

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

Sexual harassment or assault on campus occurs around the world. The incidents happen to both men and women but women are more likely to be the victims of this phenomenon. For example, 30-50% of female students in the United States of America experienced sexual harassment and 70% of sexual harassment occurred on campus (อรพิน ชูชม, 2546). Also, in Japan 22% of students experienced this harassment (Kusakaba et al., 2005). Universities in many countries are concerned about this problem and have various measures to prevent the students from sexual harassment. In Japan, universities provide needed information on the protection from sexual harassment on campus for the first year students regularly. According to the sexual harassment approach, there are 3 types of sexual assault or harassment, which affect quality of life and mental health of the victims: they are verbal, non-verbal and physical harassment. Sexual assault or harassment normally occurs among people who know one another or are close together. In the academic atmosphere lecturers are more likely to initiate this event as it seems that they are authoritative and have power over students. In a report on *The Perception of Thai University Students on Sexual Harassment* (อรพิน ชูชม, 2546), 64.1% of the students had experienced verbal harassment or dirty jokes by lecturers, and 14.4% of the students were forced to talk about sexuality. Dirty jokes and forcing to talk about sexuality are considered as verbal harassment, one of the sexual harassment behaviors, which certainly has affected students' mental health and well-being. 50% of students' perception is more likely to accept physical harassment as sexual harassment. Furthermore, discrimination of students in this form has not gained enough attention from authorities in academia because verbal or non-verbal assault or harassment has been overlooked as a minor deed that might not create social or health problems to the victims.

Some research on sexual harassment has been carried out in Thailand, such as sexual assault or harassment at workplaces, at governmental agencies, and in the

private sector. There is limited research on the sexual harassment on campus. It will be hard to estimate the magnitude of the problem by the reports from newspapers or word of mouth from one person to the others. This research will try to explore the problem of sexual assault or harassment in the academic institutions to find out what type of sexual assault or harassment is prevalent, and to what extent, in order to look for measures to help protect students, especially female students, from this embarrassing event created by the lecturers or people in those premises.

Thailand has limited research on sexual harassment on campus, and among Thai, physical sexual harassment is more likely to be accepted as sexual harassment than other types of sexual harassment. Moreover, Thailand has no law concerning sexual harassment, while sexual harassment occurs often in Thailand. Recently, for example, two popular female singers were filmed while taking a shower. The video clip was widely spread through mobile phone and the Internet. The two young singers were understandably very upset as they tearfully told how embarrassed they felt. Both of them felt stressful and mental suffering from the incident while the law punishment for this case is limited.

Due to lack of sexual harassment law, the New Thailand Cyber-Crime Law was introduced for this case. For this case, Internet is not the root of the problem. This video clip incident reflects that Thailand lacks concern on this problem seriously due to lack of data to show the magnitude of the problem, while the sexual harassment incidence is frequent among Thai women.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study aims to answer the following questions:

- 1.2.1 Does the prevalence of sexual harassment exist on the campus?
- 1.2.2 Do the sexual harassment behaviors have negative effects on the students?
- 1.2.3 What is the profile of perpetrators of sexual harassment?

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this study are the following:

- 1.3.1 Main Objective:

To survey the prevalence of sexual harassment experienced among undergraduate female students on campus

1.3.2 Sub-Objectives

1. To confirm the prevalence of sexual harassment on campus;
2. To look at the types of sexual harassment behavior that the students are faced with;
3. To identify the negative effects of sexual harassment; and
4. To discover the profile of perpetrators of sexual harassment.

1.4 DEFINITION OF TERMS

The definition of the terms of this study is as follows:

1.4.1 Sexual Harassment on Campus

Sexual harassment on campus is defined as unwanted sexual attention that (1) would be offensive to students, including being obstacles of students' ability to learn or participate in school's activities, and (2) that negatively affects the school environment (hostile environment or individual). Sexual harassment includes a wide range of behaviors: verbal behavior, non-verbal behavior, physical behavior, Quid Pro Quo Harassment, threat and sexual coercion (Judith, 1997).

1.4.2 Distinguishing between Sexual Harassment and Friendly Behavior

According to research of the Southern Illinois University, the distinction between sexual harassment and friendly behavior is as following: If the behavior is perceived as unwelcome it is no longer friendly behavior. Any behavior that makes another person feel uncomfortable or upset is most likely sexual harassment. The fact that the person had no intent is ordinarily irrelevant with harassment claims. In most cases, it is the effect and characteristics of the behavior that determine if it constitutes sexual harassment.

1.4.3 Quid Pro Quo Harassment

Quid Pro Quo harassment can be defined as sexual bribery which occurs when sexual favour or demands are made a condition of receiving benefits (e.g., a grade, promotion, job, recommendation or appointment) or of avoiding a penalty (e.g., being fired or receiving a negative evaluation).

1.4.4 Hostile Environment Harassment

Sexually harassing conduct (which can include unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours, and other verbal, nonverbal, or physical conduct of a sexual nature) by a teacher, by another student, or by a third party that is sufficiently severe, persistent, or pervasive enough to limit a students' ability to participate in or benefit from an education program or activity, or to create a hostile or abusive educational environment.

1.4.5 Effects of Sexual Harassment on the Victims

Some of the health effects, psychological and physiological, that can occur in someone who has been sexually harassed are as follows:

- Depression;
- Anxiety and/or panic attacks;
- Sleeplessness and/or nightmares;
- Shame and guilt; self-blame;
- Difficulty concentrating;
- Headaches;
- Fatigue or loss of motivation;
- Difficulties with time (forgetting appointments);
- Stomach problems: gastrointestinal disorders;
- Eating disorders (weight loss or gain);
- Feeling betrayed and/or violated;
- Feeling angry or violent towards the perpetrator;
- Feeling powerless/helpless/or out of control;
- Increased blood pressure, loss of confidence and self esteem;
- Overall loss of trust in people: problems with intimacy;
- Problems with sex (sexual dysfunction);
- Withdrawal and isolation; and
- Suicidal thoughts or attempts suicide.

1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study aims to survey the prevalence of sexual harassment among undergraduate female students and examine the negative effects of sexual harassment on the students. The principle of models of sexual harassment, and the patriarchy/male dominant approach is used as a basis of this research design.

394 undergraduate female students at Thammasat University were randomly recruited as the respondents. The main instrument used in this survey was a self-administered questionnaire consisting of 5 parts: the student's year of study, the experience of sexual harassment, the negative effects of sexual harassment, the sexual harassment experienced by other female students whom the respondent knows personally, and the respondent's opinions of the issue.

The survey was conducted in December 2008 and the data as analyzed by SPSS programme to find out the prevalence of sexual harassment, perpetrator profile, and its negative effects on the students.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

In general, sexual harassment is considered as an individual and a small problem even though there are many women often experiencing the incidents in many places: school, universities, workplaces, and public areas. This incident upsets women's lives and sometimes many of them get physical harm from the harassment, but the issue still is kept as a private problem. The sexual harassment behavior is transferred generation to generation without concerning the incident by involved institutions. This research tries to reveal the incidence and shows the significance of the problem to raise awareness of people on the sexual harassment with hope that the issue will be accepted as a public and national problem, which is the first step of law, regulation, and measure setting to protect women from the sexual harassment.

1.7 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

The study of prevalence of sexual harassment among undergraduate female students at Thammasat University consists of five chapters:

Chapter One: Introduction to the study background, statement of problem, objectives of the study, variables and definitions, scope of the study, and significance of the study.

Chapter Two: Literature review explaining definitions of sexual harassment based on sexual harassment theory, types of sexual harassment, and relevant studies.

Chapter Three: Subjects, materials, procedures of data collection and analysis.

Chapter Four: Findings report and data analysis.

Chapter Five: Summary of the study, summary of findings, discussions, conclusions and recommendations for further research.