arm/back", although all four groups agreed that this behaviour was perceived as sexual harassment, those holding a degree showed a statistically significant lower agreement.

**TABLE 6: Mean Rating for the Perception of Sexual Harassment Behaviour by Level of Highest Education**

<i>Sexual Harassment Behaviour</i>	<i>Level of Highest Education</i>						<i>F-Value</i>
	<i>SPM and below</i>	<i>STPM/HSE</i>	<i>Di-ploma</i>	<i>De-gree</i>	<i>Masters and above</i>	<i>Total</i>	
Eyes me up and down	4.44	4.50	4.21	4.05	4.44	4.37	2.01
Makes sexual remarks	4.52	4.46	4.44	4.35	4.52	4.49	0.36
Tells sexual jokes	3.59	3.43	3.15	3.45	3.59	3.46	2.43
Kisses me on the cheek	4.79	4.64	4.68	4.55	4.79	4.72	1.15
Asked me to have sex	4.94	4.93	4.94	4.95	4.94	4.93	0.03
Touches me on the arm/back	4.67	4.50	4.38	3.90+	4.67	4.52	6.21*
Asks me on dates after I have refused	3.97	3.79	3.60	3.85	3.97	3.86	2.31
Touches me on chest/thigh/buttocks	4.94	4.96	4.94	4.75	4.94	4.93	2.60
Treats me as sex object	4.81	4.93	4.86	4.90	4.81	4.84	0.91
Comments on my physical appearance/attractiveness	2.74	2.50	2.19+	2.90	2.74	2.59	3.52*

*Note:* Higher mean values denote agreement that the items are indicative of sexual harassment; lower mean values denote disagreement.

\*significant at 0.05 level

+cause of difference

The significantly lower disagreement may be explained by a greater tolerance /acceptance of sexual harassment for this descriptor. Nevertheless, this is in agreement with Coats, Agrusa and Tanner (2004) where all respondents with high school and college education or more agreed that “touches me on the arm/back” should be regarded as sexual harassment.

For the behaviour “comments on my physical appearance/attractiveness” all four groups disagreed that this behaviour was sexual harassment. However, those in the diploma group showed a statistically significant lower disagreement. This contradicts the findings of Coats, Agrusa and Tanner (2004) where the respondents with a high school diploma considered this behaviour as amounting to sexual harassment. A possible explanation for the statistically significant lower disagreement could be because complimentary comments or remarks of sexual nature are probably ego-enhancing (Gutek and others, 1980).

All groups showed the same level of agreement for all the other behaviours in the table, that is, these behaviours should be considered as sexual harassment. There was no statistically significant difference by level of highest education groups on any of these behaviours.

Table 7 lists the mean scores of the respondents’ perception of each of these items as sexual harassment according to years employed. The table shows significant differences in perception by the years employed in four of the behaviours.

For the behaviour “eyes me up and down” and “touches me on the arm/back”, while all four groups agreed that this behaviour was indicative of sexual harassment, those with only one to two years of employment showed a statistically significant lower agreement. This can be explained by the findings of a study by Lameiras-Fernandez, 2004 (cited in Oshe and Stockdale, 2008) that the lack of work experience may leave workers in the hotel industry not familiar with the subtleties of ambivalent sexism. This is also in agreement with the finding of Coats, Agrusa and Tanner (2004) where the respondents with less than one year in the hotel industry found the behaviour “touches me on arm/back” as sexual harassment.

For the behaviour “tells sexual jokes”, while all four groups agreed that this behaviour constituted sexual harassment, those with 10 years and more of employment showed a statistically significant higher agreement. People with more work experience may however show a higher sensitivity to sexism and gender issues in the workplace (see Lameiras-Fernandez, 2004 cited in Oshe and Stockdale, 2008, where those over 42 had the most sexist attitude).

**TABLE 7: Mean Rating for Perception of Sexual Harassment Behaviour by Years Employed**

<i>Items</i>	<i>Years Employed</i>					<i>F-Value</i>
	<i>1-2</i>	<i>3-5</i>	<i>5-10</i>	<i>10 and above</i>	<i>Total</i>	
Eyes me up and down	4.16 <sup>+</sup>	4.54	4.17	4.33	4.36	3.89*
Makes sexual remarks	4.41	4.59	4.30	4.47	4.48	1.85
Tells sexual jokes	3.59	3.38	3.20	4.33 <sup>+</sup>	3.46	4.26*
Kisses me on the cheek	4.60	4.82	4.70	4.80	4.73	1.98
Asked me to have sex	4.93	4.93	5.00	4.87	4.94	1.36
Touches me on the arm/ back	4.29 <sup>+</sup>	4.66	4.59	4.60	4.53	3.56*
Asks me on dates after I have refused	3.91	3.81	3.76	4.27	3.86	1.09
Touches me on chest/ thigh/buttocks	4.94	4.95	4.87	4.87	4.93	1.02
Treats me as sex object	4.83	4.84	4.85	4.80	4.84	0.06
Comments on my physical appearance/attractiveness	2.79	2.40	2.54	3.60 <sup>+</sup>	2.60	4.95*

*Note:* Higher mean values denote agreement that the items are indicative of sexual harassment, lower mean values denote disagreement.

\*significant at 0.05 level

<sup>+</sup>cause of difference

This contradicts the findings of Coats, Agrusa and Tanner (2004), where the respondents with more than five years of experience disagreed that to “tell sexual jokes” constituted as sexual harassment.

For the behaviour “comments on my physical appearance/attractiveness”, those with 10 years and more agreed that this behaviour probably constituted sexual harassment, whereas the other groups disagreed that this behaviour was sexual harassment. This again contradicted the findings of Coats, Agrusa and Tanner (2004) where the respondents with more than five years of experience disagreed that “comments on my physical appearance/attractiveness” was sexual harassment.

For all the other behaviours in the table, all groups showed the same level of agreement that these behaviours should be considered as sexual harassment. There was no statistically significant difference by years employed on any of these behaviours.

**TABLE 8: Mean Rating for Perception of Sexual Harassment Behaviour by Department**

Items	Department					F-Value
	House keeping	Food and Beverages	Front Office	Other departments	Total	
Eyes me up and down	4.34	4.52 <sup>+</sup>	4.42	4.01	4.36	3.50
Makes sexual remarks	4.26	4.47	4.58	4.40	4.51	0.61
Tells sexual jokes	4.09 <sup>+</sup>	3.48	3.00	3.31	3.46	13.61
Kisses me on the cheek	4.77	4.89 <sup>+</sup>	4.58	4.57	4.73	2.06
Asked me to have sex	4.91	4.92	4.97	4.93	4.93	0.07
Touches me on the arm/back	4.49	4.75	4.59	4.11 <sup>+</sup>	4.53	5.37
Asks me on dates after I have refused	4.13	3.95	3.81	3.45 <sup>+</sup>	3.85	5.13
Touches me on chest/thigh/buttocks	4.87	4.85	4.97	4.96	4.85	0.19
Treats me as sex object	4.70	4.82	4.87	4.84	4.88	0.06
Comments on my physical appearance/attractiveness	3.31 <sup>+</sup>	2.58	2.27	2.27	2.59	14.82

Note: Higher mean values denote agreement that the items are indicative of sexual harassment; lower mean values denote disagreement.

\*significant at 0.05 level

<sup>+</sup>cause of difference

The above table (Table 8) lists the mean scores of the respondents’ perception of each of these items as sexual harassment by different departments. As the table shows, significant differences in perception by the years employed group were revealed on six of the descriptors.

For the behaviour “tell sexual jokes”, while all four groups agreed that this behaviour was seen as sexual harassment, those in the house-keeping department showed a statistically significant higher agreement. For the behaviour “comments on my physical appearance/attractiveness”, those in the house-keeping department agreed that this behaviour probably constituted sexual harassment, whereas the other groups disagreed. This difference could be explained by the fact that housekeeping employees come in frequent contact with customers in their line of work and it is also said that sexual jokes are used to kill time in the hospitality industry (Agrusa and others, 2002).

For the behaviour “eyes me up and down” and “kisses me on the cheek”, while all four groups agreed that this behaviour was sexual harassment, those in the Food and Beverages department showed a statistically significant higher agreement. Those working in this department are the ones more likely to be exposed to sexual harassment, for they have more customer contact (Poulston, 2008), and therefore, may be more sensitive to a social-sexual behaviour.

For the item “asks me on dates after I have refused” and “touches me on the arm/back”, those working in the other departments showed a significant lower agreement that this behaviour constituted sexual harassment, whereas the House-keeping, Food and Beverages and Front Office department agreed that this behaviour was sexual harassment. The difference in perception could probably be explained by the fact that such behaviours are more accepted in the hospitality industry than in any other industry and perhaps because of the characteristics of the female employees themselves. As explained by Giuffre and Williams (1994) (cited in Welsh and others, 2006) some workers draw “boundary lines” around what they consider sexually harassing behaviours and what are pleasurable and/or tolerable.

For all the other behaviours in the table, all groups showed the same level of agreement that these behaviours should be considered as sexual harassment. There was no statistically significant difference by department in any of these behaviours.

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

As stated by Foulis and McCabe (1997) and McCabe and Hardman (2005) when it comes to dealing with sexual harassment, people with different demographic and/or social backgrounds have different perceptions regarding what constitutes sexual harassment. Demographic characteristics that have been most frequently cited in previous studies have been gender, age, race, marital status, occupation, years employed and the position of the harasser. Among these, gender difference has been found to be the most consistent variable in sexual harassment literature (Fitzgerald and others, 1988 cited in Lin, 2006).

The results of this study revealed that the perception of sexual harassment among the female respondents working in the hotel industry did not vary as a function of age, race, marital status, educational level, occupational position, department and years employed. None of the demographic variables affected the female employees’ perception of sexual harassment. The result of this



study was consistent with the findings of previous studies by Powel and others, 1981 (cited in Terpstra and Baker, 1987); Powel (1983); Baker and others, (1990); Fitzgerald and Ormerod (1991); Foulis and McCabe (1997); Cho (2002); Agrusa and others, (2002); Coats, Agrusa and Tanner (2004) and Li and Lee-Wong (2005). As such, the perception of Malaysian female employees did not differ from that of women in other countries.

The findings of this study also show that the female employees' perception of sexual harassment transcends ethnicity ( Malay, Chinese and India) despite the fact that most studies in the country tend to focus on ethnicity. However, this study disagrees with Li and Lee-Wong's (2005) study on whether certain cues relating to sexual harassment are judged equivalently across ethnic groups. The study determines whether cultural differences (beliefs and values) influence and impact interpretation of sexual harassment. The findings indicated that cultural differences had a significant effect on ethnic groups, with the highest ratings being obtained from the Malays.

Although demographic variables did not show any perceptual difference on sexual harassment among female employees, the sexual harassment behaviour itself has caused a perceptual difference. Generally, the respondent appears to recognise the physical, psychological, visual and non-verbal/gestural harassment but not verbal harassment, that is, comments and jokes.

In general, the female employees in the hotel industry did not consider the behaviours "comments on my physical appearance/attractiveness" and "tells sexual jokes" as sexual harassment, even though these behaviours are defined as sexual harassment by the Malaysian Code of Practice. This is also supported in Lin's (2006) review of the Taiwanese hospitality industry which found that the informal nature of this industry often causes blurring of the line between work and social interaction.

Telling dirty jokes, making sexually discriminating remarks and commenting on an individual's figure or sexual features might be a common practice among the working environment in the hospitality industry (Lin, 2006). Consequently, the behaviours "comments on my physical appearance/attractiveness" and "tells sexual jokes" presents itself in an ambiguous form; allowing a greater difference in perception.

As such, even when it is recognised as harassment, female victims reported feeling flattered and considered being a target of harassment as recognition of their charisma (Lin, 2006).

Another plausible explanation for the differing perception is the occupational norms that are unique to the hotel industry itself—working long hours with equally long breaks between shifts (breakfast, lunch, dinner shifts) and close interactions between workers. In such a setting, jokes with explicit sexual content are used as a means to kill time and entertain (Agrusa and others, 2002). A study of personnel directors working in the hospitality industry by Gilbert and others (1998) found that 29% considered sexual jokes and teasing a minor issue. This would explain why certain groups of female employees did not perceive these two behaviours as constituting sexual harassment.

A recent study by Poulston (2008:239) found that “sexual harassment is widely accepted by hospitality workers and to some extent, welcomed and enjoyed. As some employees enjoy and tolerate what others consider harassment, it seems that harassment occurs more because those attracted to the hospitality industry are more tolerant of anti-social behaviour”. There is also the strong influence of western ideals and the demands of a modern outlook to the hospitality industry; the traditional socio-cultural factors come into conflict with these more modern and western ideals (Cho, 2002). Thus, there is a pressing need to educate female employees of the hotel industry on the differences between sexual harassment and appropriate social behaviour.

The finding of this study is also consistent with the findings of a study conducted by Kamal and Asnarulkhadi (2011) that sexually explicit behaviour like touching is more highly rated as sexual harassment than comments, looks or gestures which until today are viewed as normal and acceptable occurrences. This is further supported by a report made by Cruz (2009) that most Malaysians think sexual harassment is only concerned with the physical and does not include verbal comments and sounds, gestures or “visual” such as obscene pictures.

Ng and Jamilah’s (2002) study highlighted the fact that despite the existence of sexual harassment policies in the companies, employees had problems defining what constituted sexual harassment; most respondents were more familiar with the physical form of sexual harassment.

The different perception about what constitutes unwanted and unwelcome sexual conduct has made it difficult to define sexual harassment. This opens up avenues for parties in conflict to take advantage of when dealing with the issue (Roziyah and others, 2006). It is important for managers to take all necessary steps to ensure that female employees are educated on what constitutes sexual harassment.

This study also shows that the organisational climate of the hotel industry plays an important role in causing perceptual difference/s in sexual harassment among its female employees.

Another study by Willness and others (2007) on the meta-analysis of organisational climate suggests that in general the sexual harassment climate has been the best single predictor of sexual harassment in organisations and this speaks of the significant potential for organisations to actually prevent the occurrence of sexual harassment. Halbesleben's (2009) study also pointed out that the climate and culture of an organisation has an impact on an employees' willingness to provide accurate behavioural cues concerning how they actually feel about sexual harassment.

As stated by Cho (2002:27):

Sociocultural factors compounded with occupational norms can expedite and overlook activities which might constitute sexual harassment. Legal procedures alone will not totally eliminate sexual harassment because sexual harassment is rooted in discrimination which exists in traditional sociocultural norms.

It is important for managers to realise the seriousness of a sexual harassment-free work environment and understand how employees feel about this issue (Argusa and others, 2002). In order to provide more protection for the employees, employers should organise promotional campaigns and educate the employees on issues related to sexual harassment (Lin, 2006).

Sexual harassment could also be reduced by using a more stringent code of ethics, improving training and demonstrating management's intolerance of harassment to both staff and customers (Poulston, 2008). In Cho's (2002) study, the respondents indicated that the most effective way to prevent sexual harassment would be through victim counselling, reinforcement of punishment, institutional prohibition, and education to reinforce internal inhibitors.

Raising awareness on sexual harassment issues is crucial. Kennedy and Gorzalka's (2002) study on 'Asian and Non-Asian Attitudes Toward Rape, Sexual Harassment, and Sexuality' revealed that Asian students were significantly more conservative in attitudes towards sexual behaviour. The Asian category included East or South East Asian countries (China, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, and Singapore). Approximately 92 percent of the Asian group identified themselves as ethnic Chinese. This reinforces the importance of educating employees on what constitutes sexual harassment and their rights. It is important to determine the level of awareness of sexual harassment among Malaysian employees in order to

give them the ability to effectively deal with the issue. The findings will help in identifying the right education tools.

Given, that the place of employment has become “home” for more than half of one’s lifetime in terms of hours spent in total, it is important to create a conducive working environment for female employees. Hence, any form of unwelcome behaviour that threatens the safety or well being of the individual should be addressed promptly to avoid dire consequences that will inevitably impact not only the occupational health and productivity of the individual but also the morale of the employees and the organisational performance (Lekha and others, 2003).

Despite the limitations of the study, the findings could serve as a starting point for future research of the hospitality industry in Malaysia. Future research could examine a larger, more diverse employee population, and this will help in the generalisation of the perceptual difference/s of sexual harassment in the hospitality industry.

#### NOTES

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2. Retrieved on May 8, 2010, from <http://www.wccpenang.org/sexual-harassment/the-cophorne-case/>
3. Coats, Agrusa and Tanner’s (2004) study included both female 53.6% and male 46.4%

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