

RATERS' JUDGMENTS OF RESPONSIBILITY TO A SEXUAL HARASSMENT
ACCUSATION FROM A DISSOLVED WORKPLACE ROMANCE: THE IMPACT
OF ETHICS AND BELIEF IN JUST WORLD

by

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ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk menilai tanggungjawab dalam memberi keadilan dan mendapatkan cadangan untuk tindakan yang harus diambil terhadap aduan gangguan seksual dimana pihak yang terlibat pernah menjalin hubungan percintaan di tempat kerja. Kajian ini juga cuba untuk menyumbangkan hasil tulisan mengenai topik ini yang didapati terhad, dengan mengkaji pengaruh etika penilai dan kepercayaan terhadap dunia yang adil sebagai pembolehubah penilaian dalam satu struktur keadaan seperti di atas. Data diperolehi dari 342 borang soalselidik yang diedarkan kepada organisasi-organisasi multinasional di sekitar Kawasan Perdagangan Bebas Bayan Lepas di Pulau Pinang. Hipotesis-hipotesis utama kajian ini diuji dengan menggunakan regresi berganda berhirarki. Keputusan analisa statistik menunjukkan hubungan yang positif di antara tanggungjawab dalam memberi keadilan dan cadangan untuk tindakan yang harus diambil. Tuduhan terhadap gangguan seksual tidak boleh dianggap sah walaupun pihak yang terbabit dalam pertuduhan pernah menjalin hubungan percintaan sebelum ini. Kajian ini juga membuktikan bahawa etika individu mempunyai pengaruh positif ke atas tindakan yang harus diambil ke atas pekerja yang terbabit. Penilai akan bertindak jika mendapati tingkah laku tersebut tidak beretika. Seterusnya, kepercayaan terhadap dunia yang adil didapati mempengaruhi interaksi di antara tanggungjawab dalam memberi keadilan dan cadangan untuk tindakan yang harus diambil. Kajian ini juga mendapati bahawa penilai yang mempunyai kepercayaan tinggi terhadap dunia yang adil, cenderung menyarankan bantuan dan kaunseling kepada pihak yang terlibat.

ABSTRACT

This present study is intended to examine judgments of responsibility and recommended personnel actions regarding a sexual harassment complaint whereby both the complainant and accused were previously involved with one another in a workplace romance. This study attempts to contribute to the limited literature available on this topic by studying the affects of rater's ethics and Belief In Just World as moderating variables in the above framework. Data was collected from 342 questionnaires distributed to multinational manufacturing organizations in the Bayan Lepas Free Trade Zone area in Penang. The main hypotheses of the study were tested using Hierarchical Multiple Regression. Results of the statistical analyses indicate that there is a positive relationship between judgments of responsibility and recommended personnel actions. A prior workplace romance was not found to wrongly legitimize sexual harassing behavior. We also found evidence that rater's ethics has a positive influence on personnel action. Rater's will act if they perceive the behavior as unethical. In addition, raters just world beliefs were found to moderate the interaction between judgments of responsibility and recommended personnel actions. This study also found that raters with higher just world beliefs who judged the accused responsible for the sexual harassment incident would be more inclined to recommend counseling and support.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

In recent years, increasing numbers of women are entering the workforce. According to statistics released in June 2000 in the Government's Economic Report 2000 – 2001, women constitute 44% of the labor force in Malaysia. In Europe, the expansion of the service sector which employs almost three – quarters of Europe's working women has also fueled the rise in number of jobs for women (Helms & Guffey, 1997). These economic and demographic changes in the workplace have created an environment conducive to workplace romance.

Romantic relationships in organizational settings have become common with 71% of respondents reporting having observed at least one relationship at work and 31% of persons surveyed had themselves been involved in a romantic relationship with someone at work (Dillard & Miller, 1998).

Results from a Workplace Romance survey of human resource professionals by the Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM) in 1998, suggest that workplace romances and sexually harassing behavior are connected. Specifically, 24% of the 617 respondents indicated that sexual harassment claims had occurred in their organization as a direct result of a workplace romance (SHRM, 1998).

A similar 2001 survey jointly conducted by SHRM and CareerJournal.com on 558 human resource professionals and 663 corporate executives showed that the number one reason to ban or discourage workplace romances was the potential for claims of sexual

harassment (95% of HR professionals and 78% of executives). However 75% of HR professionals and 59% of executives indicated their organizations had no policies on workplace romances (SHRM, 2001).

A local survey involving six pioneer companies which had adopted the Sexual Harassment Code of Practice in Malaysia, revealed that 38% of female respondents and 32% of male respondents reported having experienced sexual harassment in their workplace (Ng & Zanariah, 2001).

In a 1988 survey by Working Women magazine on 160 of the 'Fortune 500' manufacturing and service companies in the US, it found that the average losses to a company was \$6.7 million annually in terms of absenteeism, lower productivity, increased health care costs, poor morale, and higher employee turnover caused by sexual harassment (Sandroff, 1992). In the first sexual harassment survey performed by the US federal government, it discovered that the government itself had lost \$189 million between 1978 and 1980 from the effects of sexual harassment. Similarly, in its next survey, the federal government saw its losses jump to \$267 million for the years 1985-1987, even though the rate of sexual harassment had not changed (Hongchintakul & Kleiner, 2001).

In January 2004, Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon stated that Penang Gerakan would lobby for the Code of Practice on the Prevention and Eradication of Sexual Harassment in the Workplace to be compulsorily adopted and enforced by all employers. The party would work together on a solid proposal with unions, employers, non-governmental organizations, and legal aid bureaus for the introduction of a legislative provision to prevent sexual menace at the workplace. This was because the existing Code of Practice,

which was launched by the Human Resources Minister Datuk Dr Fong Chan Onn in August 1999 was not sufficient to effectively prevent sexual menace at workplaces as it is merely a guide and has no legal force to bind employers (The Star, January 12, 2004).

This study is intended to examine judgments of responsibility and recommend personnel actions regarding a sexual harassment complaint whereby both the complainant and accused were previously involved with one another in a workplace romance. In addition, this study attempts to give a better understanding of rater characteristics that influence their judgments of responsibility and recommended personnel actions. This study would examine ethics and Belief in Just World of raters in influencing judgments of responsibility and recommended personnel actions towards the accused and complainant.

1.2 Problem Statement

Since the Code of Practice on the Prevention and Eradication of Sexual Harassment in the Workplace was introduced in 1999, the number of reported incidents of sexual harassment has risen. The number of cases reported to the Labor Department was 61 for 2000, compared to just 29 cases in 1999 (Center for Asia - Pacific Women in Politics, 2001).

Sexual harassment claims can exact a high price from both employers and employees alike. These claims can affect the whole company as well as their colleagues (third parties) working together with them. They pose a serious risk to all employees' psychological and physical well being, having a direct impact on the quality of their work, home life, and emotional well being. Victims have shown negative work related

behavior such as lower morale, decreased job satisfaction, increased absenteeism, and a decrease in work performance (Burke, 1995; Hongchintakul & Kleiner, 2001; Moore & Kleiner, 2001).

The negative impact of sexual harassment claims are clear, however judgments of responsibility are not as clearly defined, with some cases resulting in the complainant getting equal or more blame compared to the accused. In this study, we would like to examine whether a prior workplace romance involving both parties, could wrongly legitimize sexual harassing behavior especially if the workplace romance had been dissolved unilaterally.

Our review on existing literature shows that an individual's ethics and beliefs influence their perceptions and behavior. As such, we would like to examine whether ethics and Belief In Just World have any influence on raters' perceptions and consequently their decision making in such a given scenario. Ethics and Belief in Just World are beliefs that are unique to each individual and we believe that these variables would make a very interesting study.

1.3 Research Objectives

Pierce, Aguinis, and Adams (2000) had found that rater's sex and attitude towards romance and sexual intimacy at work were each associated with a recommended personnel action. In this study, we would like to explore other rater's characteristics which are ethics and Belief In Just World in the above equation.

To the best of our knowledge, these variables have not been researched before in this type of context especially in Malaysia. We hope that the findings from this research

will give a better understanding and add to the existing literature available.

1.4 Research Questions

In line with our research objectives, five research questions were formulated:

- (1) Is there any significant relationship between rater's judgments on responsibility on sexual harassment accusations from a dissolved workplace romance and recommended personnel actions?
- (2) Does rater's ethics have an impact on recommended personnel actions?
- (3) Does rater's Belief In Just World have an impact on recommended personnel actions?
- (4) Does rater's ethics influence the relationship between judgments of responsibility and recommended personnel actions?
- (5) Does rater's Belief in Just World influence the relationship between judgments of responsibility and recommended personnel actions?

1.5 Significance of the Study

Sexual harassment in the workplace began to receive attention from researchers in the mid 1970's only, due to a sudden increase in the number of sexual harassment cases as the number of women in the workforce increased significantly (Gutek, 1985). Since then, there have been many studies done on this topic. However not much research has been done on sexual harassment claims as a result of a failed workplace romance especially from a third party's (rater's) point of view.

This study is significant as the data and information collected can contribute to a better understanding of judgments on responsibility on sexual harassment accusations

from a dissolved workplace romance in the Malaysian context. We also believe that this study can be helpful to Human Resources personnel who are involved in preparing guidelines concerning relationships in the workplace and on sexual harassment.

In a research carried out in Penang and Kedah, the majority of respondents indicated that sexual harassment information was acquired through the media instead of through formal training programs or seminars organized by their companies (Sharifah, 2001). As such, it is also hoped that this study can help increase awareness among organizations and encourage them to play a more active role on this issue.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study sampled employees of multinational manufacturing organizations located in the Bayan Lepas Free Trade Zone in Penang, Malaysia. These organizations are involved in various industries such as semiconductors, electronics, and computer components.

1.7 Definition of Key Variables

1.7.1 Ethics

Ethics are moral principles of beliefs about what is right or wrong that guide employees in dealing with other individuals and decision making (Tang, 2002).

1.7.2 Belief In Just World

The Belief in Just World Theory proposes that people believe in a world where individuals generally get what they deserve. This belief explains a basic human nature

whereby people expect to see good things happen to good people and vice versa (Lerner, 1980). A more detailed explanation can be found in the literature review.

1.8 Organization of the Remaining Chapters

Chapter 1 gives an overview of the research background. The subsequent chapter reviews literature related to our study. Topics covered include on workplace romance, sexual harassment, ethics, and Belief In Just World. Based on this literature review, we build our theoretical framework and hypotheses. The third chapter discusses the methodology of our research. We describe in detail the research site and sample, questionnaire design and measures, and statistical analyses. Chapter 4 presents the results of our research. The last chapter discusses the implications of our findings. Suggestions for future research are also proposed in the last chapter.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews past studies on workplace romance, sexual harassment, the link between workplace romance and sexual harassment, judgments of responsibility on sexual harassment accusations from a dissolved workplace romance and recommended personnel actions. We also review literature on sex, ethics and Belief In Just World, particularly on sexual harassment issues.

2.2 Workplace Romance

2.2.1 Definition

In Sternberg's (1986) triangular theory of love, he suggested that love is based on three components which are (a) intimacy, or feelings of closeness and connectedness in a relationship, (b) passion, or feelings of romance, sexual attraction, and the desire for sexual consummation, and (c) decision or commitment, which is the decision that one loves someone else and the commitment to maintain that love. One or more of these components exist in a workplace romance.

Workplace romances are relationships between people working together which are characterized by sexual attraction whether or not they are made known to others through the participants' behavior (Powell & Mainiero, 1990). Workplace romance is defined as mutually desired romantic relationships between two members of the same organization (Dillard, Hale, & Segrin, 1994). Romance involves a relationship between

two individuals from which others ordinarily are excluded, and romance is also more intense than friendship (Werking, 1997).

Literature on workplace romance can be grouped into three categories (a) empirical studies focusing on assessing the impact of intimate sexual relationships on productivity, and on generating guidelines to control and monitor employee behavior, (b) analyses addressing policy concerns to managers and organizations, and (c) how to advise for managers on handling workplace romance issues (Williams, Giuffre & Dellinger, 1999).

2.2.2 Antecedents to Workplace Romance

The workplace provides suitable conditions to develop a romance. Antecedent conditions to workplace romance include (a) proximity of working closely with others help foster interpersonal attractions, (b) sense of safety and familiarity at the workplace, (c) arousal from the intensity of the working relationship in pursuit of similar work goals and a feeling of excitement from tasks successfully completed foster interpersonal attractions, (d) convenience, and (e) willingness and motivation to become romantically involved (Loftus, 1995).

Pierce, Byrne, and Aguinis (1996) proposed that factors such as propinquity, repeated exposure, attitude similarity, physiological arousal, and evaluation of overt body characteristics can determine the extent of interpersonal attraction and desire for a workplace romance. Whether a workplace romance will develop depends on another set of factors, such as employees' attitude towards romance and sexual intimacy at work, levels of perceived job autonomy, and the organization's culture.

It should be noted that the relationship is a welcomed one for both partners. If the relationship is welcomed by one partner but not the other, it is likely to constitute sexual harassment because one party may be forcing his or her will on the other (Powell & Foley, 1998). Unwanted advances could lead to rebukes and even sexual harassment charges later.

2.2.3 Motives

Quinn (1977) and Maineiro (1986) identified several motives for an employee to participate in a workplace romance. The four motives are (a) love motive which is labeled as true love and sincere desire to seek a long-term companion or spouse, (b) ego motive which is labeled as a fling and a desire to seek adventure, excitement or sexual experience, (c) job motive which is considered utilitarian as one of the members is seeking work related benefits such as advancement, financial rewards or lighter workloads, and (d) power motive which is also considered utilitarian as one or both members are seeking off the job as well as on the job benefits.

2.2.4 Types of Workplace Romance

There are two types of workplace romance, (a) two romantically involved employees who are of equal organizational status participate in lateral romance, or (b) two romantically involved employees who differ in their organizational status participate in hierarchical romance (Pierce, Byrne, & Aguinis, 1997).

A survey done by Dillard, Hale, and Segrin (1994) found that 63% of workplace romances was between employees with unequal organizational rank and 37% was

between employees with equal organizational rank. In terms of type of workplace romance, 36% was classified as passionate (love and ego motive), 23% as companionate (sincere love motive), 22% as utilitarian (one partner has a job related motive and the other an ego motive), and 19% as a fling (ego motive). Mutual user romances (job related motive) however were not examined in their survey.

2.2.5 Perceptions About Workplace Romance

Compared to lateral romances, hierarchical romances, especially when they involve a direct reporting relationship, are perceived more negatively among members of the work group (Mainiero, 1986). It is also believed that hierarchical romances are more likely to lead to sexual harassment incriminations (Jenner, 1993).

Because workers' attitudes regarding romantic affairs in the workplace may be predictive of the initiation of such relationships, Powell (1986) examined employees' beliefs concerning sexual intimacy at the workplace and the conclusions drawn were that (a) boss-subordinate romances are perceived as more problematic compared to peer romances, and (b) females are more opposed to workplace romances as compared to males.

A survey (SHRM, 2001) supported these findings when 64% of HR professionals and 70% of executives indicated that the romance cannot or should not be between supervisor and subordinate. However male and female executives were found to share similar perceptions of workplace romance. Nevertheless a significantly higher percentage of males than females indicated that (a) romances should not occur between an employee and client, (b) romances should not occur between employee and vendor,

and (c) those involved in the romance must inform their supervisors of the relationship.

2.2.6 Consequences

Workplace romances have an important impact on participants, co-workers and the organization. The positive outcomes reported include increased teamwork, improved communication, reduced tension, and increased productivity. The negative outcomes, include hostility in the work group, distorted communication, reduced productivity, poorer decision making, threatened reputation, acts of sabotage, and retaliation (Mainiero, 1986).

Pierce and Aguinis (2003) did not find any positive association between job performance and intrinsic work motivation with employees' participation in a workplace romance. On the other hand, the findings did not prove that participating in a workplace romance leads to lower levels of job performance and work motivation among those involved in the relationship. Job satisfaction and organizational commitment however, were found to be positively associated with employees' participation in a workplace romance.

Negative consequences for individuals engaged in a workplace romance involve risks to one's career. When there are hierarchical differences, the higher level member may lose respect among co-workers because they think that judgments will be biased towards the other party. The lower level member on the other hand, may be uncertain whether progress in the organization is due to competence or favoritism (Paul & Townsend, 1998). As such, individuals should weigh the potential risks against the benefits before deciding to embark on a workplace romance.

2.3 Sexual Harassment

2.3.1 Definition

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (1980) defines unlawful sexual harassment as either quid pro quo (job favors in return for sexual favors) or environmental (hostile or offensive work environment). The behavior must be unwelcome, deliberate or repeated, and result in economic or psychological damage.

In Malaysia, Article 4 of the 1999 Malaysian Code of Practice on the Prevention and Eradication of Sexual Harassment in the Workplace defines sexual harassment as any unwanted conduct of a sexual nature having the effect of verbal, non-verbal, visual, psychological or physical harassment.

Despite this, courts have struggled to determine what constitutes sexual harassment and the circumstances under which employers may incur liability for the sexual harassment of employees by co-workers and supervisors. It is difficult to eliminate sexual harassment because attempting to regulate romance runs contrary to human nature (Apodaca & Kleiner, 2001).

Sexual harassment is a subjective concept and it is for each individual to determine what behavior is acceptable to them and what they regard as offensive (EC Code of Practice, 1991). There is no single situation that constitutes sexual harassment but can take one of many forms (Bellows & Kleiner, 2001).

A workplace romance is distinguished from sexual harassment in that it is jointly desired. A workplace romance is about attraction and wanted advances whereas sexual harassment is about unwanted advances.

2.3.2 Perceptions About Sexual Harassment

Research on measuring people's perceptions about sexual harassment can be divided into two categories (Gutek, 1985). One set attempts to understand which specific behaviors (e.g. repeated requests for a date, sexual touching, stares or glances) that respondents considered to be sexual harassment. Respondents are required to read a series of behaviors and asked which type of behavior is sexual harassment.

An example of such a study was by Sharifah (2001) who attempted to measure sexual harassment perceptions on five dimensions which were verbal harassment, non-verbal harassment, visual harassment, psychological harassment, and physical harassment. She reported that female respondents perceived physical harassment as more harassing than the other dimensions whereas male respondents perceived visual dimension as more harassing than the other types of sexual harassment dimensions.

The second set of studies attempts to understand factors that affect the way respondents evaluate vignettes in which various factors are manipulated. The factors that are manipulated include characteristics of the behavior (e.g. touching versus comments), characteristics of the situation (e.g. the relationship between the initiator and recipient), and characteristics of the initiator and recipient (e.g. sex, age) may be measured (Gutek & Done, 2000).

Gutek and Dunwoody (1987) found that sexual harassment incidents were considered more serious when the harasser is a supervisor rather than a coworker or subordinate. Furthermore, the incident is more likely to be perceived as sexual harassment when the harasser is a man while the victim is a woman and young. A survey on 190 respondents working on an oil refinery, 62% of male respondents and 92% of

female respondents indicated that suggestive comments made by a supervisor or colleague would certainly or possibly be classed as sexual harassment (Kiely & Henbest, 2000).

Perceptions also differ between men and women as to what constitutes sexual harassment, as women rate a wider variety of sexual behaviors at work as sexual harassment compared to men who tend to rate only the more extreme behaviors. Local research carried out by Wan Azhari (1996) and Sharifah (2001) also documented that women tend to perceive less severe acts or behaviors as sexual harassment as compared to men.

2.3.3 Forms of Sexual Harassment

It is also well known that sexual harassment in the workplace or unwelcome sexual conduct directed toward an organizational member, continues to be a problem plaguing organizations (Gutek, 1985). Sexual harassment occurs in all workplaces to varying degrees although it has been indicated that it is more likely to occur in male dominated environments or where women work in non-traditional roles (Kiely & Henbest, 2000). Less blatant forms of harassing behavior such as unwanted sexual attentions and gender-based harassment are much more common than blatant forms of harassing behavior such as sexual coercion and assault (Gutek, Cohen, & Conrad, 1990).

A research on students studying hospitality management in the UK returning from periods of supervised work experience showed that the most frequent form of harassment reported were suggestive remarks (89%), suggestive looks (66%), unwelcome physical contact (36%), verbal abuse (33%), and suggestive material (27%) (Worsfold & McCann,

2000).

However a local study revealed that verbal harassment in the form of language, messages, and sexual comments on one's body was the most common form of harassment encountered with 31% of respondents reported having experienced it. The second highest form of harassment reported was in terms of physical contact. Both forms of harassment were similarly faced by respondents in all occupational and age groups in the companies surveyed (Ng & Zanariah, 2001).

2.3.4 Harassers and Victims

In a study of over 100 applicants who had brought sexual harassment claims before industrial tribunals, it was found that in general the sexual harasser was the victim's superior (74% of cases) and in 71% of cases was the victim's immediate boss. (Earnshaw & Davidson, 1994). Similarly, two-thirds of sexual harassment complaints encountered in America's largest corporations were made against immediate supervisors and upper management (Barton & Eichelberger, 1994).

Findings by Worsfold and McCann (2000) seem to validate this pattern. A total of 156 cases of sexual harassment were reported to have occurred during the period of supervised work experience in 88% of the incidents, the victim was female and the harasser male. The largest employee group responsible for harassing students was colleagues followed closely by management.

According to a study on 8,081 respondents from 22 departments and agencies in the US, Newman, Jackson, and Baker (2003) noted that women were also much more likely to report having been harassed than men. The estimated probability of a typical

female worker reporting that she had received unwanted sexual attention is 0.51, whereas the estimated probability of a male counterpart was only 0.22. It was also documented that victims of sexual harassment were generally young, single or divorced women in a low-status job. Their results also indicate that men were more likely to have been accused of sexual harassment.

In addition new and younger entrants to the workforce were the most likely to be harassed. About half of those aged 15 - 24 years reported having experienced sexual harassment compared to only about one quarter of those between 35 - 44 years old (Ng, Zanariah, & Maria, 2003).

To summarize, harassers tend to be men who are normally in a position of authority over their victim. In general, the sexual harasser was the victim's superior. Physical harassment also appears more likely to come from supervisors than from colleagues or juniors. Male employees are also more likely than female employees to direct sexually harassing behavior towards a member of the opposite sex (Gutek, 1985).

2.3.5 Coping Strategies

Findings by Kiely and Henbest (2000) indicated that majority of respondents who had experienced sexual harassment either chose to ignore the behavior or made a joke out of it. Male respondents tended to leave the matter as that. However, some females had to ask the person to stop bothering them and some made a conscious effort to avoid the harasser. Other common responses were a verbal approach to the harasser, reporting the matter to their supervisor or speaking to a confidant within the organization (Worsfold & McCann, 2000). However a local survey revealed that the preferred coping strategies

were to share the information with a trusted person and to discuss with the management in the organization (Sharifah, 2001).

To summarize, victims of sexual harassment may rely on indirect internal strategies such as ignoring the behavior or indirect external strategies such as relying on social support from others. Victims may also rely on assertive external strategies such as confronting the harasser as well as reporting the harasser to the organization (Pryor, 1985).

Negative consequences for the victim of sexual harassment has been well documented. The experience of sexual harassment were related to lower satisfaction, greater intention to quit, and greater cynicism about the firm's commitment to fair treatment of staff (Burke, 1995). Other negative effects of sexual harassment include loss of self-confidence, low self esteem, increased stress levels, anxiety, and depression (Hongchintakul & Kleiner, 2001; Moore & Kleiner, 2001).

Reactions to the sexual harassment incidents include feelings of anger and loss of confidence, shaking and trembling, sleeplessness, irritability, and a tendency to cry often. Majority of victims also had to seek medical help and were prescribed drugs such as sleeping pills and anti-depressants (Earnshaw & Davidson, 1994). The frequency of sexual harassment also exerted a direct affect on negative work-related mood, which, in turn, affects turnover intentions, psychosomatic problems (headaches, sleep problems, gastric problems), and interpersonal dissatisfaction (with co-workers and supervisors) (Barling et al., 1996).

2.4 Link between Workplace Romance and Sexual Harassment

The most serious consequence of a workplace romance is sexual harassment. Issues to be studied include whether the conduct was unwelcome, severe enough to create a hostile work environment, based on gender or affected terms conditions or privileges of employment (Paul & Townsend, 1998).

Workplace romances and sexual harassment should be treated as related social-sexual issues as both contain a sexual component. A dissolved direct reporting hierarchical liaison was advanced as the affective link between workplace romances and sexual harassment in organizations. This is because such liaisons involve two employees who are required to work frequently with one another during daily work routines and are dependent on each other for the successful completion of critical tasks. It is believed the negative affect of a dissolved romance coupled with the inevitable repeated exposure at the workplace increases the possibility of sexual harassment (Pierce & Aguinis, 1997).

It was proposed by Pierce and Aguinis (2001) that dissolved companionate and passionate romances were more likely to lead to a hostile environment with sexual harassing behavior (such as unwanted sexual attention, physical touching, repeated requests for dates) than quid pro quo harassing behavior. This is because in contrast to dissolved mutual user and utilitarian romances, dissolved companionate and passionate romance may foster greater empathy for one's former partner, thereby resulting in less desire to engage in quid pro quo harassing behavior.

A dissolved companionate and passionate romance was also proposed to be more likely by to lead to a hostile environment with sexual harassing behavior when the romance dissolved unilaterally rather than bilaterally. The partner who did not initiate

the dissolution would more likely than the initiator to attempt to rekindle the romance. An employee who was previously participating in companionate or passionate romance might attempt to rekindle the loving relationship by engaging in romantic, affectionate behaviors that, once considered appropriate, could be perceived by the former romantic partner as unwanted and thus sexually harassing. Former partners who had genuine romance motives may find it difficult to alter their pattern of intimate behavior towards one another immediately after the relationship dissolves (Pierce & Aguinis, 2001).

Alternatively, an employee might communicate sexual jokes or to discuss sexual issues with his or her former romantic partner that, once deemed appropriate, could be perceived by the former partner as offensive and thus sexually harassing. The harasser might not even consider these forms of hostile environment behavior to be sexually harassing (Tata, 1993). This view was also shared by Stringer, Remick, Salisbury and Ginorio (1990), which mentioned that a relationship that is followed by loss of interest by one person might make the still interested party to pursue the relationship in such a way that it might ultimately become harassing.

A prior history of workplace romance can also wrongly legitimize hostile environment sexual harassing behavior (Summers & Myklebust, 1992), serving to create an ambiguous situation in the eyes of other employees and serve to disguise or legitimize his social-sexual behavior. A prior relationship has also lowered ratings of sexual harassment by raters (Weber-Burdin & Rossi, 1982).

2.5 Judgments of Responsibility on Sexual Harassment Accusations from a Dissolved Workplace Romance

An experiment by Summers and Myklebust (1992) showed that judgments of responsibility and recommended personnel actions regarding a sexual harassment complaint are affected by the rater's sex and whether the male accused and female complainant were previously involved with one another in a workplace romance. Their study indicated that a (a) history of romance between the accused and complainant resulted in more favorable responses regarding the accused and less favorable responses regarding the complainant, and (b) male raters were also found to respond more favorably towards the accused, whereas female raters responded more favorably towards the complainant.

However, results based on a sample of 226 sheriff's department employees in a study done by Pierce et al. (2000) failed to obtain the same findings. Their findings indicated that male and female raters did not differ in their attitude towards romance and sexual intimacy at work. Their hypothesis that male and female raters would judge a male accused of sexual harassment as more responsible and a female complainant as less responsible for the harassing behavior when the accused and complainant were previously involved in a hierarchical (male supervisor - female subordinate) as opposed to a lateral workplace romance also could not be proven in their findings. Judgments however were found to differ depending on romance motives.

Foley (1996) also argued that coworker's reactions to workplace romances are also based on the actions taken by management, if any, in response to the romance. It was also proposed that (a) coworkers form perceptions of the perceived justice of a

management intervention regarding a workplace romance, whether strong or weak in severity, according to the type of romance (hierarchical or lateral), (b) attributed motives for the romance (job related or non job related), (c) their own beliefs about workplace romance in general (positive or negative), (d) perceived disruption of the work group (high or low), and (e) perceived conflict of interest (present or absent).

2.6 Recommended Personnel Actions

Quinn (1977) described three general kinds of interventions that organizations make in response to a specific organizational romance, (a) no action at all, (b) punitive action such as reprimand, warning, transfer or termination, and (c) positive action such as open discussion or counseling. In a survey of 200 chief executives, 70% of respondents said that romances between workers were ‘none of the company’s business’ (Fisher & Welsh, 1994). Employers are encouraged to get involved in employees’ privacy matters only when job performance is affected and to educate employees on the risks involved in workplace romance (Paul & Townsend, 1998).

Mainiero (1986) however recommended that managerial actions, ranging in severity from discussions and reprimands to transfers and terminations, should be taken only when exploitation of one participant by the other had actually occurred in a romantic relationship. Similarly, when no exploitation had occurred, no action was necessary.

Summers and Myklebust (1992) showed that raters perceive the degree of appropriateness of various personnel actions differently depending on the sex of the rater and whether the male accused and female complainant had a prior history of workplace romance. Compared to female raters, male raters were found to be more lenient with the

accused when the accused and complainant had a prior history of romance. This observation may be caused by the dissolved romance legitimizing the harassing behavior.

This was supported and advanced by Pierce et al. (2000) in their study that (a) male raters were more likely to ignore the harassment complaint and drop the issue, (b) raters were more likely to suggest disciplining the accused when the prior romance was hierarchical as opposed to lateral, and (c) in terms of disciplinary action, raters with a more favorable attitude towards romance and sexual intimacy at work will respond more leniently towards a male accused of sexual harassment. Recommended actions also differed depending on romance type and rater's characteristics.

2.7 Sex

Men and women can be differently motivated when judging the cause of sexually harassing behavior. In a sexual harassment accusation, the accused are typically men and the complainant are usually female. As such, male raters are able to identify with and favor the male accused by attributing more responsibility to the female complainant. Female raters want to avoid being harmed in a similar future situation, and thus identify and favor the female complainant by attributing more responsibility to the male accused. (Summers & Myklebust, 1992).

This is in line with the thinking that women are disproportionately victims of rape and sexual assault, thus women have a stronger incentive to be concerned with sexual behavior. Men, who are rarely victims of sexual assault, may view sexual conduct in a vacuum without a full appreciation of the social setting or the underlying threat of violence that a woman may perceive (Croney & Kleiner, 1995). De Judicibus and

McCabe (2001) validated this assumption with their findings. Their study on workers and students confirmed that although the majority of subjects attributed little blame to the victim, males blamed the victim of sexual harassment more than females did.

2.8 Ethics

2.8.1 Definition

Taylor (1975) (as cited in Chow, 2001) defined ethics "... inquiry into the nature and grounds of morality where the term morality is taken to mean moral judgment, standards, and rules of conduct." Ethics are moral principles of beliefs about what is right or wrong that guide employees in dealing with other individuals and decision making (Tang, 2002).

2.8.2 Ethical Decision Making

Jones (1991) proposed a four component model of ethical decision making as consisting of (a) recognizing a ethical issue, (b) making an ethical judgment, (c) establishing intentions to engage in ethical behavior, and (d) actual ethical behavior. According to this model, the perceived moral intensity of the ethical issue would influence all components of the ethical decision making process.

Moral intensity consists of six components, which are (a) proximity, which is the affinity between the moral agent with the victims or beneficiaries of the action, (b) magnitude of consequences, which is the sum of the harms or benefits resulting from a given action, (c) social consensus, which is the extent of agreement that an action is ethical or unethical, (d) concentration of effect, which is the number of people affected by