



Identifying the Gaps, Limitations, and Effectiveness of Psychosocial and Mental Health Support

for Survivors of Sexual Harassment
in the Kenyan Media

Synopsis

Sexual harassment in the workplace is a pervasive issue with profound consequences, affecting individuals and organizations alike. Within the Kenyan media industry, it has emerged as a pressing concern that warrants careful examination and intervention.

This report explores the critical subject of “Identifying the Gaps, Limitations, and Effectiveness of Psychosocial and Mental Health Support for Survivors of Sexual Harassment in the Kenyan Media.”

This crucial inquiry has been commissioned jointly by the Association of Media Women in Kenya (AMWIK) and the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

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List of Abbreviations

AMWIK	Association of Media Women in Kenya
MCK	Media Council Kenya
PTSD	Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
FIDA	Federation of Women Lawyers in Kenya
NGO's	Non-Governmental Organisation
MOOC	Massive Open Online Courses
WAN – IFRA	The World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers
HR	Human Resources

1.0 Introduction

Sexual harassment in the workplace is a pervasive issue with profound consequences, affecting both individuals and organizations. The widespread sexual harassment of female journalists in Kenya is exacerbated by a legislative environment, which fails to curb the scourge. This ultimately results in a silencing of female journalists (King'ori & Nyanoti, 2021). This pervasiveness in turn foments misogynistic and patriarchal interests that result in a form of media capture. Sexual harassment also incrementally negatively affects the mental health of female journalists who have to endure working in unsafe newsrooms (Wangusi & Abuya, 2019). Essentially, this report draws a causal link of a triad of sexual harassment, media capture, and its debilitating effects on the mental health of journalists in Kenya.

In the context of the Kenyan media industry, sexual harassment has emerged as a pressing concern that necessitates thorough examination. The extent and urgency of the challenge of sexual harassment within Kenyan newsrooms were revealed in a comprehensive study on the subject, which shed light on the extent of this problem in the media industry. This study involved 240 participants and 20 Key Informants (KIs). It sought to assess the prevalence of sexual harassment in the Kenyan media, evaluate the existing legal framework in Kenya to curb the vice, and uncover the underlying challenges to curbing it.

The study revealed a disturbingly high prevalence of sexual harassment within Kenyan newsrooms, with a staggering 60% of respondents reporting experiencing sexual harassment during their careers.

As a result of the discovery of the high prevalence and substantial harmful effect of sexual harassment in the Kenyan media, this report reveals the results of the exploratory research on the essential subject of "Identifying the Gaps, Limitations, and Effectiveness of Psychosocial and Mental Health Support for Survivors of Sexual Harassment in the Kenyan Media."

Evaluating the psychological and mental health effects of sexual harassment on Kenyan journalists, constitutes a fundamental and significant objective of this study. Sexual harassment in the workplace is a pressing issue that requires attention. It not only restricts women's access to educational and professional opportunities, and exacerbates gender disparities, but also infringes upon individuals' rights and dignity (Blumell, 2023). This in turn constitutes a form of media capture as women are systematically excluded from the media space, and as patriarchal interests and privilege are nurtured, protected

or advanced (Tshuma et al., 2023). Our study pointed out that at least 61% of female participants felt unsafe in reporting incidences of sexual harassment.

Secondly, sexual harassment's negative psychological impact can be severe and enduring, such as trauma, anxiety, and depression that detrimentally affects a journalists' well-being. Analysing these effects is crucial as it reveals the factors contributing to the persistence of harassment and the challenges its victims encounter when reporting and seeking justice (Wood et al., 2018). Our study highlighted that 55% of respondents who had been sexually harassed ended up changing jobs or becoming less responsive to other journalists as a coping mechanism.

Thirdly, comprehending the harmful psychological impact of sexual harassment on journalists aids in crafting effective interventions to curb it, as well as identifying effective support systems for survivors (Hershcovis et al., 2021). By examining these effects, researchers and policy-makers can develop targeted interventions to curb the vice. Furthermore, grasping the harmful effects of sexual harassment contributes to raising awareness and education about the issue, enabling individuals, organizations, and society at large to understand the consequences. Our research showed that at least 56% were not aware of any interventions or training workshops to fight sexual harassment.

In short sexual harassment of journalists in Kenyan media houses takes place in an environment where patriarchal and misogynistic interests have constituted a form of media capture, and this leads to female journalists operating in an environment that is not safe (Baker, González, and Relly, 2023). Policies and regulatory mechanisms remain inadequate when it comes to deterring offenders from committing sexual harassment, which inadvertently results in journalists, particularly female interns, feeling insecure in their workspaces (De Vuyst, 2020). This subsequently erodes the mental health of journalists who may end up being bullied into changing professions or adopting other coping mechanisms, such as working in isolation and avoiding contact with fellow journalists (Slavtcheva-Petkova et al., 2023).

1.1 The Alarming Prevalence of Sexual Harassment

The urgency of this study is underscored by the alarming prevalence of sexual harassment in the Kenyan media. A study commissioned by the Association of Media Women in Kenya (AMWIK), with support from the Thomson Reuters Foundation, has revealed distressing insights into the prevalence of the vice in the Kenyan media sector. Shockingly, this research uncovered that at least 59%

of respondents (n=240) in Kenya have experienced sexual harassment at their workplace. These statistics are a real representation of the lived experiences of individuals who have endured distressing, often traumatic, encounters.

1.2 The Kenyan Context

Equally concerning is the revelation that over 70% of the respondents (n=240) indicated that they knew of perpetrators of sexual harassment who are yet to be punished for their crime. This stark reality highlights a deeply rooted culture of misogyny and a systemic failure to address sexual harassment effectively. The consequence of this culture extends beyond the immediate victims, affecting workplace morale, productivity, and the overall well-being of media professionals as a whole. This crystallizes a misogynistic and patriarchal media capture, as female journalists have to endure working in a hazardous space. Of the respondents, 77% said that they did not know of any initiatives that would be powerful enough to dislodge the problem of sexual harassment in their work places.

An environment where female journalists find it difficult and uncomfortable to work because of constant sexual harassment can have far-reaching negative consequences that extend beyond the immediate victims. One of the most significant adverse impacts of the vice is on workplace morale. When employees are subjected to a hostile work environment, characterized by bullying, sexual harassment, and a lack of support by their supervisors or co-workers, their morale is likely to suffer. This can lead to decreased job satisfaction, increased stress levels, and a general sense of dissatisfaction among media professionals in Kenya (Bluemell, 2023).

Of the respondents, 63% indicated that they did not feel empowered or protected enough to report the sexual harassment perpetrators. “No matter what you say, after reporting the culprits, you are, in one way or another, forced as the victim to change the way you work or socialise with your colleagues.” A hostile work culture can have a detrimental effect on a journalist’s productivity. When employees are constantly subjected to negative behaviour such as sexual harassment, their ability to focus and perform at their best is compromised. Research has shown that toxic work environments can lead to decreased productivity, increased absenteeism, and higher employee turnover rates (Rasool et al., 2020). This not only affects the individuals directly involved but also the media industry in Kenya. Consequently, a misogynistic and patriarchal media capture is exacerbated as disheartened female journalists are defeated in their efforts to challenge, eliminate or neutralise sexual harassment.

The overall well-being of media professionals is also significantly impacted by sexual harassment in the newsroom. Studies have found that exposure to sexual harassment in the newsroom can have negative effects on the physical and mental health of journalists. Chronic stress, anxiety, and depression, are common outcomes of working in a space with prevalent sexual harassment (Blumell and Mulupi, 2021). Sexual harassment therefore adversely impacts the mental health of journalists in a manner that urgently calls for sustainable interventions that lead to positive outcomes with regards to curbing the crime. A significant intervention creates a progressive and enabling work culture. primarily because 39.8% of the respondents in our study attributed organizational culture to being responsible for sexual harassment.

1.3 The Imperative for Comprehensive Support

It is evident that addressing sexual harassment in the Kenyan media is not a moral imperative only but a necessity if integrity is to be sustained in the industry. Survivors of sexual harassment require immediate assistance and comprehensive psychosocial and mental health support to heal and regain their professional footing.

This report conducts a comprehensive examination of the existing support mechanisms, identifies gaps and limitations, and assesses their overall effectiveness in assisting survivors of sexual harassment within the Kenyan media. By shedding light on these critical aspects, this study aims to offer actionable insights and recommendations, fostering a safer, more supportive, and equitable work environment for all media professionals.

In the pages ahead, we will explore the methodology, key findings, and resulting recommendations from this vital inquiry. This report aims to foster positive change, challenge the culture of impunity, and create a media landscape in Kenya where every individual can work free from sexual harassment.

1.4 A Note on the Methodology

This qualitative research study examined the psychological and mental health effects of sexual harassment in the Kenyan media . The methodology involved an extensive document review and an online questionnaire distributed via Google Forms, ensuring anonymity and identity protection for the respondents during data collection. The survey received responses from 240 individuals including journalists, academics, and other professionals. Of

the respondents, 148 were journalists (98 females and 50 males). Additionally, the study conducted 25 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) involving 20 journalists and 5 academics. To preserve participant anonymity, quotations from the KIIs are coded and presented using numbers.

Research has shown that sexual harassment can have significant adverse impacts on the mental health and well-being of the survivors. A study by Street et al., (2007) examined the association between sexual harassment experiences and mental health symptoms. They found that sexual harassment exerted similar negative effects on both men and women. This highlighted the importance of understanding the negative psychological impact of sexual harassment on the different gender (Street et al., 2007).

Likewise, the impact of sexual harassment on mental health is not limited to specific professions. Vargas et al., (2020) conducted a large-scale examination of the incidence and impact of sexual harassment on physicians and other faculty members at an academic medical centre. The researchers emphasized the need for interventions to address sexual harassment, as it affects the mental health and career outcomes of both male and female physicians (Vargas et al., 2020).

Longitudinal studies have also explored the association between sexual harassment and mental health outcomes. Houle et al., (2011) investigated the impact of sexual harassment on depressive symptoms during the early occupational career. Their findings confirmed a negative association between sexual harassment and mental health, highlighting the importance of considering the long-term consequences of such experiences.

Moreover, the impact of sexual harassment on mental health is not limited to a specific gender. Haas et al., (2009) conducted a study on male and female police officers and found that sexual harassment was associated with negative mental health outcomes for both gender. This highlights the need for comprehensive interventions to address sexual harassment and its adverse impact on the mental health in various occupational settings for both gender.

2.0 Psychological Impact of Sexual Harassment on Journalists in Kenya

A recent study featuring 16 countries across sub-Saharan Africa, South-east Asia, and the Arab regions, found that 8 out of 10 female journalists reported experiencing sexual harassment at least once in their careers in Kenya, highlighting the widespread nature of the problem (Blumel, et al., 2023).

As a common occurrence in media houses, sexual harassment negatively and profoundly affects journalists psychologically. It often leads to psychological distress, such as anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder. The constant fear of encountering their harassers or facing further harassment at work contributes to heightened stress and anxiety levels. Journalists may develop a sense of helplessness and vulnerability, which can erode their overall mental well-being.

One of the most distressing aspects of sexual harassment for journalists is the stigma associated with being a survivor. Many journalists fear being stigmatized or blamed for the sexual harassment, leading to their feeling isolated and lonely (Blumel et al., 2023). This isolation can intensify their mental health struggles as they grapple with the emotional aftermath of the harassment. At least 87% of the research participants felt less trusting towards the process, of dealing with sexual harassment in their work places which invariably leads to their isolation at work.

On the same note, sexual harassment has a significant impact on job performance. It can lead to decreased productivity, increased absenteeism, and difficulties in concentrating on tasks in the office. The constant distress and emotional burden hinder journalists' ability to deliver quality journalism, affecting their professional reputation and career advancement. This ultimately impedes media freedom as journalists are incapacitated and prevented from performing optimally at work.

To cope with the trauma of sexual harassment, some journalists may resort to unhealthy coping mechanisms such as substance abuse, further exacerbating their mental health issues (Hennekam & Bennett, 2017). Additionally, survivors often experience a decline in self-esteem as the harassment makes them question their worth and abilities. This hinders their confidence and overall well-being.

Reporting sexual harassment poses significant challenges for journalists in

Kenya. Fear of retaliation, career damage, and lack of confidence in reporting mechanisms deter them from seeking help (Zviyita and Mapudzi, 2023). Furthermore, a lack of awareness or knowledge of anti-sexual harassment policies compounds the problem as survivors fail to seek redress. Our study found that 69.5% of the respondents were not aware of any existing editorial policy, or guidelines to assist them in reporting cases of sexual harassment.

Media organizations play a crucial role in supporting the mental health and well-being of journalists. It is essential for them to create safe and supportive environments for survivors to come forward and report harassment. Implementing robust anti-harassment policies, conducting awareness campaigns, and providing access to mental health resources are crucial steps in curbing sexual harassment in the work place.

3.0 The Impact of Sexual Harassment on Stigmatization and Isolation

Sexual harassment is a deeply distressing experience that can have lasting and profound effects on individuals. Among the many adverse consequences of sexual harassment, two of the most prevalent and debilitating are stigmatization and isolation. In this section, we will explore in detail how these two aspects impact survivors of sexual harassment.

Stigmatization

Stigmatization is the process of labelling and stereotyping individuals based on certain characteristics or experiences (Mapudzi, 2023).

Blame and Shame

Survivors are frequently subjected to victim-blaming, where they are held responsible for the sexual harassment they endured. This blame can manifest in comments such as “Why didn’t you speak up earlier?” or “What were you wearing?” Such reactions from colleagues or supervisors place the burden of proof on the survivor rather than the perpetrator, contributing to feelings of shame by the survivor. Some colleagues publicly questioned survivors on how the sexual harassment happened. Repeatedly narrating the ordeal causes survivors to feel uncomfortable and ashamed. “The whispers about the sexual harassment by colleagues in corridors can make it difficult for the survivor to focus on their work, and it can also make them feel more self-conscious.”

Professional Stigma

In many cases, survivors fear that reporting sexual harassment may negatively impact their professional reputation. They worried that being labelled as a “harassment victim” may hinder their career advancement or lead to discrimination in the workplace. Of the participants, 87.3% identified fear of victimisation as a major hurdle in addressing the problem of sexual harassment at the workplace.

Silencing Effect

Some journalists stated that fear of stigmatisation discouraged them from reporting sexual harassment or seeking support. They internalized the stigma associated with being a survivor, leading to self-censorship and the suppression of their feelings. Of the respondents, 54.5% said that they did not know of guarantees to anonymity after reporting a case. They therefore preferred to stay silent regarding the sexual harassment rather than get exposed.

Social Isolation

Stigmatisation extends to survivors’ social circle. Friends, family, or colleagues, can inadvertently perpetuate the stigma through judgemental comments or avoidance. This can lead to social isolation, where survivors withdraw from their support networks due to the fear of judgement. Of the respondents, 63.2% indicated that they were not aware of organizations that support victims of sexual harassment. The lack of support from organizations, or the lack of information, compounds the problem, as survivors of sexual harassment are left feeling isolated and ostracised by those they were formerly close to

Isolation

Isolation is a common response to the trauma of sexual harassment. Survivors often experience different forms of isolation

Self-Imposed Isolation

Many survivors withdraw from social interactions as a coping mechanism after they are sexually harassed. They isolate themselves to avoid triggering situations that force them to recall the trauma and the feelings that resulted from it, or to protect themselves from potential harm. This isolation can be emotionally taxing and exacerbate feelings of loneliness and depression. Of the respondents, 47% reported that they avoid socializing with colleagues as a result of the sexual harassment they went through.

Workplace Isolation

In the workplace, survivors may distance themselves from colleagues or professional networks to avoid encountering their harasser, or to blot out reminders of the harassment. This isolation can impact their job performance, career advancement, and overall job satisfaction.

Avoidance of Reporting

Some respondents felt that the lack of supporting mechanisms made it difficult for them to report cases of sexual harassment. Fear of isolation in the work place or industry can discourage survivors from reporting the harassment. They may believe that coming forward will lead to further isolation and ostracization.

Psychological Isolation

The emotional toll of sexual harassment can lead to a sense of psychological isolation. Survivors said they still struggle to connect with others who have not experienced similar trauma, making it difficult to share their feelings and experiences regarding the sexual harassment.

4.0 Combating Stigmatisation and Isolation

Addressing the impact of sexual harassment on stigmatisation and isolation requires a multifaceted approach.

Education and Awareness	Promoting awareness about the harmful effects of stigmatisation and isolation of the survivors by their social circle and work colleagues is essential. Training programmes and workshops help colleagues and communities understand the experiences of survivors and avoid victim-blaming. While organizations such as the Association of Media Women in Kenya (AMWIK) and the Media Council of Kenya (MCK) have held workshops and training programmes about sexual harassment, there is still a wide gap to bridge as over 30% of the study respondents indicated that they had not attended a workshop or seminar about sexual harassment in the last three years.
Support Systems	Establishing support networks and resources within work places and communities provides survivors with a safe space to share their experiences without fear of stigmatization or isolation. At least 46.8% of the respondents in our study said they were not aware whether reporting procedures and support structures existed their places of employment.
Legal Protection	Strengthening legal protection against retaliation against survivors for reporting sexual harassment encourages them to come forward without fearing professional negative repercussions. At least 47% of participants reported that they did not know of any anonymous channels for reporting sexual harassment in their work places.
Counselling and Therapy	Access to mental therapeutic health services and counselling is crucial for survivors in order for them to cope with the emotional aftermath of harassment, and to reduce their isolation. Organizations like the Kenya Red Cross and the Media Council of Kenya offer links to counselling services to sexual harassment survivors.

5.0 The Impact of Sexual Harassment on Job Performance of Journalists in Kenya

Sexual harassment in the workplace is a pervasive issue that affects individuals in various professions, including journalism. In Kenya, journalists frequently encounter the damaging consequences of sexual harassment, which not only harm the individual survivors but also have a broader impact on the media industry.

Emotional Distress and Psychological Toll

Sexual harassment results in significant emotional distress for survivors. Journalists who experience such harassment may struggle with anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). These mental health challenges hinder their ability to focus, make clear decisions, and perform optimally in their work roles.

The constant fear of encountering the harasser or facing further harassment creates a hostile work environment that exacerbates stress and negatively affects work performance. Survivors may find it challenging to concentrate on their work, leading to decreased productivity and quality of output. Of the respondents, 54% indicated that they did not know if their work place empowers them to report a sexual harassment incident anonymously.

Erosion of Self-Esteem and Confidence

Journalists rely heavily on their self-esteem and confidence to pursue investigative stories, ask tough questions, and report on critical issues. Sexual harassment erodes these essential traits, leaving survivors feeling self-doubt and inadequacy. As a result, their willingness to tackle challenging stories may diminish, leading to a decline in the quality of journalism.

Moreover, diminished self-esteem affects journalists' ability to interact with colleagues, sources, and the public effectively. Confidence is crucial in building trust and rapport with sources and readers, and its erosion can hinder the journalist's career progression and overall job performance.

Fear of Retaliation and Reporting Hurdles

Reporting sexual harassment can be a daunting task, especially in a close-knit industry like journalism. Fear of retaliation is a significant barrier for journalists who wish to report harassment. They worry about the impact that reporting the harassment may have on their professional relationships, job security, and career advancement.

The reluctance to report harassment not only allows the harasser to continue their misconduct but ultimately perpetuates a culture of silence about the vice in newsrooms. This culture can hinder efforts to address and curb sexual harassment, which affects the overall work environment and job performance of all journalists. Of our respondents, 49% indicated that they know some perpetrators of sexual harassment at their work place.

Sexual harassment can be a persistent distraction in the work place. Journalists who are victims or witnesses of harassment find it challenging to concentrate on their tasks, meet deadlines, and maintain a cohesive work environment. This distraction can lead to errors, missed opportunities, and a decline in work performance.

Distraction and Disruption

Moreover, when sexual harassment cases become known within a newsroom, they often disrupt the normal work flow and dynamics. Colleagues may become divided and their morale may suffer, further adversely impacting on their job performance. This also entrenches the misogynistic and patriarchal media capture as female journalists become marginalised and distraught as a result of the distraction and disruption that sexual harassment causes in their lives.

For many journalists in Kenya, career advancement often hinges on their ability to produce high-quality work and build a strong professional reputation. Sexual harassment can hinder these aspirations. Survivors may become hesitant to take on ambitious assignments, network with industry professionals, or seek opportunities for growth.

Impact on Career Advancement

As a result, their career trajectory may stagnate, and they may miss valuable experiences that could enhance their job performance or open doors to new opportunities for them. This prevention of female journalists from reporting and dealing with sexual harassment results in a curtailment of media freedom. One respondent termed the law enforcement as “a mere knee jerk reaction.” Implying that the perpetrators are hardly held accountable for their crime.

6.0 Sexual Harassment, Coping Mechanisms and Self-esteem of Journalists in Kenya

Journalists often rely on effective coping mechanisms to navigate the demands and stress in their profession. However, when confronted with sexual harassment, these coping mechanisms are put under significant strain and the journalist may react in various ways that impede their career advancement

<p>Avoidance and Denial</p>	<p>Some journalists resorted to avoidance and denial as a coping mechanism when faced with sexual harassment. In this instance they ignored or downplayed the harassment, believing that acknowledging it will jeopardize their careers. This led to suppressed emotions and increased stress.</p>
<p>Emotional Distancing</p>	<p>Journalists emotionally distance themselves from their work environment to cope with harassment. They become less engaged or passionate about their reporting, affecting the quality and depth of their stories.</p>
<p>Self-Blame</p>	<p>Victims of sexual harassment engage in self-blame as a coping mechanism. They question their actions or choices, believing they somehow contributed to the sexual harassment. This self-blame erodes self-esteem and hinders the ability to seek support. Of the respondents, 42.3% indicated that they felt they somehow contributed to the sexual harassment by behaving inappropriately .</p>
<p>Substance Abuse</p>	<p>Some journalists turned to substance abuse of alcohol or drugs, as a means of coping with the emotional distress caused by sexual harassment. This created a vicious cycle of dependency and further deterioration of mental health, which in turn also affected their work performance.</p>
<p>Isolation</p>	<p>Journalists who experienced sexual harassment isolated themselves from their colleagues and friends, fearing judgement or betrayal. Isolation exacerbates feelings of loneliness and intensifies the emotional toll of sexual harassment.</p>
<p>Erosion of Self-esteem</p>	<p>Self-esteem plays a vital role in a journalist's ability to perform effectively. Sexual harassment impacted on self-esteem, leading to a range of negative consequences on a journalist's work and life.</p>
<p>Self-Doubt and Insecurity</p>	<p>Victims of sexual harassment experienced self-doubt and insecurity. This resulted in them questioning their abilities, decisions, and even their right to be in the media profession. This self-doubt and insecurity hinder confidence in pursuing important stories.</p>
<p>Loss of Professional Identity</p>	<p>Journalists take pride in their professional identity. However, some journalists reported a loss of identity as they felt defined by the victimization rather than by their journalistic achievements.</p>

Impaired Decision-making

Low self-esteem impairs a journalist's ability to make clear and confident decisions. They second-guess their choices, leading to hesitation in pursuing stories or effectively engaging with sources.

Diminished Assertiveness

Journalists often need to be assertive in their interactions with sources, colleagues, and superiors. Sexual harassment erodes this assertiveness, making it challenging for survivors to stand up for themselves or to assert their rights.

Career Limitations

Victims of sexual harassment may limit their career aspirations due to reduced self-esteem. They avoid seeking promotions or taking on high-profile assignments, believing they are not worthy of success. This constitutes a misogynistic and patriarchal form of media capture as their career advancement as female journalists is impeded. Our study showed that 59.2% of respondents experienced sexual harassment while on duty.

7.0 Challenges to Effective interventions, and Limitations and Gaps

Lack of Comprehensive Support The Kenyan media industry lacks a comprehensive psychosocial and mental health support system tailored specifically for survivors of sexual harassment. Existing support mechanisms are fragmented and inadequate. Of the respondents, 72% indicated that a nationwide or universal editorial policy and guide against sexual harassment would assist in curbing it.

Inadequate Legal Protection	Limited legal protection for journalists who report sexual harassment contributes to the lack of support for the survivors. Without legal recourse, they may feel powerless and unable to hold their harassers accountable.
Stigma and Fear of Reprisals	Survivors hesitated to seek help due to fear of stigma, retaliation, and damage to their professional reputation. This reluctance contributes to under-reporting and under-utilization of resources created in the work place that help curb sexual harassment.
Inadequate Training	Professionals in the media industry, including in human resources and management, lack training in handling cases of sexual harassment and providing appropriate support to survivors. This knowledge gap hampers effective assistance. Of the respondents, 71.3% indicated that they had never attended a workshop that empowered them to deal with sexual harassment
Limited Accessibility	The available support services are often concentrated in urban areas, making them less accessible to survivors of sexual harassment who work in remote regions or smaller media outlets. This geographic limitation impedes timely assistance. Of the respondents, 68.4% of participants identified the lack of solid structures as a hindrance to curbing sexual harassment of journalists in Kenya.
Cultural Sensitivity	Support services must be culturally sensitive and tailored to the diverse backgrounds of survivors. Failure to address cultural nuances can deter survivors from seeking help. Of the respondents, 56% indicated that a lack of cultural support and goodwill within their communities was an obstacle to implementing legislative provisions against sexual harassment.

<p>Mental Health Integration</p>	<p>There is a need to integrate mental health support seamlessly into the existing systems and processes in the work place. Survivors experience significant emotional distress and addressing this is crucial for their recovery. There should be structures that enable anonymity of the survivors, in order to assist in supporting their mental health. The Media Council of Kenya (MCK) has introduced a mental health curriculum with a provision for e-learning. However, most participants of our study were not aware of the initiatives by the MCK. This underscores the need for collaborative efforts among organizations working towards advancing and protecting the interests of journalists. Only 30.6% of the respondents were familiar with interventions in their work places that were aimed at safeguarding the psychological and mental health of sexual harassment survivors.</p>
<p>Collaboration</p>	<p>Collaboration between media organizations, civil society, and government agencies is essential to create a holistic support ecosystem. This includes sharing resources and best practices, and establishing reporting mechanisms to help curb sexual harassment. Similar collaborations have had favourable results in Australia (North, 2016) and in Sweden (Idås et al., 2020). As evidenced by the Manzoni Declaration, 2021, the Kenya Media Sector Working Group is implementing reforms and fostering partnerships across several media organizations.</p>
<p>Lack of Awareness</p>	<p>Many survivors of sexual harassment are not aware of the psychosocial and mental health support services that are available to them. This is compounded by how many media organizations in Kenya lack robust reporting mechanisms. Journalists may not know where to turn when they experience this type of harassment, leading to a sense of helplessness.</p>
<p>Psychological Impact</p>	<p>The psychological impact of sexual harassment can be debilitating. Survivors experience anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), making it challenging to continue their work without getting adequate mental health support.</p>
<p>Lack of Access</p>	<p>Access to psychosocial and mental health support services can be limited to survivors of sexual harassment, due to factors such as cost, location, and transportation. Similarly, the quality of psychosocial and mental health support services can vary widely. 69.5% of participants indicated that support services for survivors were inadequate.</p>
<p>Lack of Training by Mental Health Practitioners</p>	<p>Some psychosocial and mental health support providers may not have the necessary training to support survivors of sexual harassment within the profession of journalism.</p>

Stigmatization

Some survivors of sexual harassment may be reluctant to seek help due to the stigma or fear of retaliation by the perpetration of this crime. The effectiveness of support services depends on a few factors, including the quality of the services, the willingness of the survivors to engage in support, and the level of support from the survivor's family and friends. In an environment where 61% of the respondents indicated that, men who feel entitled, are a major cause of sexual harassment of journalists in Kenya, there is dire need for extensive support from family and peers.

Professional Consequences

Reporting sexual harassment can lead to negative professional consequences, including retaliation from employers or damage to one's career. Journalists may fear losing their jobs or facing professional setbacks if they speak out against the vice. This also showcases a form of media capture as female journalists are intimidated into silence.

8.0 Recommendations

The Study puts forward a number of recommendations that could ensure a significant curbing of sexual harassment in the Kenyan Media space. This include:

1. Raise awareness at individual and institutional levels on sexual harassment and the psychosocial and mental health support services that are available and create sustainable interventions that lead to positive outcomes with regards to curbing the crime
2. Create a progressive and enabling work culture in media houses
3. Disaggregate research on how sexual harassment impacts different gender in diverse occupational settings
4. Create safe and supportive media houses to enable survivors to come forward and report harassment by for example, implementing robust anti-harassment policies, conducting awareness campaigns, and providing access to mental health resources in the media work place
5. Promote awareness on the harmful effects of stigmatisation and isolation of the survivors by their social circle and work colleagues
6. Develop training programmes and workshops to help colleagues and communities understand the experiences of survivors and avoid victim-blaming.
7. Establish support networks and resources within work places and communities to provides survivors with a safe space to share their experiences without fear of stigmatization or isolation.
8. Strengthen legal protection for survivors who report sexual harassment Encourage survivors to come forward without fearing negative repercussions on their profession
9. Enable access to mental therapeutic health services and counselling by survivors to help them cope with the emotional aftermath of harassment, and to reduce their isolation.
10. Train professionals in the media industry, including in human resources and management, on how to handle cases of sexual harassment and how to provide appropriate support to survivors.

11. Spread the support services to the rural areas to make them more accessible to survivors of sexual harassment who work in remote regions or smaller media outlets.
12. Seamlessly integrate mental health support seamlessly into the existing systems and processes in the work place.
13. Create a holistic support ecosystem, that includes the sharing resources and best practices, and establishing reporting mechanisms to help curb sexual harassment, through the collaboration of organizations working towards advancing and protecting the interests of journalists such as: media organizations, civil society, and government agencies.
14. Ensure psychosocial and mental health support services are accessible to survivors of sexual harassment especially with regards to the cost, location, and transportation.
15. Ensure a standardized high quality of psychosocial and mental health support services at all levels and institutions by providing adequate and equal training to mental health support providers

Additional recommendations are captured in the table below:

<p>Comprehensive Support Framework</p>	<p>Develop a comprehensive support framework specifically designed for survivors of sexual harassment in the Kenyan media. This should include counselling, legal aid, and career rehabilitation components.</p>
<p>Training Programmes</p>	<p>Implement mandatory training programmes for media professionals, HR personnel, and management on sexual harassment awareness, reporting procedures, and psychosocial support that is available to survivors.</p>
<p>Awareness Campaigns</p>	<p>Increase awareness of sexual harassment and the services that are available for survivors. This can be done through public education campaigns, training for media professionals, and outreach to survivor organizations. Currently the organizations that are offering psychosocial services include:</p> <p>Center for Rights Education and Awareness (CREAW) https://home.creaw.org/</p> <p>Gender Violence Recovery Centre https://gvrc.or.ke/</p> <p>Health Assistance Kenya 1195 https://hakgbv1195.org/ Toll free line 1195</p> <p>World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN IFRA) Women in News https://sexualharassment.womeninnews.org/en/scene/media-employee/intro https://sexualharassment.womeninnews.org/en/scene/media-manager/intro</p> <p>The Association of Media Women in Kenya (AMWIK) https://amwik.org/programmes/#acc-ml38383-0</p> <p>Media Council of Kenya (MCK) Dedicated hotline https://mediacouncil.or.ke/media-center/mck-newsroom/news/addressing-sexual-harassment-newsrooms</p>
<p>Mobilization</p>	<p>Mobilization campaigns within media organizations to reduce stigma, encourage reporting, and promote a safe working environment.</p>
<p>Accessible Services</p>	<p>Expand support services to cover rural areas and smaller media outlets in the rural communities to ensure that survivors across the country have equal access to assistance when they are facing sexual harassment.</p>

<p>Cultural Competence & Relevance</p>	<p>Develop culturally-sensitive support materials and provide training to support staff on cultural competence and relevance of interventions to curb sexual harassment. Ensure that these services are also culturally appropriate. This can be done by hiring staff from diverse cultural backgrounds to deal with sexual harassment, and by providing training on cultural sensitivity.</p>
<p>Mental Health Integration</p>	<p>Incorporate mental health professionals into the support system to address survivors' psychological needs effectively. There can also be campaigns aimed at ensuring that mental health is promoted in newsrooms as part of the work culture.</p>
<p>Collaborative Initiatives</p>	<p>Encourage collaboration between media houses, government agencies, and civil society organizations to pool resources and knowledge for a more effective response to cases of sexual harassment .</p>
<p>More Specialised Services</p>	<p>Develop specialized services for survivors of sexual harassment in the Kenyan media. These services should be tailored to the specific needs of media professionals and should be culturally appropriate.</p>
<p>Resource Enhancement</p>	<p>Increase funding and staffing for existing sexual harassment services to help educe waiting lists and to improve the journalists' quality of care.</p>
<p>Counselling & Therapy</p>	<p>Counselling can help survivors of sexual harassment to process their thoughts and feelings, cope with the trauma of their experience, and develop strategies for moving forward. Therapy can help survivors of sexual harassment to address the underlying psychological issues that may be contributing to their distress, such as anxiety, depression, and PTSD.</p>
<p>Support Groups</p>	<p>Support groups can provide survivors of sexual harassment with a safe space to share their experiences, connect with other survivors, and learn from each other. Examples of such interventions include the the peer-to-peer support group for sexual harassment survivors established by AMWIK and Free Press Unlimited.</p>
<p>Government Services</p>	<p>The Ministry of Health offers psychosocial support services through its mental health facilities. These services are available for sexual harassment survivors and those affected by it, free of charge.</p> <p>The Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Development offers psychosocial support services to sexual harassment survivors through its gender and social protection offices. These services are free of charge.</p>

Non-Governmental organizations (NGOs):

These NGOs offer a variety of services, including counselling, support groups, and legal assistance. Some of these services may be free of charge, while others may require a fee.

- Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) Kenya
- Media Council of Kenya (MCK)
- There is a need for a 24-hour toll-free hotline for victims of sexual harassment and counselling services specifically for journalists who are survivors of sexual harassment. A similar service has had notable positive results in South Africa.
- There is a need for more collaboration through the Kenyan Media Sector Working Group to enhance collaborative and coordinated efforts to promote journalists' well-being and rights in the Kenyan media landscape

Private Practitioners

There are several private practitioners in Kenya who offer psychosocial support services to victims of sexual harassment. These services may be more expensive than services offered by the government or NGOs, which are usually subsidized or free.

Examples include:

Online Resources

The one2one 1190 Hotline

<https://findahelpline.com/organizations/one2one-1190>

The free massive open online course (MOOC) by UNESCO entitled How to Report Safely.

<https://journalismcourses.org/course/reportingsafely/>

The Gender-sensitive Safety Policies for Newsrooms Guidelines + Checklist, The Thomson Reuters Foundation.

<https://safetyofjournalists.trust.org/>

The Sexual Harassment Media Guide by the world Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA)

9.0 Final Remarks/Conclusions

This study has illustrated how sexual harassment affects journalists by making it difficult for them to perform their duties. It does so in a manner that negatively impacts their mental health and reflects a misogynistic and patriarchal media capture. Female journalists are more vulnerable and disproportionately affected by sexual harassment than men, which leads to many of them adopting coping mechanisms such as isolation and in some cases quitting their job altogether, which inadvertently affects media freedom as they are incapacitated and muzzled.

Factors like inadequate legislation and lack of awareness of how to make anonymous reports about sexual harassment, coalesce into militating against female journalists reporting such cases. This perpetuates a cycle of oppression as female journalists have to work in unsafe newsrooms, where the policies are more amenable to male journalists. This ultimately demoralises and dis-empowers female journalists. There is an urgent need to implement interventions to enable female journalists to thrive in newsrooms, and these must be structured to foster judicious and effective professional practice in the media.

Media organizations need to adopt proactive measures, including the implementation of editorial policies that ensure a safe and secure newsroom environment. Establishing reporting mechanisms that safeguard the anonymity of survivors of sexual harassment, and providing counselling and support services are equally essential. Given the disproportionate negative impact of sexual harassment on female journalists, extensive awareness campaigns are needed to empower them and to prevent further victimization. Media organizations should take the lead in creating policies that counter media capture and weaken the grip of patriarchy.

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