

The Impact of Thai Culture on Perceptions and Experiences of Sexual Harassment in Policing: A Case Study of Female Police Officers in the Royal Thai Police

Sasiphattra Siriwato

Institute of Criminology and Criminal Administration,
Rangsit University, Pathumthani, 12000 Thailand
Email: sasiphattra.s@rsu.ac.th

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Abstract

Many women face sexual harassment in the workplace, especially in the male-dominated workplace where the majority of employees are men. Many studies show that there are cultural norms that reward traditional masculine values and therefore women who work in the male-dominated workplace had been harassed by a senior male officer. This article examines whether female police officers in Thailand face sexual harassment in the workplace or not by using the Royal Thai Police (RTP) as a case study. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather information on women's experiences. Approximately 37 participants were interviewed including both retired and current officers. This research found that most participants did not face any physical sexual harassment. They also reported that verbal and physical harassment in the workplace was not perceived as a major problem. However, lack of reporting of sexual harassment does not necessarily mean that sexual harassment does not occur in the RTP. There are two reasons that why these participants reported that sexual harassment does not occur. The first reason is that Thai women do not discuss or talk about sexual harassment with other people. The second reason is that there is no clear definition of the term sexual harassment.

Keywords: Sexual harassment, culture constraint, female police officers in Thailand, policing, Thai culture

1. Introduction

The number of women who enter the formal workforce has increased gradually. There was approximately 74 percent of women around the world in the workforce in the mid-2014 (The Globalist, 2016). Women's participation in the workforce is lower than 30 percent in Northern Africa and Western Asia; lower than 40 percent in Southeast Asia; and lower than 50 percent in the Caribbean and Central America (United Nations, 2010). While European countries, especially in Sweden, Portugal, Iceland, Austria, Switzerland, and Slovenia, have experienced different trend, there was around at least 85 percent of women participation in the workforce (The Globalist, 2016). The major reason that why there is a high percentage of women who enter the workforce is because of a better benefit offered such as extended paid maternity leave and protections for women to return to their jobs after having children when compared to other countries (The Globalist, 2016).

As there is a high number of women who enter the workforce, many anti-discrimination laws have been enacted to help prevent gender discrimination in the workplace at both an international and national levels. However, many women still confront gender discrimination in the workplace. International Labour Office (2007) states that sexual harassment is a form of gender discrimination based on sex and a manifestation of unequal power relations between men and women and further defines the term sexual harassment as a sex-based behavior that is unwelcome and offensive to its recipient. For sexual harassment to exist, these two conditions must be present. Sexual harassment may take two forms:

- 1) Quid Pro Quo, when a job benefit – such as a pay rise, promotion, or even continued employment – is made conditional on the victim acceding to demands to engage in some form of sexual behavior; or
- 2) The hostile working environment in which the conduct creates conditions that are intimidating or humiliating for the victim.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) (2013) further reported that approximately 50 percent of women in the European Union have experienced unwanted sexual advances, physical contact, and verbal suggestions or other forms of sexual harassment in their workplace while there are around 40 percent of women in Asia-Pacific who have experienced sexual harassment in the workplace. Additionally, Cairns and Wright (as cited in Cairns, 1997) stated that most researchers who worked in the area of sexual harassment often heard this statement or a similar statement to this in cases of sexual harassment: “we were in his room talking and he started to kiss me and more and I wanted him to stop but I just could not say no. I felt terrible, and I hated it”. Therefore, this demonstrated that they felt obliged because the person was their boss.

Therefore, sexual harassment is a severe problem for women, especially in male-dominated occupations where the majority of employees are men who have more power than women. Stockdale (2005) indicated that sexual harassment is used to maintain masculinity and status differences between men and women. In other words, the objective of sexual harassment is the satisfaction of power needs. In traditional male-dominated occupations, supervisors often used the fact that men outnumbered women, combined with the power of their higher position to make sexual advances (Kauppinen & Patoluoto, 2005).

Gruber and Morgan (2005) studied of male dominance in the workplace defining it as a multifaceted concept, consisting of two dimensions: numerical and normative male dominance. Numerical male dominance refers to an organization that is numerically dominated by men or has more men than women employees. In numerically male-dominated organizations, sexual harassment occurred much more often when compared to other types of organizations, and because of its frequency, it was a major problem in male-dominated occupations. Berdahl (2007) also undertook surveys on sexual harassment in five organizations where the number of male employees outnumbered female employees in the US. He found that women who worked in male-dominated occupations often faced higher rates of sexual harassment than women who worked in female-dominated jobs. Contrary to expectations, women who acted like men and worked in male-dominated occupations had even higher chances of facing sexual harassment. Women who worked in male-dominated occupations were also often more aware of sexual harassment rather than women who worked in feminized occupations.

Moreover, numerically male-dominated workplaces tend to have cultural norms that support sexual bravado, sexual posturing and the denigration of feminine behavior. These cultural norms increase the risk of the occurrence of sexual harassment in the workplace (Sbraga & O'Donohue, 2000). Wilson and Thomson (2001) also indicated that in workplaces where men outnumber women, women are likely to face sexual harassment because the presence of women in the workplace reinforced male hegemony and masculinity. They also further indicated that when women enter the workplace, men fear the loss of their power and as a result, sexual harassment increasingly occurs.

Normative male-dominated workplaces refer to the organizational or occupational culture that rewards traditional masculine values such as the devaluation of women, aggression and emotional self-regulation (Gruber & Morgan, 2005). In normative male-dominated workplaces, the incidence of sexual harassment depends on the sexist behavior of women in those workplaces. O'Hare and O'Donohue (1998) found that women who perceived sexist attitudes and believed that men and women had been treated unequally were more likely to have experienced sexual harassment. Conversely, women who believe that there is equal treatment for men and women less experienced sexual harassment (Timmerman & Bajema, 2000). Sbraga and O'Donohue's (2000) research shows that such culture is reinforced when men outnumber women.

The Royal Thai Police (RTP) is a male-dominated organization in Thailand where sexual harassment should exist. This paper then aims to discuss whether female police officers had faced any sexual harassment themselves and had they met anyone or heard about any sexual harassment in their workplace. This paper is divided into three parts. The first section is the literature review on sexual harassment in policing. The second part describes how this research is conducted and the final section discusses what the researcher has found from conducting this research.

2. Sexual Harassment in Policing

Brownmiller and Alexander (as cited in Giele & Stebbins, 2003) argue that the term sexual harassment was used for the first time in 1974 when clerical employees and other staff at Cornell University started to name this problem. Gregory (2003) claims that Catherine MacKinnon was the first to outline how sexual harassment in the workplace was a major issue for women. MacKinnon (1979) studied and analyzed the problem of sexual harassment in the late 1970s. She found that sexual harassment generally happened in two types of situations. The first occurred when employers offered improved conditions of employment or access to promotion in exchange for sexual favors. The second situation was where employers created a hostile environment in the workplace to interfere with an employee's work in order to force employees to have sexual relations with them.

According to the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (2011), sexual harassment means "unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical harassment of a sexual nature". It also indicated that sexual harassment happened when "submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment" (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 1990). This definition of the term sexual harassment will be used in this research.

There are two main types of sexual harassment. The first one is 'quid pro quo harassment' which is when a supervisor refuses employment or any action that related to work because of their subordinate rejects their sexual advances. The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity (1990) stated that quid pro quo harassment occurs when "submission or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for an employment decision affecting such individual". The second type is 'hostile environment harassment'. It takes place when verbal or physical harassment has an effect on work performance and may lead to an aggressive environment in the workplace (DeLaat, 2007). Normally, these two types of sexual harassment always happen together (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 1990). For example, a supervisor may ask for sexual advances in exchange for some rewards, that is, quid pro quo harassment. After that hostile environment, harassment will happen when their subordinate may refuse the sexual advance, and the supervisor may then create some threat that effects the employment status of their subordinate.

In policing, sexual harassment happens in part because it has been seen as a man's job and male officers are the majority. Male officers may act aggressively to fellow female police officers and may take part in activities that constitute sexual harassment (Gruber & Morgan, 2005; Gutek & Morash, 1982; Remington, 1981). Brown (1998) argued that female police officers are more likely to face sexual harassment from male police officers than civilian women. When male and female police officers have to work together, sexual harassment may occur. In policing, this tends to happen most in patrol departments where women and men work together closely most of the working day. In contrast, there is a higher number of women than men who work in administrative work. The sexual harassment rate is, therefore, low when compared to the patrol department. In the administrative department, there are more supervisors to check closely on sexual harassment while in patrol work, women and men work together and this is unsupervised work. Therefore, the patrol department has a higher rate of sexual harassment than administrative work (Brown, 1998).

Female police officers face the possibility of sexual harassment at every level (Brown, 1998; Chaiyavej & Morash, 2008; Martin, 1990; Martin & Jurik, 2007; Schuck & Rabe-Hemp, 2007; Wexler & Logan, 1983). Female police officers of every age may be confronted with sexist languages such as dirty jokes, rude language, and comments on their appearance. Some male officers may gamble with their male co-workers as to who will be the first person to sleep with a new policewoman on the job (Brown, 1998; Chaiyavej & Morash, 2008; Gutek & Morash, 1982; Martin & Jurik, 2007). A policewoman also claimed that she heard six officers suggest that "if you sleep with someone, you are a slut; if you are not, you are a dyke" (Wexler & Logan, 1983, p. 49). This form of sexual harassment creates major problems for female police officers. Policewomen may then separate themselves from male co-workers in order to avoid such occurrences. Gutek and Morash (1982) further claimed that in policing, female police officers are often confronted with sexual harassment. Therefore, most female officers may then decide to resign from

policing. Sexual harassment could be one of the reasons why female police officers decide to resign in policing and that is why there are few female officers left to work in policing.

Non-verbal forms of sexual harassment, such as unwanted touching, exist but are in the minority. If such instances occur, they are more likely to be a result of male supervisors using their position and power to force female police officers to agree to sexual activities. They may be either direct or indirect supervisors over these female officers (Chaiyavej & Morash, 2009; Gutek & Morash, 1982; Wexler & Logan, 1983).

However, some women are happy to use their femininity with their supervisor to gain promotion. These female police officers may fit into the deprofessionalization¹ category. They may not perform police work well and may complain when have to do some tasks that they do not want to do such as patrol tasks. Therefore, they tend to use their femininity with their supervisor to gain promotion (Martin, 1990).

3. Methodology

Qualitative methods were used to conduct this research. Semi-structured interviews were used to get more detailed information in order to identify whether female police officers in Thailand face sexual harassment in the RTP or not. Participants were interviewed for an hour with open-ended questions to allow participants to explain their answer and share their life experiences. The interview question guide was used as an outline for interviewing in order to confirm that the researcher covered the similar details of sexual harassment for each participant.

As the RTP is a large organization in Thailand, this research will only focus on four bureaus; the General Police Hospital (GPH), the Education Bureau (EDB), the Royal Police Cadet Academy (RPCA) and the Provincial Police Region Division 1 – 9 (PPR). Three of the four bureaus are the categories in the Technical Support Bureaus. Only the Provincial Police Region Division 1 – 9 is categorized as a Field Operation Unit. The major reason to choose these four bureaus is to show that whether female police officers faced sexual harassment in both Technical Support and Field Operation units in the RTP or only female police officers often faced sexual harassment in the workplace. This section is divided into two parts which are the selected bureaus and participants.

3.1 The Selected Bureaus

As mentioned above, this research focuses on four bureaus: the Police General Hospital, the Education Bureau, The Royal Police Cadet Academy and the Provincial Police Region Division 1-9. The main reason that these four bureaus are selected is that they perform different tasks in the RTP. The major reason that these three bureaus were selected rather than other bureaus in the Technical Support Unit is due to the fact that these three bureaus have the highest number of female police officers who work at the senior levels. From the four chosen bureaus, only the Provincial Police Region Division 1-9 is categorized in the Field Operation Unit. The reason that the Provincial Police Region Division 1-9 was selected is because this is the only bureau where female police officers have to perform traditional police tasks. The following paragraph outlines the specific reasons why these four bureaus have been selected.

The first bureau is the Police General Hospital (PGH). In this bureau, the number of female police officers who work at the senior levels is higher than other bureaus. The main reason for focusing on this bureau is because police officers who work at this hospital are also doctors and nurses. These officers are only assigned to hospital work and never to any 'police' duties in the form of patrolling or even police paperwork tasks. However, they are officially police officers according to the RTP definitions. All employees who work at this hospital have the same rank as police officers. In the PGH, many female police officers work there, especially as nurses. Employees who work at the police or military hospital in other countries do not consider themselves as police or military officers. The PGH is then a unique bureau and a fascinating matter to be studied.

¹ Deprofessionalization or policewomen means that the female police officer "accept the men's invitation to function as a nominal equal while actually functioning as a junior partner or assistant and receiving treatment and exemption from work tasks appropriate for a lady" (Jones, 1986, p. 171).

The second bureau is the Education Bureau (EDB). The main duty of this bureau is administration. Female police officers who work at the EDB are assigned to do only administrative tasks that have been seen as 'women's work'. Women are traditionally seen as more suitable to do this work than men in Thailand. Most police officers who work at the EDB, then, are women. The central reason that this bureau has been selected is because this bureau has been seen as a 'woman's bureau'.

The Royal Police Cadet Academy (RPCA) is the third bureau. The core reason that this has been selected for this research as police officers have to be assigned to police work and perform well in order to be able to work at the RPCA. Therefore, officers who work at this academy have to be highly experienced in frontline policing or have worked in the Local Police Bureau. If the police officers do not have significant experience in frontline policing, they have to be teaching in the area in which they are the specialists. For example, most female police officers who work at the RPCA often graduated in Law and had some experience as lawyers before joining the police. Thus, police officers either work at the field operation unit or become specialists in Law.

The last bureau is the Provincial Police Region (PPR). The central reason for choosing this bureau is because their main duty is crime prevention. This means female police officers who work in these bureaus have to perform all police work that is usually referred to as a 'man's job'. Therefore, female police officers who work in these bureaus mostly work with male police officers and compete with male officers to gain promotion. At the same time, police officers at this bureau are also assigned to administration work. Female police officers who work at this bureau are assigned to perform police tasks such as investigation and being inspectors when they have lower ranking and positions. In contrast, when female police officers are promoted to a higher ranking and positions such as at Police Lieutenant Colonel and above, they are often assigned to perform administrative jobs rather than police work.

3.2 Participants

Approximately 37 participants who sworn and non-sworn women police officers were selected. All intended participants had to work in either the PPR, the EDB, the PGH, or the RPCA. In addition to meeting the department criterion, they also have to meet one of the following criteria:

- 1) Ex-senior female police officers who have retired within the last five years;
- 2) Current senior police²;
- 3) Women who have not been able to achieve promotion to the senior level. These women will be identified by having the rank of police lieutenant colonel. They also have to have been working as a Deputy Superintendent for at least six years but not received promotion; and
- 4) Significant public authority figures who work with the RTP. These women are not employed by the Thai government and are external civilian advisors.

These three significant public authority figures were Supensri Puengkongsung who is head of the supportive gender equality department of Women and Men Progressive Movement Foundation; Thanawadee Tajejan who is the President of Friends of Women Organization in Thailand; and a female senior officer who works in the Office of Women's Affairs and Family Development (OWF). Two of these three women gave their explicit permission to be named and to have their work details recorded in this research.

Thirty-four participants were selected from the four bureaus while the other three participants are significant public authority figures whom most participants highly recommended to the researcher. These 34 samples combined 12 participants who are ex-senior women police officers who have retired within the last five years from the GPH and the EDB, 13 participants who are current senior police officers from these four departments; three participants from each department, except the GPH that has four participants as there are the highest number of female officers who currently work at senior levels. For the third criteria: women officers who have not been able to achieve promotion to the senior level, there are only nine participants and did not have participants from the EDB.

² Senior level in this research refers to policewomen who work at police colonel position or higher. The reason for this is that policewomen who are in this category are noted in Thai newspapers when they are promoted from this level onwards.

To protect the anonymity of participants, only those who expressly allowed the researcher to disclose their name are named which as two of significant public authority figures. The remaining participants are identified by a number, such as P1 and P2.

4. Research Findings

Participants were asked whether they had faced any sexual harassment themselves and had they met anyone or heard about any sexual harassment in their workplace. However, none of the female police officers in these four bureaus said they felt uncomfortable working with men, and verbal and physical harassment in the workplace was not perceived as a major problem.

The three bureaus which are the PGH, EDB, and PPR reported in the same direction that there were few incidents involving sexual harassment in the RTP (see Figure 1).

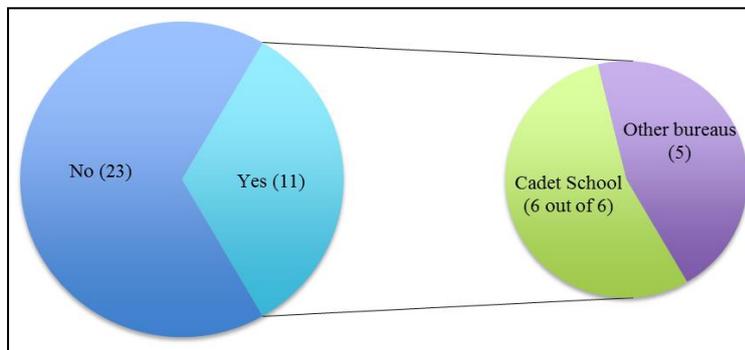


Figure 1 Have female police officers faced any sexual harassment in the RTP?

Source: This figure was designed by the author

In the EDB, sexual harassment appears to have occurred less when compared to other bureaus as no female police officers interviewed reported having heard of experiences of any type of sexual harassment in the workplace. For the PGH and the PPR, 20 out of 24 of the participants reported that they had never heard of or experienced sexual harassment. For instance, participant P2 reported that her supervisors evaluate her and police officers who worked under him each year as to whether both male and female police officers behave correctly when they perform their duty according to section 83(8) of the Civil Service Act of 2009 in order to consider salary increases and promotion. This includes sexual misconduct and harassment. Section 83(8) in the Civil Service Act states that:

A civil servant must not commit any of the following prohibitions: (1) to not make a false report to the supervising official; ... (8) to not commit acts which amount to a sexual violation or harassment as prescribed by Civil Service Commission (CSC) Regulation.

("Pra Rat Cha Banyat Ra Beab Kha Rat Cha Karn Pon La Roen B.E. 2552 (Civil Service Act of 2009)", 2009).

Section 83 (8) is further defined by the Civil Service Commission (CSC) Regulation of Sexual Harassment of 2010, section two:

Any civil servant who commits any of the following actions to other civil servants or colleagues against his or her will or causes nuisance, whether such action is committed inside or outside of official workplace, such civil servant is deemed to commit a sexual harassment according to the section 83(8) of the Civil Service Act of 2009.

- 1) Any action involving physical contact in a sexual manner such as kissing, hugging or touching any part of body;
- 2) Speaking in a sexual manner such as criticizing others' bodies, teasing or talking impolitely;
- 3) Any action of a sexual manner such as looking at other people's bodies, and making any signs or symbols of a sexual nature;

- 4) Communicating in any way that implies a sexual manner such as displaying of pornographic material, sending letters, sending messages or any other form of communication containing sexual references or material;
- 5) Any behavior of a sexual nature against others' will or causes nuisance. ("Kot Kor Por Wa Duai Karn Kra Tum Karn Un Pen Karn Lung La Meard Reu Kuk Kam Tang Pet B.E. 2553 (The Civil Service Commission Regulation of Sexual Harassment of 2010)", 2010).

The categories covered in this Regulation should prevent sexual harassment in the workplace. At the same time, section 85(7) in the Civil Service Act of 2009 which supports section 83(8) is the regulation which mandates the punishments for such behaviors. Section 85(7) states that:

Disciplinary breaches of the following description are gross breaches of discipline: (1) wrongfully performing or refraining to perform official duties in order to cause severe detriment to any person or dishonestly performing or refraining to perform official duties; ... (7) refraining from or committing any act not in compliance with section 82 or in violation of a prohibition under section 83 causing severe detriment to the government service;

("Pra Rat Cha Banyat Ra Beab Kha Rat Cha Karn Pon La Roen B.E. 2552
(Civil Service Act of 2009)", 2009)

Although, all supervisors in the RTP have to evaluate the police officers who work under them to ensure discipline is maintained, no participants from other bureaus mentioned about this evaluation. This may be for the reason that the supervisors at the other bureaus did not pay as much attention to these aspects in the annual assessments. Therefore, sexual harassment was not seen to be a problem in the PGH. Participant P24 also stated that when she has formal meetings with her subordinate police officers, she often discusses appropriate behavior in the workplace, including sexual harassment in the meetings with all police officers. Thus, most officers were aware of harassment issues, and no female officers made any reference to such harassment.

It has to be noted here that there are two main issues related to Thai culture that may have affected these answers about sexual harassment. The first issue is that sexual harassment issues are rarely discussed or talked about with other people in Thai culture. Thai women feel shy about disclosing their personal stories and therefore they tend to keep it secret. However, Thanawadee mentioned that Thai women would call women's organizations to tell about sexual harassment when they have resigned from their workplace because they feel too shy to let other people know that they have been harassed.

Zimbroff (2007) found that Asian people are more likely to endure sexual harassment than Western people and Asian people do not tend to report sexual harassment. Therefore, when participants reported that they had not heard about or experienced any sexual harassment themselves, this may not have been the truth as they may have wanted to keep their story secret. This point may assume that there is a level of under-reporting of sexual harassment rather than a non-existence of sexual harassment. One senior representative who works in the OWF also indicated that even though several incidents of sexual harassment in the workplace are known to exist, "few people report about sexual harassment". Therefore, sexual harassment in the workplace has not been seen as a serious issue in Thailand as it is very hard to learn about the cases of sexual harassment in the workplace. Most Thai people then assume that there is no sexual harassment.

The second issue is that Thai people do not know much about the definition of the term sexual harassment and behaviors that have been identified as sexual harassment. In Thailand, the law preventing sexual harassment in the workplace was introduced in 1998 for the first time. However, they did not define the term sexual harassment. According to section 16 of the Labour Protection Act of 1998 ("Pra rat Cha Banyat Kum Krong Rang Ngan B.E. 2541 (Labour Protection Act of 1998)", 1998), it only stated that "An employer or a person who is a chief, supervisor or inspector shall be prohibited from performing an act of sexual harassment against an employee who is a woman or a child." Although the latest Labour Protection Act was announced in 2008, the Act only updates to protect male employees from sexual harassment ("Pra rat Cha Banyat Kum Krong Rang Ngan B.E. 2551 (Labour Protection Act of 2008)", 2008). The term sexual harassment still has not been defined.

Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, for public agencies, the OCSC has announced in section 83(8) of the Civil Service Act of 2009 and section 2 of the CSC Regulation of Sexual Harassment of 2010 what actions are considered as sexual harassment ("Kot Kor Por Wa Duai Karn Kra Tum Karn Un Pen Karn Lung La Meard Reu Kuk Kam Tang Pet B.E. 2553 (The Civil Service Commission Regulation of Sexual Harassment of 2010)", 2010; "Pra Rat Cha Banyat Ra Beab Kha Rat Cha Karn Pon La Roen B.E. 2552 (Civil Service Act of 2009)", 2009). This means if any officers do any action that listed in this Regulation, they will be punished because of sexual harassment. However, this Regulation has not been widely promoted. Therefore, participants may not be sure whether actions that they have faced would be called sexual harassment. For example, one senior representative who works in the OWF reported that Thai women might not know whether they had been harassed or not as sometimes their colleagues or supervisors just 'tease' or 'joke' with them.

However, five participants worked in these two bureaus who stated that they had heard about sexual harassment in their workplace. Three participants, participants P18, 23 and 25, each stated that they heard their supervisors make jokes of a sexual nature. The other two participants had heard about physical harassment, like unwanted touching. Participants P10 and 26, who worked at the PGH, reported that they heard that some female officers had agreed to have sex with their supervisor to gain promotion.

At the RPCA, all participants had heard about physical harassment that happened in this bureau in 2007. All six participants reported the same story that one female officer had been harassed by her supervisor in the past. This officer went to report her story to a higher supervisor, and she requested to move to another bureau. However, no participants had heard of any recent cases of sexual harassment.

5. Discussion

The cultural subordination of women is a major problem in the RTP, and sexual harassment is one of them. Although, most participants (68 percent) reported that they did not face any physical sexual harassment such as touching, lack of reporting of sexual harassment does not necessarily mean that sexual harassment does not occur in the RTP. The most important point here is that there is no bureau or department that has responsibility for the management of sexual harassment in the workplace in the RTP or a place that female police officers can go to talk and discuss sexual harassment issues. Female police officers may not know what action is called sexual harassment and do not know whom they can talk to about it. Moreover, there are no strict regulations as to what actions are considered as sexual harassment. Therefore, female officers lack knowledge about sexual harassment.

There are two reasons related to cultural constraints that need to be explained in order to understand why most participants reported that there is no sexual harassment in the RTP: the notion that participants may not actually know whether they have been harassed or not, and fear to talk or discuss about sexual harassment. Firstly, Thai women often did not know whether they had been harassed or not. As previously mentioned, in Thailand women still lack knowledge and awareness of sexual harassment. For Thai women, sexual harassment means a situation whereby a man may force a woman to have sexual intercourse or may touch her body against her will. In the RTP, there is no department or division to take responsibility for sexual harassment. Therefore, it is quite difficult for female police officers to decide what action is defined as sexual harassment. Female police officers then believe that most verbal and physical actions are not sexual harassment because male officers always use the word "teasing" to explain their action. The term 'teasing' is defined as "a behavior designed to provoke a target through the use of playful commentary on something relevant to the target. This provocation can be verbal (a cutting remark) or physical (an embarrassing gesture)" (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007, p. 969).

Participants use the word "teasing" to explain situations that internationally may be defined as sexual harassment. Teasing in this context means trying to make fun or jokes with their colleagues, but this can include using 'bad words' and touching. For example, Participant P11 reported that there were some teasing and dirty talk in her department. Teasing for her can mean some touches, but overall it seems like male colleagues want to 'play' with her. Therefore, she did not feel that she has been harassed through this teasing. However, sometimes teasing can constitute sexual harassment. When male officers touch female officers' arms or hands when female officers do not want it, this is in reality called sexual harassment even though they may think that this action is teasing between male and female police officers.

This situation is also a cultural constraint which prevents identification of which behavior and actions are in fact sexual harassment. Most of the time, Thai women try to believe that these actions are teasing as they do not want to report them and feel shame later when their male colleagues say that he just wanted to tease or play with them. Finally, women have been seen as if they are the wrong side, thinking too much and making other people in the workplace feel uncomfortable about talking with them.

Teasing is an action that is considered as sexual harassment because it can “contain elements of humor and insult and can function as either play or punishment or both” (Alberts, 1992, p. 186). However, the content of teasing in oral communication is often insulting and can have sexual innuendos. Also, the mix of ‘fun’ and insult elements in teasing occur to varying degrees. Therefore, teasing is perceived as sexual harassment. Tangri, Burt and Johnson (1982) also did a survey of federal employees in the US. The total participants were 20,083: 10,644 were women, and 9,439 were men. Tangri et al. found that less than half of men considered that sexual teasing and jokes from co-workers was sexual harassment, but that such actions from supervisors were not sexual harassment. Conversely, more women than men believed that sexual teasing and jokes from both supervisors and co-workers was sexual harassment.

Secondly, Thai women may fear to talk about or discuss sexual harassment. In the RTP, there is the regulation which is the CSC Regulation of Sexual Harassment of 2010 to protect police officers from sexual harassment in the workplace even though the term sexual harassment still has not been defined. As mentioned earlier that in the CSC Regulation of Sexual Harassment of 2010 does describe what actions are considered as sexual harassment, so this regulation should be able to guarantee the safety of female police officers in the workplace from harassers. Similarly, participants who worked in the PGH also reported that all supervisors have to evaluate the police officers who work under them as to whether they behave appropriately towards other police officers or not. This annual evaluation should be another way to protect female police officers in the RTP from sexual harassment.

However, there is a cultural constraint that prevents female police officers from reporting when sexual harassment has happened. This cultural constraint restricts talk about sex in Thai society as it is taboo. Female police officers, therefore, fear to report that they have been harassed. Supensri also explained that most Thai women do not feel confident to talk about or discuss that they have been harassed in the workplace because of Thai culture. Most of them will keep quiet, and there are still some people who do not know that they have rights in the workplace. Zimbhoff (2007) also found that Asian people endure sexual harassment situations more than non-Asian people. Thai people may be a good example that confirms the research findings of Zimbhoff as Thai people may endure sexual harassment because they do not want to talk about it. Buddhism also teaches that to be a good woman, they should not talk about sex, unless they are married. This may be one reason why women remain quiet when they have been harassed. However, it cannot be denied that Buddhism also teaches in the five precepts³ that Buddhists should abstain from taking the life of living. This means that men should not do any violent action to or take the life of any living beings. Therefore, men should not do any violent action to women including sexual harassment.

To be a good woman in Thailand, one should not talk about sex. Thanawadee also mentioned that after Thai women resigned from their workplace, subsequently the latter called women’s organizations to tell their stories about sexual harassment and to ask for some help in dealing with this issue. This reinforces the claim that Thai women may fear to discuss sexual harassment in the workplace when they are still working there because they may feel ashamed to let other people know that they have been harassed. These women will wait until they have resigned and do not have any more contact with any of the people in that workplace to report about sexual harassment or they may decide to resign to escape sexual harassment in this workplace. This is the cultural norm in relation to reporting sexual harassment in the workplace in Thailand.

Unfortunately, when women are generally reluctant to report sexual harassment incidents, both women and organizations face many serious consequences. For example, the consequences to women who fear to report sexual harassment are health problems, performance problems, relationship problems and career problems while the consequences to organizations where there are underreporting sexual harassment

³ The five precepts is the major part of the Buddhist practices to become more self-disciplined. Observing the precepts is a way to gain mastery of the mind. At the same time, the idea of such precepts is to avoid harmful ways of behaving and speaking.

incidents are high turn-over employees, lost organizational reputation and costly lawsuits (Peirce, Rosen, & Hiller, 1997). Despite these negative outcomes, there is effectively a culture of silence. Cairns (1997) argued that the causes of women's silence are that:

If, all our attempts to educate women about harassment and to establish accessible, non-punitive procedures to deal with it when it occurs, women continue to have trouble applying the term harassment to their own experiences, and if, even when they do label their experience correctly, they do not use the means available to them to combat harassment, then we must consider the probability that we still have not fully understood the nature of harassment and of women's responses to it.

This means when women do not feel certain that they have been harassed or that they were not to blame for the harassment, then they still will not report their problems like sexual harassment, even when system are available for them to do so.

Similarly, Peirce, Rosen and Hiller (1997) surveyed women who worked in a variety of managerial position in the US and found that there are two reasons why women decided not reporting sexual harassment incidents. The first reason is that women fear long-term damage to their career in their current organization. Most women who participated in this study agreed that reporting sexual harassment incidents are very harmful to their career. The second reason is that there are problems with company reporting policies and procedures on sexual harassment incidents. Over 40 percent of participants in this study reported that they did not know about complaint policies and procedures on sexual harassment incidents and they also questioned the fairness of sexual harassment investigation and the length of time it would take.

Thus, even if this cultural constraint on talking about sexual harassment were lifted, there is still likely to be a problem on lack of reporting on sexual harassment in the workplace in Thailand, as in other countries. In the RTP, female police officers still did not clearly understand that what actions should be called as sexual harassment. This may be one point that makes female police officers fear to report sexual harassment incidents. At the same time, there is no unit or department that has responsibility for preventing sexual harassment in the workplace. When a female police officer was harassed by their male supervisor, they did not know whom to talk or discuss about with regards to this situation. Therefore, this lack of system or unit with responsibility adds to the cultural constraint that makes female police officers decide not to report sexual harassment occurrences.

Moreover, supervisors can often be the person who uses their power to harass female officers who work under them. Thanawadee explained that "supervisors are a major problem in Thailand, as they tend to use their power to force or harass women in the workplace". A woman does not know how to manage this sexual harassment situation because if they reported it to senior supervisors, male supervisors would explain that they did not do anything and there is no evidence to confirm that these women have been harassed. Therefore, women will decide to resign from that workplace because of shame from this situation. The reporting of the current research is supported by research that found that male supervisors often use their positions and power to force female police officers to agree to sexual activities with them (Chaiyavej & Morash, 2009; Gutek & Morash, 1982; Wexler & Logan, 1983).

In addition, it is very hard in Thailand to sue some people for sexual harassment because male colleagues or supervisors will explain that they just wanted to play or joke with this woman, and finally, the case will end with a verdict that those involved simply misunderstood the term sexual harassment. This result has the effect of making women feel reluctant about reporting sexual harassment in the workplace. For example, five participants did report that they had faced some verbal harassment from their male colleagues or male supervisors. However, they did not report this to senior supervisors because they knew that male officers would likely to belittle the incident. This situation means female police officers are seen as in the wrong while male officers are seen as having done nothing wrong in people's eyes.

6. Conclusion

Overall, many anti-discrimination laws have been passed to prevent gender discrimination in the workplace at both international and national levels. However, many women still face gender discrimination in the workplace such as sexual harassment. In the case of the RTP, most participants who worked in the PGH, EDB and the PPR reported that they had never heard of or experienced sexual harassment while all participants who worked in the RPCA reported that they had heard about physical harassment that happened in this bureau. The major reason that why most participants reported that no sexual harassment had happened is because there is an evaluation to check whether male and female police officers behave correctly according to the Civil Service Act of 2009.

However, it cannot deny the fact that Thai culture may have an influence on the answers of participants. Two reasons have to mention here. The first one is that Thai women do not discuss or talk about sexual harassment with other people. Therefore, they tend to keep it secret rather than disclosing their personal stories. The second point is that there is no clear definition of the term sexual harassment. Participants may then not be sure whether actions that they faced would be called sexual harassment. With these two reasons, it cannot, therefore, say clearly that there is no sexual harassment happening in the RTP.

Finally, there are two major recommendations to prevent sexual harassment in the RTP. The first recommendation is that ensure that supervisors complete annual evaluations to check whether male police officers behave appropriately towards female police officers to prevent sexual harassment. When interviewing participants who have worked in the PGH, they reported that there is no sexual harassment in the PGH because there is an evaluation every year by supervisors to ensure that male police officers are behaving appropriately towards female police officers. In contrast, no participants from other bureaus mentioned about this evaluation. This should be one of the strategies that the PGH shall use to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace. If other bureaus strongly ensure that every supervisor has to complete annual evaluations to check whether male police officers are behaving appropriately towards female police officers every year, this strategy should help to prevent sexual harassment in the RTP. The second recommendation is that establish a unit or department to deal with sexual harassment. The role of the unit would be to ensure that police officers are aware of sexual harassment issues, knowing what action should be called sexual harassment and that take it very seriously. Over time, a cultural shift would occur in the RTP making sexual harassment unacceptable. Female police officers would, therefore, feel confident to work in the RTP as they would be less likely to encounter or never encounter sexual harassment in their workplace in the future.

7. References

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