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**Al- Quds University**



**Sexual Harassment against Female Health Workers in  
Public Hospitals in West Bank**

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**Sexual Harassment against Female Health Workers in  
Public Hospitals in West Bank**

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## Thesis Approval

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## **Dedication**

*To the memory of my mother "Ibtesam", a strong and gentle soul who taught me to trust in Allah, believe in hard work and always have belief in my potentials.*

*I dedicate this work to my father Faisal; "without him nothing of my success would have been possible".*

*My sister May, who has always been with me in every single moment.*

*My brothers Malek, Murad & Motie, who were my backbone whenever I needed the support.*

*My partner & Fiancé Husam for his patience and love.*

*To my friends, who were there to lift me up whenever I felt down to help me approach my achievement.*

**Declaration**

I certify that this entire thesis submitted for the Degree of Master, is the result of my own research, except where otherwise acknowledged, and that this thesis (or any part of the same) has not been submitted for a higher degree or qualification to any other university or institution.

Signed: .....

Mais Faisal Iz-Aldin Abu-Assab

Date:4/3/ 2019

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I was also fortunate to study with some wonderful colleagues, who at opportune times offered me their wise counsel, the willingness to succeed despite the difficulties, and who provided me with a balanced perspective that will sustain.

Finally, I send my gratitude to my family to whom I owe all the success. To my father Faisal: "thank you for showing me that the key to life is enjoyment". To my sister May, "thank you for the unstoppable support". And to my brothers Malek, Murad and Motie. And above all, to the one person who made this all possible; my mom "Ibtesam". She was the constant source of support and encouragement and has made a numerous number of sacrifices for the entire family, especially for me to continue my education; for without her understanding this work would have never been completed, "you are my enormous inspiration, may your soul rest in peace". Also I'll never forget to thank my partner "Husam" for his patience and his support in helping me to finalize this work.

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## Abstract

**Background:** Sexual harassment is considered one of the most prevalent types of violence against women. The issue is a recognized phenomenon throughout the world in all cultural and occupational contexts. The World Bank defines sexual harassment as is any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favor or other verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature which unreasonably interferes with work, is made a condition of employment, or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment.

The problem of sexual harassment in workplaces is well known as a significant issue. It is an occupational hazard and a violation of human rights. According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, the number of women who have joined the labor force has been increased from 10.3% in 2001 to 19% in 2017. Therefore, increased their vulnerability to unwanted attention at the workplace.

When a male harasses a woman on the job, he is doing more than annoying her, he is creating tension which makes her job more difficult and reduces her productivity. A woman who is a target of sexual harassment often goes in the same process of victimization like other gender related crimes, frequently blaming herself and doubting her own self-worth.

The objective of this study is to explore prevalence, types, and the effect of workplace harassment against female health workers in public hospitals in the West Bank, the consequences, and the associated risk factors.

**Methods:** A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted on a sample of 238 female health workers in all departments at three major public hospitals in West Bank. A self-administered questionnaire was developed based on the WHO workplace violence questionnaire which was used to collect the data. The questionnaire consisted of 3 parts: socio-demographic data, incident of harassment, and reporting of harassment. Oral consent was obtained from the participants. The questionnaire was filled by 238 female health workers, the response rate was 87.5%, and the data were analyzed using SPSS.

**Findings:** The prevalence of sexual harassment among participants was (27.3%). The most common type of sexual harassment was oral with the percent of (44.6%). Assaulters of sexual

harassment were as follows: (24.6%) were patients' companions, and (21.5%) were colleagues in the same position.

“Job category” and “years of experience in the current hospital” are significantly associated with exposure to sexual harassment ( $p < 0.05$ ). Nurses showed their vulnerability to be harassed 3 times more than doctors (OR= 2.8; 95%CI (1.173 – 6.738)); on the other hand, workers who had 1- 5 years of experience in the hospital were more likely to be harassed 1.5 times more than those who worked for more than 10 years (OR= 1.583, 95%CI (0.393 – 6.374)). The majority of respondents (44.5%) indicated that they don't know about hospital policies regarding harassment, while 41.6% assured the absence of any policies. Only 12.8% (mainly 8 cases) reported the incident of harassment; 1 case reported for the hospital administration, 2 cases reported for the police and 5 cases to the direct manager.

**Interpretation:** The study revealed high prevalence of sexual harassment among females in the health system compared to other findings in other studies. Meanwhile, the study showed significant underreporting of sexual harassment. There is a need for effective policies and strategies to prevent harassment against female health workers in public hospitals.



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## التحرش الجنسي بالعاملات في المستشفيات العامة في الضفة الغربية

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إشراف: د. معتصم حمدان

### الملخص

يعتبر التحرش الجنسي أحد أكثر أنواع العنف شيوعاً ضد المرأة، موجود في جميع أنحاء العالم في مختلف الأوساط المهنية والثقافية. يعرّف البنك الدولي التحرش الجنسي بأنه أي فعل جنسي غير مرغوب به، أو طلب الحصول على منفعة جنسية، أو أي سلوك لفظي أو غير لفظي أو مادي ذي طبيعة جنسية يتداخل بشكل غير منطقي مع العمل، أو يصبح شرطاً للعمل، أو يخلق خوفاً أو عدائية أو بيئة مسيئة. هذا وتعتبر مشكلة التحرش الجنسي في مكان العمل انتهاكاً لحقوق الإنسان. وفقاً لجهاز الإحصاء الفلسطيني؛ ارتفع عدد النساء اللواتي انضمن للقوى العاملة من 10.3% في عام 2001 إلى 19% في عام 2017. و بالتالي ازداد تعرضهن للتحرش الجنسي في مكان العمل. عندما يتم التحرش بالمرأة في مكان العمل، هو لا يزعجها فقط، بل يخلق جواً من التوتر، مما يجعل العمل أكثر صعوبة وأقل إنتاجية. وبالعادة كثيراً ما تلوم المرأة نفسها وتشكك في تقديرها لذاتها في حال تعرضها لتحرش جنسي.

تهدف الدراسة إلى؛ توضيح مدى انتشار التحرش الجنسي في مكان العمل ضد العاملات في المستشفيات العامة في الضفة الغربية، ما هي العواقب المرتبطة به وأسبابه.

منهجية البحث؛ اتبعت الدراسة منهجية الوصف التحليلي المقطعي الذي شمل جميع العاملات في المستشفيات العامة في الضفة الغربية. احتوت الدراسة على 238 عاملة في المستشفيات شمال ووسط وجنوب الضفة الغربية موزعة بين (الممرضات، الطبيبات، العاملات في المهن الطبية المساندة وموظفات الاستقبال والإداريات) كل حسب نسبة تمثيله في المستشفى. لقد تم تطوير الاستبيان المستخدم بالبحث من استبيان منظمة الصحة العالمية ليُطابق منهجية البحث. و قد كانت نسبة الاستجابة 87%. جرى تحليل البيانات باستخدام برنامج SPSS.

خلصت الدراسة إلى أن معدل انتشار التحرش الجنسي بين المشاركات بالبحث (27.3%). أكثر أنواع التحرش الجنسي شيوعاً كانت التحرش اللفظي (44.6%). أما بالنسبة لمن قام بالتحرش فكانت (24.6%) من مرافقين المرضى و (21.5%) من زملاء بنفس المستوى الوظيفي.



ارتبط "نوع الوظيفة" و"سنوات الخبرة في نفس المستشفى" بشكل واضح مع التعرض للتحرش الجنسي. فكانت الممرضات معرضات للتحرش الجنسي أكثر بثلاث مرات من الطبيبات، أما فيما يتعلق بسنوات الخبرة فكانت الفئة التي عملت ما بين سنة وخمس سنوات أكثر عرضة للتحرش الجنسي بمرة ونصف عن اللواتي تجاوزت سنوات الخبرة لديهم العشر سنوات. وقد أشارت (44.5%) من المشاركات في البحث أن لا معرفة لديهن بسياسات المستشفى المتعلقة بالتحرش الجنسي، بينما أكد (41.6%) عدم وجود سياسات تتعلق بالتحرش الجنسي داخل المستشفى. كانت نسبة التبليغ عن التعرض للتحرش الجنسي (12.8%) أي ما يعادل 8 حالات فقط.

الاستنتاجات والتوصيات: كشفت الدراسة عن ارتفاع معدل التحرش الجنسي وسط العاملات بالمستشفيات العامة مقارنة مع الدراسات السابقة التي أجريت في الضفة الغربية. ومع ذلك كانت نسبة الإبلاغ عن حوادث التحرش الجنسي ضئيلة. مما يشير إلى الحاجة لسياسات واستراتيجيات فعالة للحد من التحرش الجنسي في أماكن العمل وعمل ورشات تهتم بالتوعية ضد التحرش الجنسي.