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## ***WHO REPORTS SEXUAL HARASSMENT?***

HOW GENDER AND ORGANIZATIONAL POSITION SHAPE WILLINGNESS  
TO REPORT SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN THE WORKPLACE

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### **Abstract:**

*The aim of this paper is to investigate willingness to report sexual harassment in the workplace through the effects of gender and organisational power of employed victims. The data used to test the hypotheses was acquired from the Netherlands Institute for Human Rights, collected by the Beleidsonderzoekers in 2021. The results indicate a significant effect of gender on willingness to report, which showed that men are less likely to report being sexually harassed. A relation of position within an organisation and willingness to report was not found, however. An interaction effect of position and gender was not found either. This suggests that the effect of organisational power on willingness to report sexual harassment does not differ between men and women. Policy should focus on promoting reporting sexual harassment among men.*

Key words: Sexual harassment; sexual harassment in the workplace; gender; organisational power; reporting; willingness to report.

## 1. Introduction

At the start of 2022, BOOS (a Youtube programme which' name is the Dutch word for 'angry') came out with a documentary about incidents of sexual harassment and intimidation at the popular talent shows The Voice of Holland and The Voice of Holland Kids (BOOS: THIS IS THE VOICE, 2022). Allegations ranged from sexist or sexually tinted comments to rape. The documentary sparked a lot of outrage among the Dutch population and even got some international attention. The documentary, which was aired on Youtube, had gotten a few million views within mere hours. Not only did it get people to talk about sexual harassment, it also inspired others to come forward about their own experiences with sexual intimidation. After the publication of the much-anticipated documentary, many more people in the Netherlands stepped forward and had the courage to report on their own stories of sexual harassment, both in the workplace and other contexts (NOS, 2022). This movement is similar to the MeToo-movement, which gained a lot of traction in the fall of 2017 when people in the United States started publicly speaking out about their own experience with sexual assault and intimidation (Keegan, 2017). This movement began to spread virally through Hollywood when allegations of sexual harassment were made against film producer Harvey Weinstein and actor Kevin Spacey (NOS, 2017a; NOS, 2017b). The attention these events got, also drew attention to the fact that this is not exclusive to popular media. Sexual harassment in the workplace instead is a widespread issue throughout every layer of society.

Sexual harassment is an act of violence that could take many different forms. We speak of sexual harassment or intimidation when a person is (repeatedly) confronted with unwanted sexual behaviour (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). It can be verbally, through sexual comments or receiving sexually tinted messages that make a person feel uncomfortable, or non-verbally. Non-verbal sexual harassment could include receiving certain looks that imply sexual contact, or getting physically touched inappropriately. For behaviour to be classified as sexual harassment, the target must experience it as such (Thacker & Ferris, 1991). In the Netherlands, any form of sexual intimidation is forbidden by law.

Sexual intimidation as a workplace phenomenon seems to be a widespread issue. A recent survey showed that 16 percent of people in the Netherlands have had to deal with it in the past 10 years (Netherlands Institute for Human Rights & Beleidsonderzoekers, 2021). Sexual intimidation at the workplace has consequences for both the victim - usually an employee - as for the organization they work for, since it may lead to negative results at the workplace. This is because sexual harassment and intimidation in the workplace could lead to a high level of stress, which in

turn may increase absenteeism and turnover and may decrease job satisfaction. Moreover, it may decrease both individual and overall productivity (Morash & Haarr, 1995; Hersch, 2015; McDonald et al., 2015). It is therefore in the best interest of not only employees, but organisations as well to decrease the prevalence of sexual harassment as much as possible.

Not only the nature of the allegations in the BOOS documentary provoked attention. The host of the show, journalist Tim Hofman, also interviewed John de Mol. De Mol is one of the biggest Dutch television producers and invented the format of *The Voice of Holland*. He was responsible for the show until 2019. Although many viewers of the documentary respected the fact that he wanted to be interviewed by Hofman, a lot of people spoke out on social media against him. A group of his female employees even placed an ad in a Dutch newspaper to draw attention to his words and their impact (de Lange, 2022). For many, the way he addressed the issues at the show, was a clear illustration of the cultural issues that are at base of the issue of sexual intimidation. In his message, De Mol addressed the victims and made it apparent that for him, the main solution to solving sexual harassment in the workplace was for victims to come forward instead of addressing the perpetrators and their behaviour. Although the focus should be on adjusting the perpetrators' behaviour instead, it is true that one way of tackling a societal issue is to create awareness on it. After the BOOS-documentary, many more instances of sexual harassment in work environments made Dutch headlines. These news articles all contribute to an increased awareness of what sexual harassment means, the impact it has and its prevalence in society.

Organisations have often taken measures to help make it easier for people who experience sexual harassment in the workplace to report this type of harassment. More often than not, however, people choose not to report their experience with sexual harassment in the workplace (McDonald et al., 2015). It can be very hard to do so and often, people feel like the risk of consequences that may come after reporting is higher and worse than staying silent. Even when victims do choose to step forward, they often choose not to officially report within their place of work (Fitzgerald & Swan, 1995). And when they do, they are most likely to opt for the least confrontational response.

It is evident that sexual intimidation in the workplace is a persistent societal issue, that has gained more and more attention over the past few years. However the role of gender in relation to the occurrence of sexual harassment in itself has been studied and established, not much research has

been conducted on willingness to report. Neither related to gender, nor at all. In October 2021, the Netherlands Institute for Human Rights published a study conducted among approximately 2.000 employees and employers, with the focus on not only the occurrence of sexual intimidation in the workplace, but on reporting harassment and possible obstacles thereto as well. The report does not, however, go into depth on the characteristics of victims nor on their relation to their organisation. The aim of this current paper is to close this gap in knowledge. Sexual harassment, both in and outside of the workplace, is still very much underreported. Without putting the responsibility on the victim, it is important that report rates go up. By doing so, awareness on the issue can grow which in turn is necessary in decreasing the problem altogether.

To study the relation between gender, power structures and willingness to report, the following question will be answered: To what extent do gender; organisational position; and an interaction of gender and organisational power affect the willingness to report for a victim of sexual harassment in the workplace?

The hypotheses that will be formed, will be assessed based on data derived from the Beleidsonderzoekers for the Netherlands Institute for Human Rights (2021). This paper proceeds as follows. In the next chapter, existing studies will be reviewed on the mechanisms explaining the possible effects of gender and power on willingness to report sexual harassment to form hypotheses. Following, the data used and methods of analysis will be presented. Thereupon, the results from these analyses will be presented, followed by a discussion on these findings and implications with suggestions for future studies. Lastly, the paper will present a policy solution to sexual harassment in the workplace. To assess the best possible policy, the following question will be answered: What policy could be implemented to induce a cultural change in order to increase reporting of sexual harassment in the workplace and who does this policy need to be focus on?

## **2. Theoretical framework**

### ***2.1 Gender***

Society is essentially divided into two large groups; male and female (Morash and Haarr, 1195; Ridgeway, 1997). Many aspects of our life or how we view certain aspects of our life are dictated by this division and the characteristics we have assigned to the groups. Examples are how

we often ask men to carry heavy things or how when the mother takes care of her children it is considered normal and ordinary, while a single dad is more likely to get praised for taking care of his children.

Sexual harassment (in the workplace) can be seen as a gendered issue and is often a topic in the debate on and fight for gender equality and feminism. However people of any gender can experience sexual harassment, according to a study commissioned by the Netherlands Institute of Human Rights (2021), women are twice as often a victim as men. Simultaneously, most harassers are male. 70 percent of the victims said that the perpetrators were exclusively male, opposed to 14 percent stating that the perpetrators were mostly or exclusively female. This statistic is particularly true for women who are harassed. These results are not exclusive to this study. Many other (international) survey studies have found similar results (Hersch, 2015). Additionally, it was found that most of sexual harassment takes place in male-dominated work fields (Lafontaine & Tredeau, 1986; Morash & Haarr, 1995; Hersch, 2015). This is especially true for women, since for men the risk of sexual harassment does not vary between female-dominated and male-dominated industries (Hersch, 2015). Previous studies on the willingness victims had to report to the police, showed conflicting results. On one hand, people who had previously been victimised could be made more vulnerable but on the other hand may actually have had more experience with reporting crimes or unjust treatment (Torrente et al., 2016). Another study found that multiple victimisation does not necessarily lead to more crime reporting, as it may also lead to a lower willingness to report (Carcach, 1997). These contradictory results make it hard to determine whether or not women are less or more likely to report sexual harassment based on the fact they are far more likely to experience it.

According to social sciences, social and behavioural differences between men and women are hardly biological (Eagly et al., 2000; Ridgeway, 2011; Kray et al., 2017). It is, however, more likely that these differences are learned. The imbalance in power between men and women, for instance, is reinforced by social norms concerning what is appropriate behaviour. These norms are based in stereotypes, which communicate to us what can be expected from a person in a certain group. These stereotypes can in turn shape and reinforce our behaviour. One theory that is in line with this notion, is the social role theory. This theory states that differences in behaviour between genders come from the social roles inhabited by men and women (Eagly & Steffen, 1984; Eagly et al., 2000).

Historically, these gender roles first started out by the fact that men and women got assigned labour tasks that fit more with their physique. Men were responsible for tasks that required strength, while women were expected to be more concerned with tasks related to their home and children. Consequently, these roles formed assumptions about how men and women were supposed to behave and relate themselves to others. These gender stereotypes, like all stereotypes, describe what behaviours can be expected from a person of a given category. These often entail that men are expected to possess more agentic qualities, while women are expected to possess more communal and relational qualities (Eagly et al., 2000; Kray et al., 2017). Increases in agency have previously been linked to more increases in perceptions of control (Brescoll, 2011). Men are more likely to assert their power positions than women, and engage in dominant behaviour more often than women do (Archer, 2009; Brescoll, 2011; McDowell, 1990; Uhl-Bien, 2011). Traditionally, they are more sensitive to hierarchy and may behave in ways that will establish their own position in hierarchies more often. Women on the other hand are often more concerned with the relationship they have with others (Brescoll, 2011). They are more interested in establishing and maintaining a positive relationship and will behave accordingly. According to previous literature reviews, women are often attributed and have a preference for egalitarian and cooperative relationships rather than hierarchical ones, while men generally prefer hierarchy and to be in control (Fondas, 1997; Uhl-Bien, 2011). Even when women are at the top of an organisation, their style of leading that organisation is different from how men portray their leadership. Even when women are in leadership positions, they tend to be more concerned with attentiveness to others. When asked why they did not report their harasser, many women answered that they were reluctant to cause their harasser any harm (Jensen & Gutek, 1982; Fitzgerald & Swan, 1995). This harm may be included in a rational cost-benefit analysis victims make about whether or not they should report any experience with sexual harassment, either consciously or unconsciously.

Due to their fear of retaliation and ruining their relation with their colleagues or supervisors, women can be expected to come forward about their experience with sexual harassment in the workplace less often than men.

*H1: Women are less likely than men to report sexual harassment in the workplace.*

## ***2.2 Power structures and fear***

A factor that was often discussed in the BOOS documentary related to sexual harassment, was a power structure (BOOS, 2022). The alleged perpetrators were, in this case, people who stood higher on the social ladder than the victims. In the specific case of *The Voice of Holland*, the alleged perpetrators had the power to bring the victims further career-wise. Not only during the talent show, but outside of it as well. These people had the power to give the women they assaulted the career in music they had dreamed of, or at least provide them with a stepping stone to get there. Simultaneously, they had the power to break their career before it had even started. The same goes for the (convicted) offenders in Hollywood: they were big names in the industry and had gained a lot of respect from people in that same industry. It is this hierarchy of power that often makes it hard for victims to step forward after they have been sexually intimidated: they have a fear of their dreams or lives as they are to be broken by the people who have sexually harassed them. It is not rare for sexual harassment to be performed by a person in authority toward a subordinate (Thacker & Ferris, 1991).

Sexual harassment in a work environment is often possible because there is an imbalance in power between two people (Thacker & Ferris, 1991). A study conducted on sexual harassment found that environments in which an organisation's power structure is very hierarchical are more likely to be environments where sexual harassment happens more often as well (McDowel, 1990; Johnson et al., 2018). This is especially true if this hierarchy means a higher level of dependency on people in higher ranks. When the hierarchical structure is very prominent, people are also less likely to report harassment due to a fear of negative impact on their own lives (Johnson et al., 2018). This correlates with findings which suggest that within a hierarchical organisation, stress is more prominent than within a horizontally organised structure (Morash & Haarr, 1995). Fear is often said to be one of the most important reasons for victims of sexual harassment not to come forward (Fitzgerald & Swan, 1995; Hersch, 2015; Netherlands Institute for Human Rights, 2021). This fear can be fuelled by many things. One of those can be fear of retaliation, by either the alleged harasser or by the organisation. Retaliation could in turn lead to a decrease in job satisfaction (Fitzgerald & Swan, 1995; Hersch, 2015). Negative consequences for a person's career are more likely to happen to people who are quite low on the hierarchical ranks, since their safety net is of lower quality in relation to their job than the safety net of people who have a higher position (Verhoeven et al.,

2000). Since people in a position of authority have more power to assert over the other person, while people who are not in this position do not, it is less risky for them to report their experience with sexual harassment. This is especially the case because people who are not in a position of authority may be threatened with sanctions for noncompliance, while this risk is not as high for people who occupy a higher position (Thacker & Ferris, 1991).

Fear can lead to the victim of sexual harassment not taking any action, simply denying or enduring the harassment (Fitzgerald & Swan, 1995). Some studies found that victims often blame their own behaviour for the harassment, which lead to lower reporting levels as well (Jensen & Gutek, 1982). According to research done by Fitzgerald & Swan, victims who do turn to others after being harassed, likely choose the least confrontational response (1995). The most chosen response is informal, where they will talk to friends or coworkers. After this, they are more likely to notify a supervisor rather than file an official complaint. Furthermore they will, in like manner, file a complaint before filing a lawsuit.

Another theory that touches upon how hierarchy may influence social behaviour, is the social relations theory. This theory, which was proposed by Fiske (1992), presents four models that focus on the social relations between people. One of these is called authority ranking. According to this model, relationships that are authority ranking are asymmetrical and linear. If one person is higher in ranking than another, they are often treated as such. People in a higher rank tend to be treated with more respect, have more privileges than people in a lower rank as them and have a higher status. According to this theory, people who view their relationship with someone else as such, are likely to treat higher ranks (as) better. Following this logic, people who are low in ranking would be less likely to report someone higher than them since being accused of sexual harassment could have serious repercussions for the alleged perpetrator.

*H2: A person that has a lower position in the organisation's hierarchy is less likely to report sexual harassment in the workplace than someone with a position of authority.*

### ***2.3 Power and gender***

As suggested by Berdahl et al. (1996), sexual harassment has more to do with power than with gender. Power can be defined as a person's ability to influence and control situations to their own advantage. Throughout many centuries, men have always held higher positions of power than women have (Basow, 1986; McDowell, 1990; Berdahl et al., 1996; Brescoll, 2011; Kray et al., 2017). This goes not only for professional and economic positions, but for social and political positions as well. Although women are slowly making headway, men are still often at the top. As a result, power and gender are often intertwined or even confounded (Brescoll, 2011). This is linked to intersectionality, a term first coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989). She first used it to explain the societal position of African-American women, who not only were disadvantaged because of their gender, but also because of their skin colour and cultural heritage. Intersectionality shines a light on the crossroads at which different marginalised identities can overlap which may cause another form of oppression. In the case of this paper, these identities are defined by gender and power.

As was stated earlier, we as a society divide and categorise ourselves and our society based on sex. Presuming and reinforcing differences between gender, based on stereotypes, can form gender status beliefs (Ridgeway, 1997; Ridgeway, 2011; Thébaud, 2015). These beliefs are widely held cultural beliefs that will classify one gender as superior to and more competent than the other(s). Current gender status beliefs entail the viewing of men as generally more competent than women at many things, but especially professionally. These beliefs directly affect gender inequality. As a result, these beliefs could initiate processes which will lead to gender hierarchy in the workplace (Ridgeway, 1997). This will in turn lead to and further reinforce gender inequality in the workplace. According to Ridgeway, this process is due to three different effects that gender status beliefs set in motion. To begin with, these beliefs will cause men as well as women to expect more competence from men, leading to a self-fulfilment of these beliefs (Ridgeway, 1997; Ridgeway, 2011; Thébaud, 2015). Additionally, these beliefs of status will lead to beliefs regarding rewards as well. If a man and woman of similar work status are placed on the same reward level, this may provoke a negative reaction from the man who expects to get a higher reward. The third and final effect concerns the perception and willingness to reconsider 'known' information. A person's willingness to reevaluate information that is not actually true, depends on their own motive in the situation. Since men are favoured strongly in the gender status beliefs, they will be less likely to consider the possibility that

they are not truly more competent in every situation, even if these beliefs are implicit. As a result, women may find it difficult to alter the lower expectations held for them. As demonstrated, these beliefs regarding gender and power position, favour men over women, resulting in men being more likely to occupy higher positions within an organisation. For a woman, this may not only result in more difficulty in making her way to the top, but it may also affect her credibility within an organisation. Consequently, she may be taken less seriously when reporting sexual harassment than her male colleagues may be.

As was explained previously, sexual harassment is more prominent within male dominated work fields and women are more prone to fall victim to sexual harassment in the workplace than men are. Studies found that within these work fields, such as policing or science, the interaction between men and women can be great stressors for women (Morash & Haarr, 1995; Johnson et al., 2018). Male coworkers have been found to often be unsupportive or even hostile towards women in these environments, not taking them serious enough to see them as their equals or to mentor them. More specifically, women often find themselves having to ‘prove themselves’ before earning respect from their male counterparts before gaining the same respect their male coworkers will have from the start. If men are automatically being taken more seriously than women are, a woman can be expected to be met with disbelief after making a claim of sexual harassment in the workplace.

Following previous literature, people in low positions are less likely to report sexual harassment in their workplace. This is partially due to a power difference. It is expected that this same power difference leads to women experiencing these effects even more. The effect that a person’s position will have on their willingness to report, will therefore be stronger for women than it is for men. Our final hypothesis can be formed:

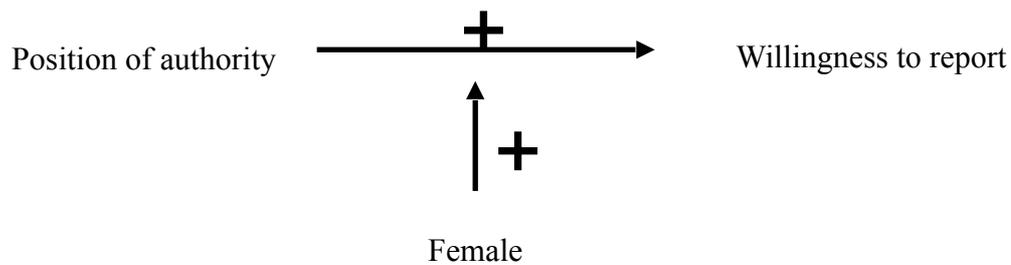
*H3: The positive effect of a person’s organisational position on their willingness to report sexual harassment will be stronger for women than it will be for men.*

This hypothesis is demonstrated further in Figure 1. It shows how the positive effect of having a position of authority on one’s willingness to report sexual harassment in the workplace will be stronger for women than it is for men. This means that the difference in willingness to report

between a man in a position of authority and a man in a low position is smaller than the difference is between a woman in a position of authority and a woman in a low position.

**Figure 1**

*Moderation-effect of position of authority and gender on willingness to report.*



### **3. Data and Methodology**

#### **3.1 Data**

The hypotheses of this study will be tested using data derived by the Beleidsonderzoekers, for a study they were commissioned to conduct by the Netherlands Institute for Human Rights (2021). The aim of this study was to find out more on willingness to report and formally file a complaint of employees when they experience sexual intimidation in the workplace and the ways in which employers handle these reports and complaints.

The dataset contains data obtained by surveys that were sent to a representative sample of employees. This sample was acquired through a panel of Panelclix. Panelclix is an online panel that people can sign up to if they would like to participate in a study. With around 100.000 active members, it is the largest active online panel in the Netherlands (Panelclix, 2020). One of the panel's priorities is being representative for both the online and offline population. They achieve this representativeness by asking all members of the panel to fill out demographics for their profile and because of the extensive number of members they have. Before every survey respondents have to answer some base questions and if based on those answers they would not fit in the sample, they would not be able to participate. The target population of the survey were employees in the Netherlands between the ages of 18 and 70. The representability of the sample was drawn based upon age and gender. The online survey that was sent out by the Beleidsonderzoekers had a netto

response of 2.012. After selection, 25 of those respondents were removed from the data, leaving 1.987 respondents.

The final N of this thesis is 300, because of dropout within variables. This is because there was made a selection of relevant respondents. Only people who reported in the survey that they experienced sexual harassment in the workplace over the last ten years were included. Employees who answered this question with 'No' or 'I don't want to disclose', were excluded. A further selection was then made, leaving only respondents who had answered all relevant questions. Only the variable that disclosed the sector someone was working in at the time of the incident contained 8 missing values. Ultimately, this left 300 respondents who were included in the tests performed.

### **3.2 Variables**

*Willingness to report.* To measure willingness to report, several questions from the survey were used to form a new variable. Within this variable, a distinction is made between people who did not or only informally make a report about the harassment (0) and people who officially came forward and made a report or filed an official complaint (1). People who had indicated in the survey they had reported the incident with their supervisor, someone from HR or management, the company's confidential counsellor, company social worker, company doctor or works council were put in the second category. All other people who had experienced sexual harassment but did not report to any of these, were put in the first category. After the selection which left only relevant respondents, this variable had 0 missing values. This means that the variable contained 0 respondents after the selection in the dataset of men or women who had experienced sexual harassment in the workplace, which did not give a valid answer to this question. This variable is the dependent variable in the research question.

*Female.* Within this dataset, a distinction is made between men (0) and women (1). This variable has 0 missing values after selection.

*Victim is supervisor or board member.* In the survey, employees were asked about their own function within the organisation. They were given three answer options, being 'employee', 'supervisor' and 'board member'. A new variable is coded, which takes the latter two together to form a binary variable. The distinctions now are employee (1) and supervisor/board member (2). Employee here is of the lowest rank, while supervisor/board member is of the highest ranking. This variable has 0 missing values after selection.

### *Control variables*

*Sector.* The respondents were asked about their current sector of work. They were given twenty answer options, ranging from ‘agriculture and fisheries’ and ‘justice, fire brigade, police and social insurances’ to ‘education’. They were also given the option ‘other sector’. If a respondent chose this option, they could fill out their sector themselves. After stating whether or not respondents still worked in the same organisation as when they experienced the harassment, respondents who said ‘No’ were asked in which sector the incident happened. A new variable was computed which took these questions together and indicated in which sector the incident had happened, since not all respondents had to answer the last question. As became apparent from the literature study that was done for this paper, the amount of sexual harassment and intimidation to happen in a workplace, can be very dependent on the sector of work an organisation is a part of (Hersch, 2015). Most sexual harassment takes place in male-dominated fields (Lafontaine & Tredeau, 1986; Morash & Haarr, 1995; Hersch, 2015). This would suggest that the sector someone works in can influence their willingness to report. Apart from the fact that male-dominated sectors are most often hierarchical, it also differs per sector how hierarchically structured organisations often are. It is for this reason that the conducted analyses are controlled for sector. This variable has 8 missing values after selection.

*Harassers relation to victim.* In the survey, respondents were able to indicate by whom they were sexually harassed in the workplace. This was a question which allowed them to fill out several different options, as it was possible they were harassed more than once. The answer options for this question were ‘my direct superior’, ‘a colleague’, ‘the director or other board member within my organisation’, ‘a patient’, ‘a client’, ‘a subcontractor or cooperation partner from outside my organisation’ or ‘other’. Although research is unclear on the exact effect of harasser status on reporting, it has been clear that there is some effect (Fitzgerald & Swan, 1995; Hunt et al., 2010). Previous research has, however, been conflicting on whether this effect means that people were less likely to report their supervisor or their equal in their organisation. The variable used is categorised as colleague (1), direct supervisor (2), board member (3) or other (4). This variable has 0 missing values after selection.

*Age.* In the survey, respondents were asked to list their age, with the restriction that it had to be between 18 and 70 to be eligible for the survey. Age is expected to be an influence on several of the study’s considered factors. First, age might affect the confidence that is needed to report sexual harassment (Reese & Lindenberg, 2005). It might also have an effect on a victim’s own position in

an organisation, as the youngest respondents are far more likely to still be a regular employee than older respondents are. As older respondents have had more time to build their career, they may have encountered more opportunities to rise to a higher position, such as leadership or board positions. To control for these effects that a respondent's age either directly or indirectly may have on willingness to report sexual harassment, the the conducted analyses will be controlled for age. This variable has 0 missing values after selection.

**Table 1**

*Descriptive statistics of independent and dependent variables (N = 300).*

	<b>N</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>	<b>Mean/ Proportion</b>	<b>Std. Dev.</b>
<b>Willingness to report</b>	300	0	1		
Did not report or reported through informal route only				62.7	
Made a report via official route				37.3	
<b>Female</b>	300	0	1		
Male				33.3	
Female				66.7	
<b>Victim is supervisor/board member</b>	300	0	1		
Employee				77.0	
Supervisor/board member				23.0	
<b>Sector</b>	300	1	20	10.740	5.795
Agriculture and fishery				0.7	
Industry				9.3	
Energy- and water companies				0.3	
Construction industry				3.3	
Wholesale and retail trade				11.7	
Hospitality and catering				10.0	
Transportation and storage				4.7	

	<b>N</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>	<b>Mean/ Proportion</b>	<b>Std. Dev.</b>
Information and communication				6.3	
Financial institutions				4.3	
Rental of and trade in real estate				0.7	
Consulting, research and other specialised business				2.0	
Veterinary services				0	
Rental of movable property and other business services				2.0	
Public administration, government and municipalities				6.3	
Justice, fire, police and social insurance				0.7	
Education				4.7	
Health and welfare services				26.3	
Culture, sports and recreation				2.7	
Other services				4.0	
Other sector				0	
<b>Harassers relation to</b>	300	1	4	2.293	1.383
Colleague				49.3	
Direct supervisor				7.7	
Board member				7.3	
Other				35.7	
<b>Age</b>	300	18	64	36.993	12.330
<b>Valid N (listwise)</b>	300				

*Note:* The standard deviation is not stated for dichotomous variables. For the nominal variables, the means are equal to the proportions. See appendix for more detailed list of sectors.

### *3.2 Statistical methods*

To test the hypotheses, SPSS is used to conduct several regression analyses to see how and if the variables per theory are correlated with the reporting of sexual harassment in the workplace. The dependent variable for every analysis is 'willingness to report'. This is a dichotomous variable and can therefore be used in a logistic regression analysis. Such an analysis demonstrates the main effects of a chosen independent variable on the chosen dependent variables. Logistic regression in particular is used to predict the probability of a binary event occurring. This analysis, in conjunction with the control variables, allows for a prediction of the influence of different variables on a person's willingness to report sexual harassment in the workplace.

In all models where willingness to report is the dependent variable, sector, harassers relation to the victim and age were included as control variables. This is done so that it is clear whether an effect exists when any influence of control variables is included in the test.

The first model demonstrates the analyses regarding both the first and the second hypotheses. Not only will it be used to look at the effect of gender on willingness to report, when controlled for the respondent's own position within an organisation, sector, the harasser's relation to the victim and the respondent's age; it will also demonstrate the effect of a victim's own position within their organisation on their willingness to report, when controlled for gender, sector, the harasser's relation to the victim and age. The reference sector in all models is health and welfare services, as this is the largest category which contains the most respondents.

The third and last hypothesis will be tested by means of a regression analysis as well. This analysis will include all previously included variables, including the control variables. Additionally, an interaction variable is included which shows an interaction between gender and the respondent's position within their organisation.

For every model that includes a logistic regression, the Hosmer and Lemeshow test shows if the model is a good fit for the data and will be described as well. When the results of this test are non-significant, the model fits the data well. The predictors were checked for multicollinearity. None of them were too highly correlated, so it can be assumed that multicollinearity is not an issue with the data that are used. None of the variables contained any outliers. Since the variable for age is the only continuous predictor, it was tested for the linearity of the logit. The interaction term has a

significance value greater than .05, which indicates that the assumption of linearity of the logit has been met for age.

## **4. Results**

### ***4.1 Descriptives***

Before moving onto the regression analyses which will show the results upon which the answer to the research question is based, the dataset will be examined a little further. This is done, because the ultimate sample is much smaller than the original sample. It is therefore valuable to see how different our respondents are from the overall dataset, which contains a representative sample of employees in the Netherlands.

In the first table, numbers on the variables that are answered by all respondents can be viewed. Even without selecting people who have experienced sexual harassment only, some of the questions were only answered by people who did have this experience. The questions about gender, people's own position and their age were answered by all respondents.

These numbers show that before selection, the dataset contained roughly the same amount of men and women (996 versus 991 respectively). After selection, however, 100 men were left versus 200 women. Since in the new sample, exactly two third of the respondents is female, it means that women experienced sexual harassment in the workplace twice as much as men did.

The selection showed a slight increase in the amount of people who worked in a position of authority: where in the original sample, 17.3% were either a supervisor or board member at their place of work, after selecting only people who had ever experienced sexual harassment in the workplace, this number increased to 23%. There was a slight difference regarding age as well: where the average age in the original sample was almost 41 years, after selection the average person was roughly 37 years old.

**Table 2.**

*Descriptive statistics of variables in total dataset (before selection).*

	<b>N</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>	<b>Mean/ Proportion</b>	<b>Std. Dev.</b>
<b>Female</b>	1987	0	1	0.50	0.50
<b>Victims position within an organisation</b>	1987	1	2		
Employee	1643			82.7	
Supervisor/board member	344			17.3	
<b>Age</b>	1987	18	66	40.8	13.26

**Table 3.**

*Cross-reference table between who has and has not experienced sexual harassment in the workplace and gender; position within an organisation and age (before selection).*

		<b>Female</b>		<b>Victim's position within an organisation</b>		<b>Age (Mean)</b>	<b>Total</b>
		<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Employee</i>	<i>Supervisor/ board member</i>		
<b>Has respondent experienced sexual harassment in the workplace?</b>	<i>Yes</i>	102	206	237	71	36.96	308
	<i>No</i>	883	767	1386	264	41.58	1650
	<i>Does not want to disclose</i>	11	18	20	9	36.90	29
<b>Total</b>		996	991	1643	344	36.99	1987

The two different tables showing the distribution of men and women across employees and supervisors or board members before and after selection differ notably. Although the total numbers of respondents decreased, the differences between men and women only widened. In the original sample, the positions were already not evenly distributed between the two sexes. Although there were almost as many women as there were men in the sample, there were almost three times as many men in positions of authority as there were women in such positions. Where the sample after selection had twice as many women as men included, the amount of men in positions of authority was almost as high as the amount of women in positions of authority, with a difference of 1. In the original sample, almost one sixth of the people were in a position of authority. After selection, a little over a quarter of the respondents were in such a position. This suggests that people who are in a low organisational position do not necessarily experience sexual harassment in the workplace more often, at least not in this dataset.

**Table 4.**

*Cross-reference table between gender and position within an organisation in total dataset (before selection).*

		Victim's position within an		Total
		<i>Employee</i>	<i>Supervisor/board member</i>	
Female	<i>Male</i>	742	254	996
	<i>Female</i>	901	90	991
Total		1643	344	1987

**Table 5.**

*Cross-reference table between gender and position within an organisation in sample (after selection).*

		Victim's position within an organisation		Total
		<i>Employee</i>	<i>Supervisor/board member</i>	
Female	<i>Male</i>	66	34	100
	<i>Female</i>	165	35	200
Total		231	69	300

Lastly, we look at who decided to report their experience. As can be seen in Table 6, people who did not officially report being sexually harassed on average were over 36 years old, while people who did make an official report after the incident were a little over 38 years old. Of the whole sample of 300, 188 people never made an official report about the incident. This is around 63% of respondents.

**Table 6.**

*Cross-reference table between willingness to report sexual harassment in the workplace and age (after selection).*

		Age (Mean)	Total
Willingness to report	<i>Did not report or reported through informal route only</i>	36.37	188
	<i>Made a report via official route</i>	38.04	112
Total		36.99	300

## 4.2 Analyses

The first hypothesis which is being tested, reads as follows: Women are less likely than men to report sexual harassment in the workplace. The results of this analysis are demonstrated in Table 7, Model 1. Since these hypotheses both are one-sided, they will be tested as such as well. Hosmer and Lemeshow test results confirmed that the model was a good fit for the data,  $\chi^2$  (df = 8, N = 300) = 13.500, p = .096.

The results show that gender was able to predict willingness to report. The odds ratio for gender indicated that if gender would change from male to female (which means an increase of one unit in this analysis), the odds of a victim reporting their experience with harassment would increase by 80.7%. This indicates that, if all other variables will remain the same, the odds of a woman being willing to report any experience with sexual harassment in the workplace are 1.807 times greater than the odds that a man will do so. That is the case after controlling for position within an organisation, age and the relation the harasser had to the respondent. This suggests that gender does have an effect on willingness to report, just not in the expected direction. The first hypothesis, therefore, has not been confirmed.

The second hypothesis can be tested using the same model as hypothesis one, since the exact same variables will be included. This second hypothesis reads: a person that has a lower position in the organisation's hierarchy is less likely to report sexual harassment in the workplace than someone with a position of authority.

As demonstrated in Model 1, a victim's position within an organisation does not significantly predict a person's willingness to report sexual harassment in the workplace. The odds ratio for willingness to report indicated that if the respondent's position would increase from being an employee to being a supervisor or board member, there was a predicted increase of 0.9% in the probability of a victim of sexual harassment in the workplace to officially report this harassment. Since the result is non-significant, however, position does not seem to significantly influence the probability of a victim being willing to report sexual harassment.

**Table 7.**

*Binary logistic regression analysis of gender and victim's position on willingness to report sexual harassment in the workplace, controlled for each other; sector; harassers relation to victim and age.*

<b>Model 1</b>			
	<b>B</b>	<b>SE B</b>	<b>Exp(B)</b> <b>[95% CI]</b>
<b>Constant</b>	-1.292*		
<b>Female</b>	.592*	.296	1.807 [1.011, 3.231]
<b>Victim is supervisor or board member</b>	.009	.313	1.009 [.547, 1.863]
<b>Harassers relation to victim</b>			
Colleague	-.186	.336	.830 [.430, 1.604]
Direct supervisor	-.323	.545	.724 [.249, 2.108]
Board member	.094	.543	1.099 [.379, 3.186]
Other	Ref.		
<b>Age</b>	.013	.011	1.013 [.992, 1.035]

*Dependent variable: Willingness to report sexual harassment; \*\*\*= $P=0,001$ ; \*\*= $P<0,01$ ; \*= $P<0,05$  (one-sided). Sector was included in the model as a control variable.*

The third and final hypothesis that is tested, reads as follows: The positive effect of a person's organisational position on their willingness to report sexual harassment will be stronger for women than it will be for men. The results of this hypothesis can be observed in Table 8, Model 2. The hypothesis is one-sided and will be tested as such. The Hosmer and Lemeshow chi-square test is not significant, which is indicative of a well-fitting model,  $\chi^2$  (df = 8, N = 300) = 11.110, p = .196.

The results do not demonstrate enough evidence to assume that the effect of organisational power on willingness to report sexual harassment differs between men and women. With this, the third hypothesis gets rejected.

**Table 8.**

*Binary logistic regression analysis of gender and victim's position on willingness to report sexual harassment in the workplace, controlled for each other; sector; harassers relation to victim and age.*

<b>Model 2</b>			
	<b>B</b>	<b>SE B</b>	<b>Exp(B)</b> <b>[95% CI]</b>
<b>Constant</b>	-1.335		
<b>Female</b>	.672*	.350	1.958 [.985, 3890]
<b>Victim is supervisor or board member</b>	.178	.496	1.195 [.452, 3.162]
<b>Female * Victim is supervisor or board member</b>	-.281	.644	.755 [.214, 2.667]
<b>Harassers relation to victim</b>			
Colleague	-.169	.339	.845 [.435, 1.640]
Direct supervisor	-.279	.553	.757 [.256, 2.239]
Board member	.095	.543	1.100 [.380, 3.187]
Other	Ref.		
<b>Age</b>	.013	.011	1.013 [.991, 1.035]

*Dependent variable: Willingness to report sexual harassment; \*\*\*= $P=0,001$ ; \*\*= $P<0,01$ ; \*= $P<0,05$  (one-sided). Sector was included in the model as a control variable.*

## **5. Conclusion and discussion**

### **5.1 Summary and conclusions**

This study sought to answer the question of to what extent the gender; organisational power and an interaction of gender and organisational power affect the willingness to report for a victim of sexual harassment in the workplace. In order to answer this research question, several hypotheses were established. Data obtained by the Beleidsonderzoekers (2021) were used, which were derived by

conducting surveys among a little over 2000 employees. After selection, 300 of these respondents were left for the analyses conducted for this study.

Firstly, the results demonstrate a positive effect of being a female on willingness to report. This suggests an effect of gender where men are less likely to report. This leads to a rejection of the first hypothesis, which stated that women are less willing to report sexual harassment than men are. Previously done studies may offer an explanation for this discrepancy. One reason for the gap may be that women are more likely to experience sexual harassment in the workplace during their life than men are. According to research, multiple occasions of victimisation may lead to a lower willingness to report if for instance the processing of the complaint did not go well for the victim (Torrente, Gallo & Oltra, 2016). This may, however, also lead to a higher level of experience with reporting which lowers the threshold of reporting for the victim. This would be a reason for women to be more likely to report, which is different to reasons for why men would be less likely to report sexual harassment. Alternatively, an explanation for a lower level of reporting is how men are more concerned with their position in an hierarchical organisation than women are (Uhl-Bien, 2011). Since reporting may often lead to retaliation, or at least people fear it will lead to repercussions, men may be more cautious about reporting because they fear they will fall on the organisational ladder. Other possible reasons include a difference in perspective. Certain behaviour which women may view as sexual harassment, may not be viewed as such by men (Quick & McFadyen, 2017). This reason is not applicable to this study, however, since the man partaking in it already have defined their experience as sexual harassment. The main reason given for a difference in reporting by men and women, is the stigma around being sexual harassed (Quick & McFadyen, 2017). Although this stigma is present for both men and women, it is more prominent for men. There is a certain bias which suggests that sexual harassment is a “woman's problem” and any men having experienced something like it can be seen as “unmanly” because of this stigma. More examination needs to be done on the reasons why men would be less likely to report sexual harassment.

Secondly, a test was conducted to demonstrate any influence a victim's position may have on their willingness to report sexual harassment. No connection was found, however. This leads to a rejection of the second hypothesis, which read that a person that has a lower position in the organisation's hierarchy is less likely to report sexual harassment in the workplace than someone with a position of authority.

Finally, a regression was carried out to test the third and last hypothesis. This hypothesis stated that the effect of a person's organisational position on their willingness to report sexual harassment would be stronger for women than it would be for men. Such an effect was not found after conducting the necessary analyses, either, and the third hypothesis was rejected.

Out of the three established hypotheses, none were confirmed.

To summarise, the results show that there is a significant difference in the willingness to report between men and women. However, the results do not show any influence of a person's position within an organisation may have on willingness to report. A difference in the effect on organisational power on willingness to report between men and women was not demonstrated in this study.

## ***5.2 Discussion***

Although sexual harassment and its prevalence in a work environment have often been studied, targets' willingness to report this type of harassment has not been studied as extensively. This paper is therefore an addition to already existing knowledge, and aims to bridge the gap in research regarding the topic of sexual harassment.

Since a dataset was used which really focused on the prevalence of sexual harassment and victim's willingness to report, it was easy to take into account many different factors that may have had an influence on a person's willingness to report. Had this not been the case, it would have been much more difficult to present any definite results since the results could not have been controlled for many factors. This makes this research a study with a high level of internal validity.

This study also knows a few limitations. To test the hypotheses and thus get an answer on the research question of this study, data was used which emerged from a study conducted by the Beleidsonderzoekers on behalf of the Netherlands Institute for Human Rights (2021). While answering the survey, respondents were never asked to specify any demographic information other than gender and age. Other minority statuses, such as race or migration background may have an influence on a person's behaviour as well (Morash & Haarr, 1995) and therefore may be expected to affect their willingness to report. Since these demographics were not included in the survey, they cannot be controlled for. It is therefore impossible to rule out any effect these factors may have on

willingness to report. The question is whether this influenced the results that came out of this study and whether a different statement could be made about the expected effects if these variables had been included in the analyses. Should this be the case, future research will require asking respondents more questions which relate to their demographics.

The original sample contained 2000 respondents, which was a representative sample of employees between 18 and 70 in the Netherlands. After selection, the sample used for this study contained only 300 people, however. Although this sample can be assumed to be representative for people who have experienced sexual harassment in the workplace, it may not be for all employees in the Netherlands. One demonstration of this is that the original sample contained an even distribution of men and women, where the used sample had a distribution of exactly twice as many women as men (200 and 100 respectively). This leaves the question if the used sample could still be considered representative. Future studies should be cautious of their sample being a good reflection of their population.

### ***5.3 Recommendations for future research***

The focus of this study was partially on the victim's status within an organisation, since not much research has been conducted on its effect on reporting. The relationship between the status of the harasser rather than victim, and the willingness of the victim to report is another factor that has not been documented much either. Some studies suggest that victims are more likely to report their supervisor rather than their equal colleague, while other studies found the opposite (Fitzgerald & Swan, 1995). Future studies could look into this relation more, or focus their study on the difference between a victim's and perpetrator's relation and its effect on willingness to report. This study looked at just two factors, their effects and their intersectionality in relation to willingness to report. In reality, there may be many more determinants for someone's willingness to report sexual harassment that need further examination. Factors like this can be demographics that were talked about before, but also characteristics such as (dis)ability or behavioural factors like self-blaming or the severity of the harassment. Since willingness to report sexual harassment in the workplace and its determinants have not been researched extensively, this would all be relevant factors to study.

As stated before, more research is needed on why men are less likely to report sexual harassment. Another underreported factor of sexual harassment and reporting which is related to this, is male victimhood in itself. It is a well-known fact that women experience sexual harassment

(in the workplace) more often than men do. The fact that gender plays such a large role in the experience, suggests a difference in impact or stigma as well. Many studies that focus on sexual harassment right now focus on females only. Therefore, in future research, more study needs to be done on male victims of sexual harassment.

In this study, sector is used as a variable to control if any effect of gender or position on willingness to report would run through the sector someone works at. None of the sectors proved to have a significant effect on willingness to report. A suggestion, however, would be conducting a study where sector is the determinant of willingness to report sexual harassment in the workplace. If sector is the determinant, close attention could be paid to how respondents are distributed over the sectors, giving more reliable results on the effect of sector. Since research has shown that the sector someone works in can be an important determinant of prevalence of sexual harassment and culture difference are present across different sectors as well, some effect of sector on willingness to report may be expected also.

#### ***5.4 Policy advice***

The question that needs to be answered by this advice, is: What policy could be implemented to induce a cultural change in order to increase reporting of sexual harassment in the workplace and who does this policy need to be focus on? Of the three main predictors used in this paper to study what would affect a person's willingness to report sexual harassment in the workplace, only gender was found to be of influence. The results demonstrated a significant positive effect for being female, which indicates that men are much less likely to report their experience with sexual harassment than women are. Reasons for this may be the stigma and shame concerning sexual harassment, which may be worse for men than for women. The second part of the policy question, can therefore be answered by the notion that policy needs to be focussed on men. The aim of any policy that will be formed, should aim to promote men's willingness to report.

Since stigma, shame and negative retaliation seem to be the most important reasons for men not to report sexual harassment, policy that has the goal of increasing their willingness to report should be focussing on reducing these reasons. Policies and studies right now focus mostly on women and their experience with sexual harassment, which is why it seems logical for the narrative that it is mostly a "woman's problem" to exist. In order for this narrative to change, it is important to raise awareness on the sexual harassment men can face as well. Organisations such as WOMEN

INC, Rutgers and Emancipator focus on gender equality and emancipation. These, and other organisations are also raising awareness for sexual harassment, both in and outside of the workplace (Rutgers, 2018; College voor de Rechten van de Mens, 2021; WOMEN Inc., n.d.). To raise awareness on male victimhood in relation to sexual harassment in the workplace, these organisations could organise campaigns to spread information on and get recognition for male victimhood. This will not only raise awareness for men who have been through this experience, so that they will recognise that their problems and experiences are as valid as they are for women, but for other people as well and therefore adjust the perception people have regarding male victimhood.

One thing which is important to note, is that although an increase reporting may lead to a decrease of sexual harassment in the workplace, it is an issue which needs to be addressed on a larger scale and by organisations, rather than rely on the actions of individuals in order to deal with harassment (Adams-Roy and Barling, 1998; Hunt et al., 2010). Focussing on reporting sexual harassment is therefore only a small solution to the problem and the biggest change will happen through a cultural change which leads to a decrease of the actual behaviour of sexual harassment. Firm policy with consequential sanctions would serve best to prevent incidents of sexual harassment as a whole (Quick & McFadyen, 2017).

By looking at the results that were obtained from this study, it can be concluded that no difference was demonstrated in the willingness to report sexual harassment in the workplace between employees and supervisors or board members. However, an influence of gender on willingness to report was observed. Therefore, the answer to the research question is that there has not been found an influence of a person's organisational position or the interaction of gender and organisational power on their willingness to report sexual harassment in the workplace. There was, however, found an effect of gender on their willingness to report.

## Appendix

### 1. References

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## ***2. List of sectors in this dataset:***

1. Agriculture and fishery
2. Industry (including food, textiles, clothing, petroleum, metal, machine, electrical appliances, automobile production)
3. Energy- and water companies
4. Construction industry
5. Wholesale and retail trade (including department stores, supermarkets, car dealerships)
6. Hospitality and catering (Hospitality/logistics, meal and beverage services)
7. Transportation and storage (including public transport, maritime, aviation, rail, bus, logistics, post, couriers)
8. Information and communication
9. Financial institutions (including banks, insurance and retirement services)
10. Rental of and trade in real estate (including brokers)
11. Consulting, research and other specialised business services (including notary public, accountant, architect)
12. Veterinary services
13. Rental of movable property and other business services (including cleaning, employment agency, security)
14. Public administration, government and municipalities
15. Justice, fire, police and social insurance
16. Education
17. Health and welfare services (including hospitals, nursing or retirement homes, home care, child care, social services)
18. Culture, sports and recreation
19. Other services (including personal care)
20. Other sector