

SEXUAL HARASSMENT DURING INTERNSHIP: EXPERIENCE OF INDONESIAN STUDENT

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi pelecehan seksual yang dialami mahasiswa selama menjalani kegiatan magang di industri. Magang seharusnya menjadi wadah bagi mahasiswa untuk menerapkan ilmu yang diperoleh selama perkuliahan, namun kenyataannya dapat menjadi lingkungan yang berisiko terhadap pelecehan seksual. Penelitian ini menggunakan penelitian deskriptif dengan menggunakan kuesioner laporan diri. Sampel dan latar sampel praktis yang terdiri dari 261 mahasiswa (laki-laki dan perempuan) di Politeknik Negeri Balikpapan. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa dengan jenis kelamin perempuan menjadi korban yang dominan dengan 4 tipe pengalaman yang dominan seperti, siulan/teriakan seksual, direndahkan karena jenis kelamin, komentar menyinggung tentang penampilan/tubuh, tatapan tidak nyaman atau ajakan tidak diinginkan. Berdasarkan hasil studi ini diharapkan dapat menjadi pertimbangan penting perguruan tinggi dalam membuat regulasi dan upaya persiapan pencegahan pelecehan seksual selama mahasiswa magang di industri sesuai dengan bidang masing-masing sebelum mahasiswa berangkat magang di Industri.

Kata kunci: Magang, Mahasiswa, Pelecehan Seksual, Indonesia

Abstract

This study aims to explore incidents of sexual harassment experienced by university students during their industrial internship programs. Internships are ideally designed to provide students with opportunities to apply the knowledge and skills acquired during their academic studies; however, in reality, they can become environments that expose students to the risk of sexual harassment. This study uses descriptive research using a self-report questionnaire. Sample and Background A practical sample consisting of 261 students (male and female) at the Balikpapan State Polytechnic. The results of this study show that female students become dominant victims with 4 dominant types of experiences such as, Sexual whistling/shouting, Demeaning because of gender, offensive comments about appearance/body, uncomfortable gazes or unwanted invitations. Based on the results of this study, it is hoped that it can be an important consideration for universities in making regulations and efforts to prepare for the prevention of sexual harassment during internships in the industry in accordance with their respective fields before students leave for internships in the industry.

Keywords : Internship, Student, Sexual Harassment, Indonesian

INTRODUCTION

Sexual harassment during a student's internship is a significant concern, as it directly impacts the psychological well-being and professional development of the intern. Studies have shown that female interns report experiencing higher rates of sexual harassment compared to their male counterparts, especially in sectors such as hospitality (La Lopa & Gong, 2020). This prevalence can result in severe emotional distress and can hinder the professional growth and academic aspirations of affected individuals, leading to a work environment that feels unsafe and hostile. In addition, awareness and education about sexual harassment is essential in reducing its occurrence; initiatives that raise awareness about the dynamics of gender-based violence can empower students and foster a more equitable workplace culture (Hardt et al., 2023; Vargas et al., 2020).

The context in which sexual harassment occurs during an internship raises urgent concerns regarding the protection of interns. Internships often put students in vulnerable positions, where they may rely on higher-ups for professional recommendations and future career opportunities. This dependency can create an environment where interns feel compelled to tolerate harassment instead of reporting it, for fear of retaliation or prejudice against their career advancement (Mehasb et al., 2017; Mohamad et al., 2020)). A study on nursing students revealed that those who had taken gender-related courses were better prepared to recognize and report incidents of harassment, underscoring the importance of the educational curriculum in raising awareness and coping strategies (Chang et al., 2020). This

suggests that institutions should be actively involved in developing robust training programs that not only educate students about their rights but also equip them with the resources to effectively challenge and report harassment.

Despite the increasing research on sexual harassment in various professional settings, there is still a knowledge gap regarding its specific impact on interns, particularly in different fields and educational backgrounds. For example, many studies have focused on sexual harassment in healthcare or academic settings, while less attention has been directed to areas such as hospitality or other non-traditional internship areas where female interns may experience unique stress (Frank et al., 2024; La Lopa & Gong, 2020). In addition, the current literature often fails to explore the opinions of victims of sexual harassment independently. To address this gap, research on sexual violence in student interns in the industry from the perspective of the victim's self-esteem, so as to build on that research and develop contextual strategies to effectively combat sexual harassment in all types of student internships.

Therefore, this study aims to describe the prevalence, forms, and perceived impacts of sexual harassment experienced by interns in Indonesian industries through a quantitative descriptive approach using a self-report questionnaire. Politeknik Negeri Balikpapan was selected as the research site because it represents one of Indonesia's vocational higher education institutions with strong collaboration across diverse industrial sectors in East Kalimantan. The institution's extensive internship placement network and its gender-diverse student population provide a

relevant and representative context for examining the issue of sexual harassment in industrial settings. By systematically documenting these experiences, this study seeks to provide empirical evidence that can inform policy development, institutional responses, and prevention strategies specifically tailored to protect interns within the Indonesian work environment. These findings will contribute to filling existing research gaps and support evidence-based approaches to creating a safer and more inclusive internship experience for Indonesian students across various industries.

METHOD

This study is a descriptive research using a self-report questionnaire (Kuis et al., 2015; Lajunen & Özkan, 2011). **Sample and Background** A practical sample consisting of 261 students (male and female) at the Balikpapan State Polytechnic. The inclusion criteria are students who have completed an internship in the industry while still in vocational school as a graduation requirement, and are willing to participate in this research voluntarily.

Measurement

Sexual Harassment Experiences
Sexual harassment experiences are measured by the following procedures. Students were asked if they experienced sexual harassment during their internship at the university as in the question in table 1.

All respondents were asked about their experiences of sexual harassment during the internship which was measured using Indonesian instruments that had been adopted and developed from research Konlan & Dangah (2023;

Lee et al., 2011) questionnaire question list (1-4 ever, sometimes, never, often) such as questions (e.g. question, Is there someone who displays, uses, or disseminates sexy material to you during the internship?). Internal consistency (Cronbach alpha 1/4 0.79) (Lee et al., 2011).

RESULT

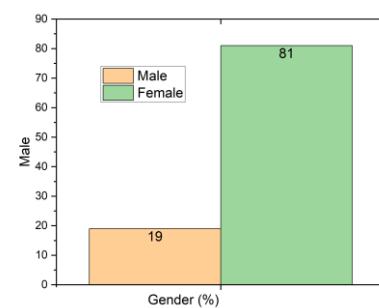


Figure 1: Gender of Respondents

Figure 1 illustrates that women constitute 81 % of the overall population, whilst men account for 19 %. The gender of these respondents shows that women are more willing to volunteer to be respondents in this study. In addition, demographic data of respondents by gender showed a fairly balanced composition even with the dominance of female respondents. This information becomes an important basis for an in-depth analysis of the experience of sexual violence during the internship. These proportional differences need to be considered in the subsequent interpretation of the results to avoid gender bias in the analysis. The data also showed that female respondents reported significantly higher incidents of harassment than male respondents, reflecting a gender gap in the experience of sexual harassment in the workplace.

Tabel 1: Frequency of Student Sexual Harassment Experience

Question	1	2	3	4
Percent (%)				

1. Is there someone during the internship who Displays, uses, or distributes sexy material to you?	4.0	7.9	88.1	0.0	at you in a way that makes you feel uncomfortable?				
2. Is there someone during the internship who Displays, uses, or distributes sexy material to you?	6.1	4.9	85.7	3.3	13. Is there someone during your internship who makes you feel like you're being bribed with a certain reward for sexual behavior?	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0
3. Is there someone who comments about sexiness that offends you?	9.4	2.4	85.1	3.0	14. Is there someone during an internship who makes you feel threatened with retaliation if you are not sexually cooperative.	0.0	5.5	94.5	0.0
4. Is there someone who looks down on you or belittles you because of your gender?	13.4	7.9	78.7	0.0	15. Is there someone who treats you badly for refusing to have sex?	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0
5. Is there someone who repeatedly tells you stories or sexual jokes that offend you?	9.7	6.1	84.2	0.0	16. Is there someone who signals better treatment if you are sexually cooperative?	0.0	3.0	97.0	0.0
6. Is it during the internship that someone whistles, calls, or yells at you in a sexual way?	14.9	14.3	70.8	0.0	17. Is there someone during your internship who makes you afraid that you will be treated badly if you are not sexually cooperative?	0.0	8.5	91.5	0.0
7. Is there someone who invites you to continue to discuss sexual issues even though you don't want to?	5.5	3.0	91.5	0.0	18. Is there someone during the internship who makes unwanted attempts to establish a Romantic Sexual Relationship With You?	2.4	2.4	92.1	3.0
8. Is there someone who makes sexually explicit and offending comments during the internship? when there are many people or in public places.	0.9	12.5	86.6	0.0	19. Is there someone who keeps asking you for dates, drinks, dinners, etc., even though you've said "No"?	4.9	5.5	86.6	3.0
9. Is there anyone on the Apprenticeship who makes offensive comments about your appearance, body, or sexual activity?	11.6	4.9	83.6	0.0	20. Is there anyone who makes gestures or uses sexual body language that embarrasses or offends you?	5.5	0.0	94.5	0.0
10. Is there someone during the internship who Touches you in a way that makes you feel uncomfortable?	0.0	5.5	91.5	3.0	21. Is it during your internship that someone you don't like try to pet, grope, or kiss you?	2.4	0.0	94.5	3.0
11. Is there anyone who makes gestures or uses sexual body language that embarrasses or offends you?	5.5	7.9	83.6	3.0	***N=329 respondent, 1= ever, 2=sometimes, 3=never, 4=often				
12. Is there someone who is staring, glanceing, or looking	13.1	9.4	74.5	3.0					

Table 1 data shows that Based on survey data involving 261 respondents, descriptive analysis shows that sexual

harassment during internships is a significant problem in the work environment. The data covers various forms of harassment ranging from verbal, non-verbal, physical, to digital-based harassment with the percentage of respondents reporting "never", "sometimes", "never", or "often" experiences. Results showed that most respondents experienced at least one form of harassment during their internships, with verbal harassment being the most commonly reported form. The percentage of respondents who answered "never" to verbal abuse reached an astonishing number, followed by non-verbal harassment such as inappropriate gazes or body movements. Meanwhile, physical abuse, although it has a lower percentage, remains a serious issue that needs to be addressed.

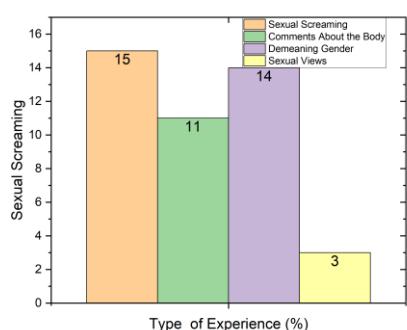


Figure 2. Dominant type of student experience

Figure 2 shows the percentage of experiences in four categories: sexual screaming (15 %), comments about the body (11 %), demeaning gender (14 %), and sexual views (3 %). Sexual screaming is the most common, while sexual looks are the rarest.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study show that verbal and non-verbal sexual harassment are the most prevalent

forms experienced by interns, with indicators such as sexual comments, abusive jokes, inappropriate views, and persistent date invitations despite having been rejected reported by the majority of respondents. These forms of abuse, while sometimes considered "mild" in the context of work culture, have a significant impact on the victim's sense of security, comfort, and psychological well-being. The high prevalence especially of sexual comments, offensive body movements, and unwanted attention in public spaces indicates a work culture that still tolerates such behavior. This illustrates the need for organizational cultural intervention through mandatory training, awareness campaigns, and active oversight from direct superiors to suppress tolerance for harassment even in a form that is considered "trivial" (St-Onge, 2024).

Further, although physical and digital harassment is reported in lower percentages, its existence still reflects the hierarchical nature and vulnerability of intern positions. The existence of cases of harassment based on threats or lures, such as pressure with the threat of ill-treatment or job rewards for being sexually cooperative, indicate an abuse of power by the more authoritative authorities. It highlights the urgency of establishing a safe, independent and guaranteed reporting channel of confidentiality, as well as legal and psychological protection for whistleblowers. Educational institutions and internship providers must work together to ensure internship programs are not only a professional learning space, but also an environment that protects the dignity and human rights of every individual, regardless of their status or gender (Lata, 2023).

Dominant Type of Student Sexual Experience Sexual Screams

Sexual screaming was the most commonly reported experience with a percentage of 14.89%. This suggests that this phenomenon is quite common and may be related to situations that trigger intense vocal responses, both in positive and negative contexts. These screams can reflect the emotional distress or trauma a person is experiencing in a sexual context.

Additionally, it's important to understand the context behind these sexual screams in order to provide appropriate support. The response of the community or the surrounding environment to this phenomenon also plays an important role in how these experiences affect individuals. Sensitive handling and adequate education can help reduce its negative impact (Mapayi et al., 2023).

Commenting on the Body

Comments about the body reached a percentage of 11 %, which is quite significant. These experiences usually relate to social interactions that involve judging or observing a person's physical appearance, which can be positive or negative. However, unwanted comments often make a person feel uncomfortable or objectified.

The impact of these kinds of comments can be widespread, ranging from a decline in confidence to mental health problems. Therefore, it is important to raise awareness about how to communicate that is respectful and supportive without causing feelings of inferiority or discomfort (Brunner & Dever, 2014; Montemurro, 2003; Tantleff-Dunn et al., 2016).

Degraded Gender

This category shows a percentage of 14 %, indicating that degrading treatment based on gender is still quite common. This illustrates the existence of gender inequality and

discrimination that is still a problem in various social contexts. This kind of treatment can limit opportunities and damage an individual's self-esteem.

Efforts to address this problem must involve education that instills the value of equality and respect for all genders. Speaking out and fighting gender-demeaning treatment is an important step in creating an inclusive and equitable environment (Leskinen et al., 2011; Murnen, 2000).

CONCLUSION

Based on the data and findings presented, it can be concluded that verbal and non-verbal sexual harassment is a significant problem and dominates the negative experiences of interns. Indicators such as sexual comments, rough jokes, inappropriate views and persistent date invitations show high prevalence in work culture. These forms of abuse, while often considered "mild" or "trivial", have a serious impact on the victim's sense of security, comfort, and psychological well-being. The high rates of "sexual screaming" and "gender degradation" also reinforce the image of an environment that is not yet fully safe and inclusive.

Although physical and digital harassment is reported in lower percentages, its existence still highlights the hierarchical nature and vulnerability of intern positions. Threats or lures associated with harassment indicate abuse of power. Therefore, organizational cultural intervention is needed through mandatory training, awareness campaigns, and active supervision from superiors. The establishment of a safe, independent, and guaranteed confidential reporting

channel, accompanied by legal and psychological protection for whistleblowers, is urgent. Educational institutions and internship providers have a shared responsibility to create an internship environment that is not only a professional learning space, but also guarantees the dignity and human rights of individuals.

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