



**Department of Social and Educational Sciences**

**Gender Studies Programme**

**“Sexual Harassment in the Workplace: A Critical Feminist Analysis of the Role  
of Trade Union and Employer Organisations in Cyprus”**

**Doctoral Dissertation**

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## Abstract

The purpose of this research is to provide a critical feminist analysis of how the trade union and employer organisations of Cyprus have historically addressed the issue of sexual harassment in the workplace, using organisational theory (power, structure, organisation) as the main analytical lens.

Specifically, the study examines the experiences and perceptions of women who have been victims of sexual harassment regarding the handling of their complaints by their respective trade unions, as well as the ways in which trade union and employer organisations justify their practices in cases of workplace sexual harassment in Cyprus. The ultimate aim was to identify and analyse systemic and organisational factors that hinder the effective prevention and management of sexual harassment.

The research maps the institutional framework governing the prevention and response to sexual harassment and gender-based violence more broadly, at international, European, and national levels, combining it with data from EU member states that have progressive legislation and prevention practices in place.

Furthermore, the study explores the contribution of employer and trade union organisations to the elimination of sexual harassment, as well as to the dismantling of outdated patriarchal perceptions and social stereotypes embedded in Cypriot culture. Throughout, the research engages dynamically with feminist theory, interpreting and analysing all issues through this theoretical lens.

The findings indicate that, despite the participating organisations' different backgrounds and trajectories in promoting gender equality and combating sexual harassment, they demonstrate notable similarities across several domains worthy of investigation—such as organisational culture, policies, actions, and the broader patriarchal and masculinised culture that characterises them.

Overall, the dissertation describes, interprets, and evaluates the elements that contribute to a deeper understanding of the processes unfolding within employer and trade union organisations regarding their efforts to achieve both formal and substantive gender equality. It also highlights the extent to which these organisations allowed their female officers and members to act as agents of change capable of influencing policy formation and decision-making within their own institutional structures.

A particularly significant role in these processes is, and could further be, played by the women's committees of the organisations—provided the conditions allowed—especially in their work to promote gender equality and combat workplace sexual harassment. However, their activism is constrained by their exclusion from decision-making bodies and their lack of autonomy.

By linking feminist theory with gendered organisational culture, the study demonstrates that the culture of Cypriot trade union and employer organisations, shaped and influenced by senior management/leadership, does not prioritise either the prevention and management of sexual harassment or, by extension, the promotion of gender equality in the workplace.

This culture is influenced by internal, external, and organisational factors. A feminist analysis reveals that internal factors relate to patriarchal structures in which men hold and determine power while women and their concerns remain marginalised. External factors reflect the patriarchal Cypriot society and its dominant, outdated gender norms and social practices. Notably, women remain under-represented across all decision-making centres—ministers, MPs, local councillors—as well as in senior positions in both the public and private sectors.

This dominant culture is shown to be reproduced or adopted as “the norm” within the organisations under examination, which neither dare nor wish to act as agents of change in promoting gender equality. The structures and functioning of the women’s committees within trade unions further reflect this masculinised culture, mirroring external societal patterns without diverging from the broader Cypriot patriarchal context—despite the fact that trade unions are mandated to promote gender equality.

Regarding organisational factors, the study reveals patriarchal organisational structures shaped by leadership styles and the long-standing dominance of men in decision-making positions. The women’s committees remain fully dependent, to the point that they lose their very purpose, since they must follow the directives and policies of their organisations with no freedom of action. In general, the organisational processes and communication patterns within trade union and employer organisations contain gendered, outdated practices, creating and maintaining strategies that exclude or marginalise women.

The prevailing organisational culture is androcentric, as is the decision-making process and the setting of internal priorities regarding measures and policies adopted both within the organisations and in society at large.

The study shows that victims of sexual harassment did not receive the necessary support from their trade unions; instead, they were met with indifference both during the reporting of the incident and throughout the progression of their complaint. They also express dissatisfaction that trade unions could have played a significant role in promoting gender equality in the workplace, something they have not done in practice to date.

The research concludes that employer and trade union organisations in Cyprus have not dared to confront entrenched patriarchy or to push the socio-political system to

recognise the value of gender equality in employment and, more broadly, in the socio-economic life of Cyprus.

The study is completed with policy recommendations designed to secure not only formal legal gender equality but also substantive equality, strengthening institutional and policy frameworks through participatory democracy and promoting gender equality in employment and Cypriot society at large.

## Preface

The purpose of this research is to provide a critical feminist analysis of the ways in which the trade union and employer organisations of Cyprus have addressed the issue of sexual harassment in the workplace, using organisational theory (power, structure, organisation) as the primary analytical framework.

Specifically, adopting a feminist approach, the study examined the lived experiences of victims of sexual harassment and investigated:

- A) the experiences of women victims of sexual harassment regarding the handling of their complaints by their respective trade unions;
- B) how the trade union movement managed and responded to such cases and to sexual harassment in the Cypriot workplace more broadly;
- C) the ways in which various internal, external, and organisational factors shaped the handling, prevention, and management of sexual harassment by trade union organisations.

This research was motivated by my personal desire to analyse and synthesise the long-standing experience and knowledge I have acquired through my social, political, professional, and trade union engagement with the issue under investigation.

Specifically, my experience—both positive and negative—proved invaluable. It emerged through my involvement in the following:

- a. male-dominated, female-dominated, and mixed work environments, as a trade unionist, where I observed and experienced both direct and indirect discrimination against women;
- b. the trade union movement and its masculinised, male-dominated culture shaped by entrenched patriarchy;
- c. the political party in which I held a leadership role and its “struggle” for social justice and equality, which was nevertheless accompanied by the marginalisation or silent exclusion of women from leadership positions—until the adoption of gender quotas;
- d. the family sphere and the guilt I felt for not meeting traditional gendered expectations associated with the roles of mother or grandmother;
- e. participation in conferences and women’s committees of Cypriot, European, and global trade union organisations;
- f. presiding over organisations promoting gender equality and participating in the submission and implementation of European programmes;

g. participation in the tripartite dialogue for the transposition of EU gender equality directives into national law and the alignment of Cyprus with the European acquis;  
h. providing scientific support to the Cyprus Committee on Gender Equality in Employment and Vocational Training;

i. my long-standing contact with victims of gender discrimination in employment, and particularly with victims of sexual harassment in their workplace.

This dissertation significantly enriched, deepened, and crystallised my theoretical understanding of the topic under investigation and provided empirical validation for the positions I had supported theoretically.

**Anna Pilavaki**

December 2019

## **Acknowledgements**

The completion of this dissertation, during a period of personal and professional temporary over-commitment, would not have been possible without the encouragement and continuous support of my supervisor, **Alexia Panayiotou**, who helped me crystallise what I wished to investigate, and who was always willing to listen, support me, review the early drafts, offer valuable guidance, and—above all—provide the internal sense of safety and confidence that she appreciated my viewpoints, theoretical approaches, writing, and my ability to complete this dissertation on a topic that has not been thoroughly examined by trade union and employer organisations in Cyprus, as also evidenced by the findings of this research. For this support, I feel profound gratitude.

Warm thanks are also due to the other members of the three-member committee, **Mary Koutselini** and **Miranda Christou**, for their support and encouragement. In particular, to Professor Koutselini, who urged me to join the doctoral programme and supported me throughout this journey, and to Professor Christou for her excellent comments, which significantly enhanced this study. I also sincerely thank **Maria Stratigaki** and **Eirini Kadianaki**, members of my five-member committee, for their constructive feedback.

It would also be a major omission not to express my thanks to Professor **Zelia Gregoriou** for her constant support and guidance throughout my doctoral studies at the University of Cyprus, and for everything she taught us through her deep scholarly expertise in new feminist theories that challenge much of what we thought we knew. She was the person who resolved our questions, assisted us with registration procedures during semester and year transitions, and showed genuine care—often before we ourselves realised the need—towards us, her students. Personally, without her invaluable help, I would not have been able to follow correctly all the academic requirements and procedures of the programme.

I also extend heartfelt thanks to the people in my close family and social circle for their support—and especially for the patience and understanding they showed during the many months of my isolation and necessary “anti-social” withdrawal so that I could complete the research and writing of this dissertation.

I apologise to my daughter and my young granddaughter for not managing, once again, to “fulfil” the traditional roles of mother and grandmother.

A special thank-you is owed to my sister **Eleni**, a philologist, for the time she devoted to the final syntactic and orthographic revisions of my dissertation, and to my friend **Niovi** for the graphical work (tables and appendices).

Finally, I thank all friends—each in their own way—who offered substantive support and friendly pressure, enabling me to complete this demanding yet deeply enriching

journey that began seven years ago and which, at various moments, I considered abandoning.

Warm thanks are also due to my former colleagues and fellow trade unionists for the valuable time they dedicated to me, for the interviews they granted for the purposes of this research, and to the victims of sexual harassment whom I unintentionally compelled to revisit painful memories of the harassment they suffered in their working lives.

I believe it would be an omission not to acknowledge the negative comments I received along the way from some individuals who wrongly associated my age and this personal choice with supposed ambitions of career advancement, forgetting the principle of “*girasco aei didaskomeni*” (“I grow old while always learning”) and the fact that each person is free to pursue what fulfils them, regardless of age constraints and without the need to justify their choices. I believe that if I did not record this form of age discrimination, I would not be consistent with the struggles I undertake to combat all forms of discrimination—including ageism.

**Anna Pilavaki**

December 2019

## **Dedication**

**This doctoral dissertation is dedicated to my little three-year-old granddaughter,  
Michaelia.**

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# Chapter One – Introduction

The purpose of this research is to provide a critical feminist analysis of the ways in which the trade union and employer organisations of Cyprus address the issue of sexual harassment in the workplace, using organisational theory (power, structure, organisation) as the main analytical framework. The study examines the lived experiences of victims of sexual harassment, their experiences with the handling of their complaints by their respective trade unions, as well as the ways in which these organisations dealt with and responded to such complaints and to sexual harassment in Cypriot workplaces more broadly. At the same time, it investigates the internal, external, and organisational factors that influenced this handling, as well as the reasons that led to the downgrading of such a serious and long-standing problem experienced mainly by women in employment, on the part of trade union and employer organisations.

## 1.1 Patriarchal Organisation and Women in the Workplace

According to Evans (2004), the structures of patriarchal society are interconnected—for example, the structure of the family with the structure of public administration, organisations and enterprises, education, the church, etc. Every act in private life and in the private sphere, in personal, sexual, and family relationships, therefore has a political dimension. Through the axiom “*the personal is political*”, the second wave of the feminist movement rejected the separation between the public and the private. Thus, the feminist lens does not examine only the public sphere and traditional political institutions in order to explain why women are oppressed on a global scale. Taking this oppression as a given, it also examines how human reproduction is controlled by various institutions, thereby touching upon the deeper essence of women’s oppression<sup>1</sup>. One such institution is the organisation.

We know that the evolution of social and economic structures pushed women into the labour market. However, women’s role has not been fully detached from their socially constructed gender. As noted by KETHI (2001), men constitute the norm in every reference to equality or inequality and, in this way, men define the measure, whereas women appear to struggle and claim their rights in a world shaped by others. KETHI (2001) further notes that gender and sexuality play a significant role in women’s access to the labour market, and thus sexual harassment in the workplace is seen as a situation that may occur—or is even expected to occur<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Evans, M. Φύλο και κοινωνική θεωρία / Mary Evans: μετάφραση Αλέξανδρος Κιουπκιολής. 1η έκδ. - Αθήνα: Μεταίγμιο, 2004 (Μελέτες για το Φύλο).

<sup>2</sup> Κέντρο Ερευνών για Θέματα Ισότητας (Κ.Ε.Θ.Ι.). Η Σεξουαλική Παρενόχληση στην Εργασία. Πρόταση ποινικοποίησης της συμπεριφοράς στην Ελλάδα, Ιούνιος 2001.

Hofstede and his colleagues (2010), argue that the traditional male model is preserved as a model of achievement, control, and power. “Masculine” values such as competitiveness and wealth acquisition prevail over “feminine” values such as relationship-building and quality of life. In male-dominated cultures, men are therefore expected to conform to the traditional male role, to be practical, success-oriented, and self-confident. Men must also be able to provide for their wives and families. Women, on the other hand, are expected to fulfil the traditional roles of mother and housewife.

Within this context, men are portrayed as tough, aggressive, competitive, and dynamic—hence suitable for the competitive labour market—while women are portrayed as weak and oriented and devoted to childbearing and to caring for children, husbands, and the home—thus constructed as “outsiders” to the world of paid work. Correspondingly, in the work environment, men seem to place great importance on high earnings, professional recognition, career advancement, power, and work-related challenges, whereas women are perceived as the opposite<sup>3</sup>.

As Broadbridge and Hearn (2008) also observe, the effective management of organisations is often understood as being aligned with traditional characteristics that are valued in men. Within management, strong gendered dynamics persist, since management both operates within and contributes to a workplace shaped by gendered power relations within and between hierarchical levels, and in recruitment, selection, evaluation, promotion, and so forth<sup>4</sup>.

Stratigaki (1996), linking women’s subordinate position and patriarchal social organisation with the ideology that stems from this organisation—and which results in gender-based discrimination in management and in organisational theory—states characteristically:

*“The investigation of the obstacles to women’s participation and advancement in management refers us back to the patriarchal organisation of society, that is, to a system of power relations between the sexes in which men—in relation to women—have more privileges, rights, and access to power, both economically and ideologically. Thus, the position of women has been historically and culturally confined in various ways to the private sphere, whereas the position of men has been identified with the public sphere. The ideology stemming from patriarchal social organisation continues to be reproduced under new social conditions, to varying degrees and in different forms. In organisations, the reflection of this ideology appears through gender-based discrimination in management and in their organisational culture<sup>5</sup>.”*

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<sup>3</sup> Hofstede, G. et al. *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind*. 3rd Edition, McGraw-Hill USA, 2010.

<sup>4</sup> Broadbridge, A & Hearn, J. *Gender and management: New directions in research and continuing patterns in practice*, 2008, *British Journal of Management*, (19), s1, 38-49. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8551.2008.00570.x>

<sup>5</sup> Στρατηγάκη, Μ. (1996). Φύλο, Εργασία, Τεχνολογία. Αθήνα: Πολίτης.

## 1.2 Definition and Forms of Sexual Harassment

During the decades that have elapsed from the second wave of feminism to the present (2019), various definitions of sexual harassment in the workplace have been debated. To this day, there is still no absolute clarity as to what does and does not constitute sexual harassment.

Academic literature and activists nonetheless agree that sexual harassment in the workplace symbolises and enacts the inferior social position of women in relation to men.

According to Bakalaki (1998), “*sexual harassment is a concept that is spatially and temporally variable, directly linked to political, historical, sociological, and legal parameters.*”<sup>6</sup> In other words, sexual harassment is directly connected to socio-political systems, the values that prevail in a society, legal achievements, and the power relations that are structured within the social formation—such as those of gender discrimination in male-dominated societies (Smaus, 1998). The reproductive role of women, associated with motherhood, has been treated as a female responsibility and has remained a private rather than a social matter. According to Smaus (1998), this has had the consequence of excluding mothers from public life and thus severely limiting women’s influence on policy-making. As a result, women have been economically subordinated to men in a relationship of dependence and control that continues to be reproduced to this day. The workplace constitutes the core of this socio-economic system: it has been a key component of the patriarchal system, reproducing dominant gender roles, and is a space where “*women themselves, unconsciously, accept, adopt, and reproduce the ‘naturalness’ of gender roles*”<sup>7</sup>.

The term “sexual harassment” is relatively recent. Only towards the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s did the second wave of the feminist movement begin systematically to address the issue of unwanted sexual behaviour in the workplace. The second wave of feminism is credited with reframing women’s personal experiences as a public and political issue (Antić Gaber, 2009)<sup>8</sup>. Within this context, sexual harassment is understood, above all, as a social problem linked to the abuse of power by men who traditionally occupy higher organisational positions as women’s supervisors.

According to the Marxist feminist MacKinnon (1992), sexual harassment is an indication and a practice of gender inequality, specifically of women’s lower status compared to men, with the ultimate purpose of controlling women. It is an act of

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<sup>6</sup> Μπακαλάκη, Α. ‘Λόγοι για το φύλο και αναπαραστάσεις της πολιτισμικής ιδιαιτερότητας στην Ελλάδα του 19ου και 20ού αιώνα’, στο Γκέφου-Μαδιανού, Ανθρωπολογική Θεωρία και Εθνογραφία, Ελληνικά Γράμματα, Αθήνα, 1998 σελ. 520.

<sup>7</sup> Smaus, G. «Social Control and Gender Relationship», Saarbrugen, November, 1998

<sup>8</sup> Antić Gaber. (2009). VIOLENCE in the EU examined: policies on violence against women, children and youth in 2004. EU accession countries / edited by Milica Antić Gaber. - 1st ed, University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts, <http://www.svri.org/euviolence.pdf>.

domination over women that systematically seeks to maintain a gender-segregated society in which women occupy a disadvantaged position. As she characteristically notes, “*in traditional gender roles, male sexuality embodies the role of the aggressor, female sexuality the role of the victim, and, to some extent, violence is idealised as acceptable.*”<sup>9</sup>”

Thomas and Kitzinger (1997) argue that the publication of Farley’s book *Sexual Shakedown* (1978) and MacKinnon’s book *Sexual Harassment of Working Women* (1979) brought the problem of sexual harassment to public attention in the United States. These works succeeded in making visible a serious problem in the workplace that women workers had been silencing and employers had been ignoring—one that generated a pervasive climate of shame and was treated as a personal issue rather than as a matter for public debate. Sexual harassment was treated by society as a non-existent problem, which made it difficult to achieve a social definition of it<sup>10</sup>. The establishment of a name for the problem, and the development of a definition, therefore granted social status to this real phenomenon, making it visible in the eyes and consciousness of workers and society more broadly. Recognition of the problem enabled victims of sexual harassment to report and share their distressing experiences, breaking their silence.

In Europe, the first reference to the issue appears around 1981–1982 in the United Kingdom through the work of two feminist sociologists, Sue Wise and Liz Stanley, who brought attention to the real problem of sexual harassment in the workplace. They defined as sexual harassment any unwelcome sexual proposition or offer of sexual favours in exchange for workplace advantages, both within and outside the workplace, as well as other verbal provocations or physical contacts<sup>11</sup>.

Over time, sexual harassment came to be recognised as an offence and as a form of discrimination based on sex, and it was linked to the unequal distribution of power and to the gendered and social dimensions of workplace relations (Papamichail, 2008)<sup>12</sup>. As Kalogiannaki (2005) notes, all social relations are connected to levels of power and authority shaped by the dominant culture. The social dimension of sexual harassment links the perpetrator to the exploitation of the position they hold or to the dependence created by a professional relationship between victim and perpetrator, which is used to

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<sup>9</sup> MacKinnon, C. Reflections on Sex Equality under Law. The Yale Law Journal, Vol. 100, No. 5, Centennial Issue (Mar., 1991), pp. 1302. Published by: The Yale Law Journal Company, Inc. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/796693>.

<sup>10</sup> Thomas & Kitzinger, *Sexual Harassment Contemporary Feminist Perspective*, Open University Press Buckingham - Philadelphia, 1997:3.

<sup>11</sup> Thomas A.M & Kitzinger, C *Sexual Harassment Contemporary Feminist Perspective*, Buckingham: Open University Press, 1997.

<sup>12</sup> Παπαμιχαήλ, Σ. (2008). Σύγχρονες Τεχνικές Management για την Προώθηση των Ίσων Ευκαιριών. [www.teipat.gr/isotita/docs/manage.doc](http://www.teipat.gr/isotita/docs/manage.doc).

blackmail the victim, to create adverse working conditions, and ultimately to weaken the victim's resistance and force them to tolerate sexual advances<sup>13</sup>.

The content of sexual harassment is described in TISIM-DEOK (2007):

*“Sexual harassment includes unwelcome sexual demands and verbal or other sexually oriented behaviour when:*

*(a) acceptance of such behaviour is a condition or prerequisite for a person's employment;*

*(b) acceptance or rejection of such behaviour or demands is used as a basis for decisions affecting a person's working life (recruitment, promotion, etc.);*

*(c) such demands or behaviour interfere with employees' work performance or create a hostile environment that offends their dignity. Sexual harassment may consist of a single incident, sporadic incidents, or an ongoing pattern and presupposes a real imbalance of power<sup>14</sup>.”*

According to Mathews (1997), there are three types of sexual harassment:

a) **Hostile work environment:** A hostile environment type of sexual harassment is generally defined as any form of unwelcome behaviour perpetrated by supervisors, other employees, or non-employees that ultimately interferes with employees' work performance by creating an aggressive, intimidating, or sexually hostile work environment (Mathews, 1997)<sup>15</sup>. Perpetrators of sexual harassment who hold positions of power and can influence the working conditions of their subordinates use intimidation, blackmail, threats, and pressure when victims refuse their advances (Pilavaki & Vakola, 2007)<sup>16</sup>.

b) **Sexual favouritism:** A person in a position of power rewards only those individuals who respond positively to their sexual advances, while employees who are deserving but do not comply with such advances are denied promotions, pay rises, or other benefits<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> Καλογιαννάκη Δ. (2005). «Η Σεξουαλική Παρενόχληση στον Εργασιακό Χώρο», <http://digilib.teiemt.gr/jspui/bitstream/123456789/2496/1/022005x03x060.pdf>.

<sup>14</sup> ΤΙΣΙΜ-ΔΕΟΚ. «Σεξουαλική Παρενόχληση: Ένας Αθέατος Εφιάλτης στο χώρο Εργασίας» «Οδηγός Καθοδήγησης και Κατάρτιση Στελεχών Επιχειρήσεων, συνδικαλιστικών Οργανώσεων και Λειτουργών Αρμόδιων Κυβερνητικών Υπηρεσιών-Λευκωσία, Μάρτιος 2007. Συγγραφή-Επιμέλεια Άννα Πηλαβάκη, Διομήδους Διομήδης.

<sup>15</sup> Mathews, A. The Sexual Harassment Revolution: Employer Liability for Third Party Sexual Harassment, 1997:988.

<sup>16</sup> Πηλαβάκη, Α & Βακόλα, Μ. (2007). Αίτια, επιπτώσεις και τρόποι αντιμετώπισης της σεξουαλικής παρενόχλησης στον εργασιακό χώρο. Κεφ. 12 του επιστημονικού τόμου «Γυναίκες και Διοίκηση Επιχειρήσεων, Εκδόσεις Σιδέρη 2007.

<sup>17</sup> Εσκεμμένα χρησιμοποιείται εδώ το αρσενικό γένος (στην αναφορά σε θύτες) αφού (i) η σεξουαλική παρενόχληση είναι ένα έμφυλο ζήτημα πατριαρχικής εξουσίας (ii) οι στατιστικές υποδεικνύουν ότι οι θύτες είναι στη μεγάλη πλειονότητα άντρες, ενώ

c) **Quid pro quo:** This type involves an exchange relationship, that is, benefits in return for sex. It refers to cases in which an employer, manager, or supervisor attempts or collaborates to influence working conditions, promotions, training opportunities, dismissals, pay rises, disciplinary measures, or recruitment in return for sexual favours (Mathews, 1997)<sup>18</sup>.

Although this categorisation may be important for the purposes of social policy-making, the present study does not draw clear distinctions between these three types, primarily because the victims themselves did not consider such distinctions important. Furthermore, the purpose of this study was to explore victims' complaints beyond the specific type of harassment they may have experienced.

### 1.3 Legislation

Today, sexual harassment in the workplace is regulated by legislation in many countries, through codes of practice and modern definitions that nevertheless differ in how the offence is established and in the severity of the sanctions it entails. It is evident, however, that although sexual harassment in the workplace is a very serious and long-standing problem, it has been formally and legally recognised only in recent decades. Kwolek-Folland (2009) notes that it took a long time before sexual harassment in the workplace was legally recognised; this was achieved around 1970, when feminist activists in the United States, through their advocacy, managed to have sexual harassment included in federal law. A milestone was the 1985 case *Meritor Savings Bank v. Vinson*<sup>19</sup> before the U.S. Supreme Court, in which the Court focused for the first time on defining the various aspects of sexual harassment<sup>20</sup>.

In the present study, the definition adopted is that of Directive 2006/54/EC and of national legislation on Equal Treatment of Men and Women in Employment and Vocational Training [Law 205(I)/2002], according to which sexual harassment is defined as:

*“any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature which has the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person, in particular when creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or*

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θύματα μπορούν να είναι και γυναίκες και άντρες. Στην παρούσα εργασία όμως εξετάζονται μόνο οι περιπτώσεις γυναικών θυμάτων.

<sup>18</sup> Mathews, A. The Sexual Harassment Revolution: Employer Liability for Third Party Sexual Harassment, 1997.

<sup>19</sup> Meritor Saving Bank v. Vinson, <https://caselaw.findlaw.com/us-supreme-court/477/57.html>.

<sup>20</sup> Kwolek-Folland.A (2009) The Personal is International: Sexual Harassment Narratives and the Corporation, 2009, MICH. ST. L. REV 915-932.

*offensive environment during employment, vocational training or retraining, or in access to employment or vocational training or retraining<sup>21</sup>.”*

The legal framework will be presented in more detail in the third section.

## 1.4 Magnitude and Consequences of the Problem

Recent international data show that sexual harassment remains a serious problem affecting a large proportion of working women. According to the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA, 2014), sexual harassment is a frequent and common experience for many women in the EU. It reports that more than 83 million women—approximately one in two women (45%–55%) in the 28 EU Member States—have experienced sexual harassment since the age of 15. It also notes that during the 12 months preceding the survey (second half of 2013 and first half of 2014), 24 to 39 million women (13%–21%) were victims of sexual harassment.

The FRA (2014) underlines that sexual harassment of women may be perpetrated by various categories of offenders (employers, directors, supervisors, subordinate staff, clients of organisations, etc.) and that new technologies exacerbate sexual harassment. Both the ease of access to new technologies (social media, text messages, email, etc.) and their extensive use make victims particularly vulnerable, as the anonymity often afforded to perpetrators leads to impunity. Another important finding is that one in five women (21%) stated that she believes no authority will do, or is able to do, anything to help her<sup>22</sup>.

According to FRA (2014), the risk of sexual harassment is higher for women working in “male-dominated” occupations. Particularly striking is the finding—reported for the first time—that even women in positions of responsibility stated, at rates of 74%–75%, that they had experienced sexual harassment, and 25% reported that they had experienced it recently, that is, in the 12 months prior to the survey. The study attributes this result to the likelihood that these women are more aware than women in lower positions of what constitutes sexual harassment and are therefore more likely to report it. The research also notes that women victims of sexual harassment continue to be blamed, as the phenomenon is attributed to women’s appearance or behaviour, or to “false accusations” made in order to take revenge on colleagues for personal gain. Finally, a particularly important finding is that only a very small proportion (10%–20%)

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<sup>21</sup> Ο περί Ίσης Μεταχείρισης Ανδρών και Γυναικών στην Απασχόληση και στην Επαγγελματική Εκπαίδευση Νόμος του 2002 (205(I)/2002), [http://www.cylaw.org/nomoi/enop/non-ind/2002\\_1\\_205/full.html](http://www.cylaw.org/nomoi/enop/non-ind/2002_1_205/full.html).

<sup>22</sup> European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA). Violence against women: an EU-wide survey. Results at a glance, 2014.

of women victims of sexual harassment lodge a complaint either with their supervisor or with official state complaint mechanisms<sup>23</sup>.

Sexual harassment has severe negative consequences for workers, their families, and their broader social environment. According to Pilavaki and Vakola (2007), it not only affects victims' job performance but also has numerous economic, social, physical, and emotional consequences, such as:

- **Economic consequences:** Reduced performance at work, as the victim focuses on dealing with the harassment; increased absenteeism to avoid the perpetrator or due to stress-related illness; termination/dismissal as a result of retaliation by the employer or as a consequence of reduced performance due to sexual harassment; relocation expenses when moving to another city or job; loss of job references/recommendation letters; and interrupted career paths.
- **Social consequences:** Violent or abusive retaliation by the perpetrator or by colleagues/friends of the perpetrator when the victim files a complaint; secondary victimisation through sexism; the victim being placed in the position of "the accused"; attacks targeting the victim's clothing, lifestyle, or private life; humiliation through gossip; defamation of the victim's character and reputation; loss of trust in work environments similar to those where the harassment occurred, or in individuals holding positions similar to that of the perpetrator; and excessive stress affecting personal and family relationships.
- **Health consequences:** Anxiety, stress, fatigue, depression, weight loss or weight gain, sleep disturbances, headaches, and post-traumatic stress disorder (Pilavaki & Vakola, 2007)<sup>24</sup>.

## 1.5. The role of trade union and employer organisations in promoting gender equality

The role of trade union and employer organisations is considered crucial in promoting gender equality and in preventing and addressing the problem of sexual harassment in the workplace.

Ledwith (2012) poses an important question, asking how the persistent exclusion of women from organisational power and leadership in trade unions can be justified, despite their increasing participation in the labour force and in trade union membership. This is particularly striking given that trade unions, within the framework of their strategies for change, have implemented a number of structural reforms aimed at encouraging gender equality which, in practice, have not resulted in a balanced

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<sup>23</sup> European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA). Violence against women: an EU-wide survey. Results at a glance, 2014.

<sup>24</sup> Πηλαβάκη, Α & Βακόλα, Μ. (2007). Αίτια, επιπτώσεις και τρόποι αντιμετώπισης της σεξουαλικής παρενόχλησης στον εργασιακό χώρο. Κεφ. 12 του επιστημονικού τόμου «Γυναίκες και Διοίκηση Επιχειρήσεων, Εκδόσεις Σιδέρη 2007.

representation in their decision-making bodies. She argues that cultures of exclusive masculinity are deeply embedded in trade unions with traditional male leaderships. The practice of keeping women in secondary and marginalised positions within trade unions continues, despite the fact that these organisations have consistently expressed concern about the gender equality deficit. She characteristically notes that “*this is a story of one step forward and two steps back, or sometimes two steps forward and one step back*”<sup>25</sup>.

In this way, Ledwith (2012) considers that trade unions do not differ from other patriarchal organisations, since, as she notes, the small steps forward that have been made can be described as “structural changes” within trade unions which recognise gender imbalances and attempt to implement explicit corrective measures in order to achieve some form of gender equality. She maintains that, although impressive work has been carried out in this field, the outcome so far is, overall, a failure, as all studies indicate that there are still very few women in leadership positions in trade unions at all levels, and particularly at the higher levels, and that only a small number of women participate in collective bargaining, which remains male-oriented. She identifies as the gender problem of trade unions the enduring strength of hegemonic masculinity, cultural barriers, steps backwards, and their relationship with women’s demands for inclusion, reform, and change<sup>26</sup>.

Pantelidou-Malouta (2002), referring to the low presence of women in decision-making structures, notes that this picture “illustrates in the most evident way the contradiction between the subordination reserved for women and the universal equality of rights which, in theory, concerns ‘free and equal’ citizens, regardless of gender. Women’s participation in public life remains an area yet to be conquered for gender equality, since for many years the distinction between public and private life has functioned as a framework for justifying women’s social inferiority and social exclusion”<sup>27</sup>.

Thus, as I also argue in an earlier study (Pilavaki, 2008), the image of political and trade union representation remains “male”, and the two arenas continue, despite developments, to be male-dominated. It is noteworthy that women participate in trade union decision-making bodies to an even lesser extent than they do in parliaments (in 2019, the proportion of women MPs in the Cypriot House of Representatives stood at 17.85%, with 10 women out of a total of 56 MPs)<sup>28</sup> and in local government (10.25%, with 4 women mayors out of 39 municipalities, and 15.27%, with 73 women out of 478 municipal councillors)<sup>29</sup>. These extremely low rates of active involvement of women in political and trade union processes, and particularly in decision-making positions,

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<sup>25</sup> Ledwith S. Gender politics in trade unions. The representation of women between exclusion and inclusion. SAGE, 2012.

<sup>26</sup> Ledwith, S. Gender politics in trade unions. The representation of women between exclusion and inclusion, SAGE, 2012.

<sup>27</sup> Παντελίδου - Μαλούτα Μ. (2002), Το φύλο της δημοκρατίας. Ιδιότητα του πολίτη και έμφυλα υποκείμενα, Εκδ. Σαββάλας, Αθήνα, σ. 67 - 8.

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.parliament.cy/el/composition/members-of-the-house>.

<sup>29</sup> [Αποτελέσματα εκλογών 2016, http://ucm.org.cy/apotelesmata-eklogon-2016/#toggle-id-6](http://ucm.org.cy/apotelesmata-eklogon-2016/#toggle-id-6).

constitute one of the manifestations of their social exclusion and remain enduring features of Cyprus's highly androcentric political and trade union culture<sup>30</sup>.

As I note in Pilavaki (2008), given that many women have challenged numerous stereotypes concerning their participation in trade unions, it follows that their low overall participation and their even lower participation in decision-making bodies are not due to their own choices or to a lack of ability, but to entirely different reasons, such as their double burden of responsibilities, the androcentric trade union environment, and the socially constructed image of gender roles<sup>31</sup>.

According to Malakasiotou (2015), women experienced more acutely the impact of the economic crisis, and in such difficult conditions the state should have prioritised the fight against their social exclusion, the elimination of inequalities and discrimination against them, and the safeguarding of gender equality. Unfortunately, however, she argues that gender equality issues have been marginalised by all stakeholders, including trade unions<sup>32</sup>.

With regard to women's participation in trade union decision-making bodies, the Labour Institute of the Greek General Confederation of Labour (GSEE)<sup>33</sup> highlights the contradiction between their equal right to vote and stand for office and their limited participation in governing bodies. It notes that trade unions have not freed themselves from discriminatory behaviours and practices regarding women's participation in their internal governing structures. This situation is explained by the fact that trade unions are, simply, a microcosm of wider society and therefore exhibit both elements of progress and elements of regression, which coexist in every conjuncture (temporal, local, economic, political, social) in social behaviour<sup>34</sup>.

In Cypriot society, as in other European countries, the ratio of men to women in the decision-making bodies of trade union and employer organisations becomes increasingly skewed in favour of men as one moves up the hierarchy, where the phenomenon of the "glass ceiling<sup>35</sup>" appears. The literature shows that trade unions

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<sup>30</sup> Πηλαβάκη, Α. (2008) Γυναίκα στη Σύγχρονη Κοινωνία Διεθνώς και στην Κύπρο: Προσωπικότητα και Παράγοντες Επιτυχίας. Παρατηρητήριο Ισότητας Κύπρου (ΠΙΚ), Λευκωσία.

<sup>31</sup> Πηλαβάκη Α. (2008), Γυναίκα στη Σύγχρονη Κοινωνία Διεθνώς και στην Κύπρο: Προσωπικότητα και Παράγοντες Επιτυχίας. Παρατηρητήριο Ισότητας Κύπρου (ΠΙΚ), Λευκωσία, σ. 29.

<sup>32</sup> Μαλακασιώτου, Μ. Η Σεξιστική Αντιμετώπιση των Γυναικών στα Κέντρα Λήψης Αποφάσεων και η Ανάγκη Εξάλειψης των Έμφυλων Διακρίσεων. Μεταπτυχιακή Διπλωματική Εργασία, Βόλος, Φεβρουάριος 2015. Πανεπιστήμιο Θεσσαλίας, Τμήμα Ιστορίας, Αρχαιολογίας και Κοινωνικής Ανθρωπολογίας.

<sup>33</sup> Γενική Συνομοσπονδία Εργατών Ελλάδος.

<sup>34</sup> Ινστιτούτο Εργασίας ΓΣΕΕ. Η Συμμετοχή των Γυναικών στα Όργανα Διοίκησης των Συνδικαλιστικών Οργανώσεων της Γενικής Συνομοσπονδίας Εργατών Ελλάδας. Συγγραφείς: Έλλη Βαρχαλαμά, Κωνσταντίνος Μπουκουβάλας, Ήρα Παπαγεωργίου. Φεβρουάριος 2015, [https://www.inegsee.gr/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/vivlio\\_isotitas.pdf](https://www.inegsee.gr/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/vivlio_isotitas.pdf).

<sup>35</sup> Χαρακτηρίζει τα αόρατα εμπόδια που αντιμετωπίζουν οι γυναίκες στην επαγγελματική ανέλιξή τους προς υψηλότερες θέσεις ευθύνης.

proclaim that they “work” to combat the glass ceiling and the “glass cliff<sup>36</sup>”, as well as gender occupational segregation (men as presidents and general secretaries, women as secretaries and ordinary members), while at the same time, within their own organisations, the glass ceiling and occupational segregation persist and they have neither attempted nor succeeded in eliminating these phenomena in their own structures. When organisations mandated to protect workers’ rights in general, and gender equality in particular, fail to combat the glass ceiling and gender occupational segregation within their own organisation, it becomes even more difficult for them to work effectively to combat these phenomena in other workplaces<sup>37</sup>.

The factors that prevent women from becoming active members of trade unions are broadly described by the veteran Greek trade unionist Fotini Sianou, who stresses that women’s participation in trade union bodies is constantly decreasing, while their numbers in the economically active population and in trade union membership are increasing. This results in a complete mismatch between women’s participation at the base and at the leadership level. In addition, the higher and more influential the decision-making body, the lower the participation of women. She characteristically notes that “*reasons beyond their will keep them away from trade unions ... they cannot cope with their multiple roles as workers, mothers, housewives, their children’s teachers, and carers of elderly or sick relatives. The few women who are active do not have children*”<sup>38</sup>.

It is possible that encouraging and strengthening women’s participation in trade unions at all levels and in representative bodies—through measures such as gender quotas—could function as corrective mechanisms for eliminating existing discrimination (Dean, 2006). Increasing the number of women in trade union structures can have a positive effect, as it would allow women to gain a more substantive place in the articulation of claims regarding labour rights<sup>39</sup>.

It is useful at this point to refer to the practice introduced by Spivak (1987), who, while recognising that women do not constitute a homogeneous group (given differences in social class, education, ethnicity, age, etc.), argues that what she terms “strategic essentialism” is important. According to this practice, vulnerable, subordinate, or marginalised social groups can temporarily set aside their internal differences and aim to create a sense of collective identity through which they can organise into movements of claim-making, focusing on a central, shared problem—such as sexual harassment. In this way, solidarity is built and their presence in society is strengthened. She cites the

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<sup>36</sup> Είναι το φαινόμενο όπου οι γυναίκες, πολύ πιο συχνά από τους άνδρες, προωθούνται και αναλαμβάνουν ηγετικές θέσεις στον επιχειρηματικό και πολιτικό κόσμο σε περιόδους κρίσης ή ύφεσης, όταν η πιθανότητα αποτυχίας είναι υψηλότερη, για να αποδειχθεί ότι γυναίκες δεν προορίζονται για ηγετικές θέσεις.

<sup>37</sup> Προσωπική εμπειρία και γνώση.

<sup>38</sup> Σιάνου Φ., Χρόνος γένους θηλυκού. Το φύλο του ρολογιού - Οι συνδικαλίστριες, [www.femnetsalonica.gr/h48.doc](http://www.femnetsalonica.gr/h48.doc).

<sup>39</sup> Dean H. (2006). Women in trade unions methods and good practices for gender mainstreaming, European Trade Union Institute for Research, Education and Health and Safety (ETUI-REHS), Institute for the Equality of Women and Men, Brussels.

feminist movement as a characteristic example: it succeeded in making women's issues visible, even though it concerned very different groups of women (e.g. white, Black, etc.)<sup>40</sup>.

As Butler (2006) characteristically notes, "*Spivak argued that feminists must rely on essentialist approaches as a tool for a provisional classification of women as a universal category, with the goal of advancing a political feminist programme, using the term for strategic reasons*<sup>41</sup>."

The reference to a "provisional classification" as a universal category is made because the problems women face worldwide are not the same in developed, developing, and underdeveloped countries, and there is no homogeneity. Women do not form a uniform global group facing identical problems; these differ from country to country, according to economic and social class, ethnicity, age, and culture. Yet, as Athanasiou (2006) notes, "*it was necessary to find a common denominator for all women that could be used as a reference point for the movement. The dominant tendency at first was to treat as a shared experience the oppression of women by androcentric culture, against which they were called upon to rebel. At this point, poststructuralism emerges, with Judith Butler challenging and transcending gender difference, showing how feminists can pursue substantive politics without a coherent identity, arguing that even if alliances are formed, they must be constituted temporarily and for purposes other than the articulation of identity*<sup>42</sup>." These issues, however, remain open in feminist thought and there is neither agreement nor consensus.

I believe that trade unions can, must, and ought to play a key role in the prevention and handling of sexual harassment in the workplace, through the development and implementation of policies and procedures, through their information and training services, and through collective bargaining. They can also support, inform, advise, and represent their members—women and men workers—who have experienced sexual harassment or are perpetrators, as they are in a privileged and crucial position to do so: they know both victim and perpetrator and are thus able to support, as far as possible, the victim of discrimination.

## 1.6 Structure of the study

Based on the overall purpose and the specific research questions posed, the present study is structured into six sections.

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<sup>40</sup> G. Chakravorty Spivak 1987, In *Other Worlds. Essays in Cultural Politics*. New York/London: Methuen, 197-221.

<sup>41</sup> Butler, J. Παραστασιακές Επιτελέσεις και Συγκρότηση του φύλου: Δοκίμιο πάνω στη φαινομενολογία και τη φεμινιστική θεωρία, 2006, σ. 390 & 401.

<sup>42</sup> Αθανασίου, Αθηνά 2006 «Εισαγωγή: Φύλο, εξουσία και υποκειμενικότητα μετά το 'δεύτερο κύμα'». Στο Αθηνά Αθανασίου Φεμινιστική θεωρία και πολιτισμική κριτική Εκδ. Νήσος: Αθήνα, σ.σ. 13-138.

In the present section, an introduction to the phenomenon of sexual harassment has been provided, including its forms, types, and consequences. Reference has also been made to the role of workers' and employers' organisations in promoting gender equality in general, and more specifically in combating sexual harassment in the workplace. Finally, the purpose and specific questions, the innovation, and the structure of the study have been outlined.

The second section explains the theoretical and conceptual framework, with references to patriarchy, gendered organisational culture, and the characteristics of social institutions such as the organisations that form the sample of this research. It also discusses the relationship between sexual harassment and gendered organisational culture.

The third section describes in more detail the evolution of the situation at international, European, and national levels, as well as the policies adopted to combat sexual harassment. It also presents the institutional and legal framework for combating sexual harassment at international, European, and national levels.

The methodology is analysed in the fourth section, which includes the research questions, the research instrument, sampling, the process of data analysis, issues of ethics, reflexivity, validity and reliability, as well as the significance and originality of the study.

The fifth section presents the findings, recording the experiences of victims regarding the handling of their complaints by their trade unions. It analyses the organisational culture of these organisations and of their women's sections. The section also includes other internal, external, and organisational factors that act as obstacles to the prevention and management of sexual harassment in the workplace.

The discussion of the findings is developed in the sixth section, where—on the basis of feminist and organisational theory—the possible reasons are analysed as to why trade union and employer organisations in Cyprus failed to address the phenomenon of sexual harassment.

The study concludes with a summary of the main findings and with recommendations for improving the current situation.

## Second Section – Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

This chapter presents the theoretical and conceptual framework on sexual harassment through a brief literature review centred on critical feminist analysis and organisational theory. Critical feminist analysis places women's experiences at the centre, interpreting relations of inequality and power between the sexes in terms of social structure and organisation, as I explain below.

I begin with a more extended discussion of gender and patriarchy than that provided in the introductory section, since this theoretical framework constitutes the main axis of my study.

### 2.1. Gender and Patriarchy

Many societies, including our own, are male-dominated and patriarchal with regard to political and economic life, as well as family and work life—which is why the phenomenon of sexual harassment persists, despite the existence of relevant legislation in our country and in many others.

The feminist scholar Walby (1990) defines patriarchy as a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress, and exploit women—a system that has not been eliminated despite feminist struggles. She considers the use of the term *social structure* crucial, as it rejects the view that women's lower status and subordination are due to biology, and avoids the mistaken generalisation that every man necessarily occupies a dominant position, while every woman occupies a subordinate one<sup>43</sup>.

According to Walby, patriarchy as a system of power relations is essential to understanding gender inequality. She identifies six “patriarchal structures” that limit women and help maintain male dominance: the family, paid employment, the state, sexuality, cultural institutions, and male violence—which is systematically ignored and legitimised by the state. These social structures function relatively autonomously. Sexual harassment constitutes a form of male sexual expression that imposes norms; sexuality thus becomes a space and tool through which patriarchal power is exercised and the mechanism that socially legitimises male superiority and reproduces gendered social hierarchies is reinforced.

More specifically, she argues that patriarchy operates as follows:

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<sup>43</sup> Walby, S. 1990. *Theorizing Patriarchy*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, <https://www.wiley.com/en-gb/Theorizing+Patriarchy-p-9780631147695>.

a) **In the family:** through the gendered division of labour within the family, which obliges women to assume primary responsibility for domestic work and for caring for children and husbands, even when they are in full-time paid employment. She also notes that women may find themselves trapped in unsatisfactory marriages because they cannot secure well-paid jobs that would allow them to support themselves and their children.

b) **In paid employment:** through waged work, where women face horizontal and vertical segregation that leads to pay discrimination and unequal treatment, as they are often concentrated in less “demanding” roles than their male colleagues.

c) **In the activities of the state:** which, she argues, remain “patriarchal, capitalist, and racist”, even if some reforms have been introduced (such as equal educational opportunities or divorce laws that make it easier for women to leave marriages), offering some degree of protection from patriarchy. Walby maintains that states are inherently oppressive towards women through their policies and laws and that society is fundamentally biased in favour of men.

d) **In patriarchal relations of sexuality:** where different norms apply to men and women in terms of social expectations and standards concerning sexual behaviour.

e) **In patriarchal cultural institutions:** such as the media, religion, and education, which produce and perpetuate representations of women from a patriarchal perspective. These representations contribute to the construction of a specific type of female attractiveness and femininity, the importance of which is particularly emphasised in contemporary Western culture, and which devalues—and at times threatens—women.

f) **In male violence against women:** which sustains patriarchy. Walby argues that such violence is neither random nor purely individual, as it might appear, but operates according to systemic patterns and criteria. When states do not condemn male violence against women, they effectively perpetuate it through their non-intervention.

Walby (1990) also argues that the nature of patriarchy has shifted from *private* patriarchy to *public* patriarchy. Initially, patriarchal domination was exercised primarily in the private sphere, within the family, where the man—as husband or father—was “the direct oppressor and beneficiary, individually and immediately, of women’s subordination”. Gradually, as women gained greater access to the public sphere through increased employment opportunities, the form of oppression in public patriarchy changed: “women are no longer exploited primarily by individual patriarchs (fathers/husbands), but rather by men collectively through their incorporation into public arenas, principally but not exclusively in employment.” These forms remain interlinked and coexist today. As an example, she refers to groups of women in contemporary societies such as the United Kingdom, where different groups may experience different combinations of public and private patriarchy: British women of

Afro-Caribbean origin are more likely to experience public patriarchy, while British women of Muslim origin are more likely to experience private patriarchy<sup>44</sup>.

It is very important, as MacKinnon (1992) notes, that relations of inequality and power between the sexes be interpreted in sociological terms, on the basis of social structure and organisation. The repeated oppression of women is a global phenomenon that characterises all societies and forms the starting point for understanding women's secondary position in private and public life over time and across cultures<sup>45</sup>.

Within this framework, male violence against women refers to a structural system of patriarchal values in which violence against women and girls is tolerated and legitimised. Its purpose is to secure male dominance over women through different forms and levels of violence, in order to control women and girls—their bodies and their sexuality. It is part of a broader patriarchal system in which men devise and maintain strategies for controlling all spheres of society, leaving women in a vulnerable position (European Women's Lobby, 2010)<sup>46</sup>.

In the same vein, Brooks (1999) notes that most incidents of sexual harassment in the workplace committed by men against women are not accidental; rather, they form part of a centuries-long process of excluding women from positions of economic and political power<sup>47</sup>.

In the next section, I will examine how culture and organisational culture can influence policies for addressing sexual harassment in the workplace.

## 2.2 Organisational Culture and Gender

Because this study aims to provide a critical feminist analysis of how employer and trade union organisations in Cyprus have dealt with the serious yet often invisible problem of sexual harassment in Cypriot workplaces, it is important to examine what culture is—and more specifically, what organisational culture is—and how it influences policies for addressing sexual harassment. Since, as Hofstede (2011) argues, national and organisational culture are directly related, I begin with the relevant definitions and discussion.

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<sup>44</sup> Walby, S. 1990. *Theorizing Patriarchy*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, <https://www.wiley.com/en-gb/Theorizing+Patriarchy-p-9780631147695>.

<sup>45</sup> MacKinnon, C. (1992). 'Feminism, Marxism, method and the state. An agenda for theory', *Signs, Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, Special Issue: Feminist Theory, Spring, Vol. No 3.

<sup>46</sup> European Women's Lobby. *Towards a Europe Free from All Forms of Male Violence against Women*, Position Paper Prepared by the EWL Centre on Violence against Women December 2010

<sup>47</sup> Brooks, R.E. (1999). *Dignity and Discrimination: Toward A Pluralistic Understanding of Workplace Harassment*. *The Georgetown Law Journal*

## 2.2.1 Definition of Culture and Organisational Culture

The word *culture* has its roots in the Latin word *cultura* (cultivation, civilisation), and some of the most representative definitions used in the literature are the following:

- a. “Culture is a system of ‘meanings’ which have been collectively accepted by a given group at a given time. This system, consisting of meanings, concepts, categories, forms, and images, interprets the overall situation among the members of a group” (Pettigrew, 1979)<sup>48</sup>.
- b. “Culture consists of the explicit or implicit patterns of behaviour that are acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements and artefacts of human groups” (Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1963)<sup>49</sup>.

The term *organisational culture* appeared for the first time in the early 1980s in American academic literature. Since then, much has been written analysing its dimensions and importance. According to Hofstede (1980), organisational culture is the “personality” of an organisation and is directly linked to national culture (that is, the culture of the country where the organisation is located). Every organisation expresses the cultures of its individual members and subgroups at all levels, and therefore the employees themselves constitute one of the most important sources shaping the culture.

Culture is made up of different elements and is therefore difficult to describe precisely. It changes over time, as people change; it is created through employees’ actions and decisions, as well as through communication among them. Hofstede (1980) stresses that it is important to understand how culture influences everyday activities and business operations, since culture is learned, derives from the individual’s social environment, and is certainly not inherited—that is, it does not come from one’s genes<sup>50</sup>.

Kotter and Heskett (1992) argue that organisational culture is perpetuated by its tendency to attract and retain people whose values and beliefs match those of the organisation. They note that there is no single “ideal” culture, since cultures depend on the organisation’s goals, the nature of competition, and other environmental factors. Culture is influenced by senior management/leadership and can have a strong impact on shaping the type of organisational culture that management seeks to transmit to its

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<sup>48</sup> Andrew M. Pettigrew, *Administrative Science Quarterly*. Vol. 24, No. 4, *Qualitative Methodology* (Dec., 1979), pp. 570-581.

<sup>49</sup> Kroeber, A. L. and Kluckhohn, C. (1963) *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions*. New York: Vintage.

<sup>50</sup> Hofstede, G. (1980). *Culture’s consequences: International differences in work-related values*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.

employees<sup>51</sup>. For these authors, the fact that there does not appear to be an ideal culture does not mean that such a culture cannot be cultivated when there is political will.

According to Rutherford (2001), organisational culture is directly intertwined with gender, as we will see in more detail below. She writes:

*“The term organisational culture refers to the totality of perceptions, values, habits, traditions, practices, symbols, beliefs, and patterns of behaviour of organisational members that endure over time and that constitute the experiences and convictions of all members. These are expressed through management style, language and communication, dress, physical artefacts, ‘informal’ behaviour, gendered perceptions, and the expression of sexuality. The expectations arising from culture create patterns of acceptable behaviour and ways of performing tasks. Overall, organisational culture guides the behaviour of organisational members, influences the work they perform, and all components of organisational culture are directly or indirectly implicated in gender.”*  
(Rutherford, 2001:373)<sup>52</sup>

### 2.2.2 Linking National and Organisational Culture

According to Hofstede (2011), organisational culture reflects national culture, as it is directly related to social relations within a given society. As Hall (1976) also emphasises, *“culture is a human medium and every aspect of human life is influenced by it, including the way organisations are structured and operate”*<sup>53</sup>.

The classification of national cultures along six dimensions (Hofstede, 2011) is a valuable tool for understanding this connection, since the specific characteristics of national culture also shape the form of organisational culture. According to Hofstede (2011), national cultures vary as follows:

**a. Power distance (Power Distance Index – PDI):** This expresses the extent to which a society accepts unequal distribution of power within an organisation. It refers to the degree to which a society or culture encourages or accepts inequality in the distribution of power among individuals. In countries where inequality in power distribution is high, leadership has considerable power over employees. Organisations are more centralised, have more hierarchical levels, and more supervisory staff. In countries where power

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<sup>51</sup> John, P. Kotter & James L. Heskett. (1992). *Corporate Culture and Performance*, New York: Free Press.

<sup>52</sup> Rutherford, S. (2001). Organizational cultures, women managers and exclusion. *Women in Management Review*, 16, 371–373.

<sup>53</sup> Hall, E.T. (1976). *Beyond Culture*. Garden City, NJ: Doubleday.

distance is low, individuals believe in reducing social inequality; organisations are less centralised, have fewer hierarchical levels, and jobs are evaluated with similar weight.

On a scale from 1 to 120, Cyprus scores 75, a medium score indicating a slight tendency towards the higher end of the PDI. According to Hofstede's analysis, this is a society that believes in hierarchy and considers inequalities between people acceptable<sup>54</sup>.

**b. Uncertainty avoidance (Uncertainty Avoidance Index – UAI):** This expresses the extent to which a society feels threatened by uncertainty and tries to avoid such situations by using fixed patterns and structures. It refers to the extent to which individuals in a society tolerate risks and threats arising from ambiguous and unstable situations. In cultures with high uncertainty avoidance, people prefer structured situations and tasks and more written rules. In cultures with low uncertainty avoidance, people prefer weaker structuring of tasks and situations and fewer written rules<sup>55</sup>.

Cyprus has the highest score among the countries studied in uncertainty avoidance, which means that Cypriots feel very uncomfortable with ambiguous situations. Bureaucracy, laws, and rules are very important because they create a sense of security<sup>56</sup>.

**c. Individualism vs. Collectivism (IDV):** This expresses the degree to which a society prefers a loose social framework or a rigid structure of absolute loyalty. In individualistic cultures, people focus primarily on themselves and their immediate family and believe in individual decision-making. In collectivist cultures, people emphasise group values and collective decision-making.

With a score of 42, Cyprus appears to have a collectivist culture centred around the notion of "we". This suggests that individuals in Cyprus are integrated into strong, cohesive groups (family, organisation, etc.) that protect their members in exchange for their loyalty<sup>57</sup>.

**d. Masculinity vs. Femininity (MAS):** This expresses the degree to which a society's values are based on traditional masculinity (assertiveness, dominance, indifference) or on femininity. In cultures where masculinity predominates, men prevail and have more rights and opportunities for advancement than women. In cultures characterised by

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<sup>54</sup> Global Human Resource Management Casebook, <http://bit.do/endJp>.

<sup>55</sup> Hofstede, G. (2011). Dimensionalizing Cultures: The Hofstede Model in Context. *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture*, 2(1). <https://doi.org/10.9707/2307-0919.1014>.

<sup>56</sup> Global Human Resource Management Casebook, <http://bit.do/endJp>.

<sup>57</sup> Global Human Resource Management Casebook, <http://bit.do/endJp>.

femininity, greater emphasis is placed on interpersonal relationships and caring for others<sup>58</sup>.

With a score of 58, Cyprus is located in the mid-range of a male-dominated, success-oriented society<sup>59</sup>.

**e. Long-Term Orientation (LTO):** This expresses the degree to which a society is oriented towards the future or towards the present. It describes how a society maintains links with its past and how it deals with the challenges of the future. Societies with a low score on this dimension tend to adhere strictly to their traditions and view future change with suspicion, being less open to innovation<sup>60</sup>.

Cyprus has an intermediate score of 59 in this dimension, indicating a tendency towards long-term orientation, with emphasis placed both on tradition and on future prosperity<sup>61</sup>.

**f. Indulgence vs. Restraint (IND):** This defines the extent to which members of a society seek to control their desires and impulses. It describes the degree to which members of a society are tolerant of basic human weaknesses. Indulgent societies are more understanding of the tendency to satisfy basic and natural desires related to enjoying life, leisure, etc<sup>62</sup>.

With a score of 35, Cyprus is below the average, which indicates a high degree of indulgence<sup>63</sup>.

Hofstede's study therefore suggests that Cypriot society is a patriarchal, male-dominated society, conservative with respect to change, which tends to justify situations relating to immediate physical gratification (it is indulgent towards desires and impulses). Within such a cultural context, incidents of sexual harassment can be "justified", as they are associated with sexuality and the "nature" of men. Furthermore, on the basis of these scores, this is a society that believes in hierarchy and considers inequalities between people acceptable. At the same time, Cypriot culture appears to place emphasis on tradition and, consequently, on traditional gender roles. In other

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<sup>58</sup> Hofstede, G. (2011). Dimensionalizing Cultures: The Hofstede Model in Context. Online Readings in Psychology and Culture, 2(1). <https://doi.org/10.9707/2307-0919.1014>.

<sup>59</sup> Global Human Resource Management Casebook, <http://bit.do/endJp>.

<sup>60</sup> Hofstede, G. (2011). Dimensionalizing Cultures: The Hofstede Model in Context. Online Readings in Psychology and Culture, 2(1). <https://doi.org/10.9707/2307-0919.1014>.

<sup>61</sup> Global Human Resource Management Casebook, <http://bit.do/endJp>.

<sup>62</sup> Hofstede, G. (2011). Dimensionalizing Cultures: The Hofstede Model in Context. Online Readings in Psychology and Culture, 2(1). <https://doi.org/10.9707/2307-0919.1014>.

<sup>63</sup> Global Human Resource Management Casebook, <http://bit.do/endJp>.

words, according to the above classification, Cypriot culture accepts gender inequalities and tends to reproduce them through tradition.

## 2.3 Gendered Organisational Culture

Theories of organisational culture were gender-neutral for many decades. In the late 1970s, the field for recognising the gendered nature of management opened up significantly with Rosabeth Moss Kanter's (1977) *Men and Women of the Corporation*<sup>64</sup>, which linked political, economic, and managerial approaches<sup>65</sup>.

In more recent literature, Meyerson & Fletcher (2000:126), giving a gendered dimension to organisational culture, state that:

*“Most organisations were created by men and for men and are predicated on male experience. Even though women have entered the workforce in large numbers, organisational definitions of competence and leadership remain closely linked to stereotypically masculine traits such as toughness, aggressiveness, and decisiveness<sup>66</sup>.”*

Similarly, Shakeshaft (1989) argues that culture constitutes the greatest barrier for women, because male dominance characterises a society that supports and reinforces a male-dominated system within organisations<sup>67</sup>.

According to Kongidou & Takis (2005), the ideology that derives from patriarchal social organisation continues to be reproduced, to varying degrees and in different forms and ways, even under new social conditions. This is reflected in the management and organisational culture of organisations, where gendered discrimination appears in:

- a) managerial stereotypes (manager = man)
- b) the absence of mentors for women
- c) the dominant masculine management style

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<sup>64</sup> Adelina Broadbridge and Jeff Hearn, Gender and management: New directions in research and continuing patterns in practice, 2008, British Journal of Management, (19), s1, 38-49. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8551.2008.00570.x>

<sup>65</sup> Adelina Broadbridge and Jeff Hearn, Gender and management: New directions in research and continuing patterns in practice, 2008, British Journal of Management, (19), s1, 38-49. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8551.2008.00570.x>

<sup>66</sup> Meyerson, D. E., & Fletcher, J. K. (2000, January/February). A modest manifesto for shattering the glass ceiling. Harvard Business Review, 78, 1, 126-136.

<sup>67</sup> Shakeshaft, C. (1989). Women in Educational Administration. Newbury Park, California: Sage Publications.

- d) the bureaucratic structures of organisations, and
- e) the selection and evaluation of managerial staff<sup>68</sup>.

Broadbridge & Hearn (2008), reinforcing the above, note that management and administration are gendered in many respects, since gender and gendered power relations are central defining features of most organisations and their management. Organisations and their management are not simply structured by gender; they are permeated by and constituted through gender. At the same time, organisational and managerial realities construct—and sometimes disrupt—dominant gender relations. Gendering appears both among gendered groups of people and in gendered practices, and this occurs even when organisations and management are made up predominantly—or exclusively—of men or of women<sup>69</sup>. This means, as Martin (2004) argues, that organisational cultures are gendered and adopt gendered practices regardless of whether they are led by men or women, since each organisation, by its very nature, generates power.

Acker (1992), explaining the gendering of organisations, argues that women and men, through processes of inclusion and exclusion, become specialised in specific forms of formal and informal work, with vertical and horizontal segregation in organisations and their management. Many organisations and management structures are characterised by clearly gendered patterns in hierarchy, occupational segregation, sexuality, and family responsibilities<sup>70</sup>.

In agreement with Acker, Broadbridge & Hearn (2008) observe that effective organisational management is often assumed to be aligned with traditional characteristics valued in men (assertiveness, toughness, dominance, competitiveness). For this reason, management is underpinned by strong gendered expectations and specialisations. Management both operates within and contributes to workplace gendered power relations—within and across hierarchical levels, in recruitment, selection, evaluation, promotion, and so on<sup>71</sup>.

According to Gherardi (1996), language also plays a crucial role, as it embodies division, differentiation, and power. The use of the masculine and feminine grammatical genders, and the prioritisation of the masculine as the “first” term, often renders the feminine invisible (as in the Greek language). As she notes, men and women

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<sup>68</sup> Κογκίδου Δ. & Τάκη Β. (2005). Γυναίκες στη Διοίκηση της Εκπαίδευσης - Τα Οργανωσιακά Εμπόδια. Στο: Π. Γεωργιάννη (Επιμ.) Πρακτικά του 2ου Πανελληνίου Συνεδρίου Διοίκησης Α/Βάθμιας και Β/Βάθμιας Εκπαίδευσης. Τόμος 3ος, σσ. 203-216. Πάτρα: Παιδαγωγικό Τμήμα Δημοτικής Εκπαίδευσης Πανεπιστημίου Πατρών.

<sup>69</sup> Broadbridge, A and Hearn, J, Gender and management: New directions in research and continuing patterns in practice, 2008, *British Journal of Management*, (19), s1, 38-49. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8551.2008.00570.x>.

<sup>70</sup> Acker, J. (1992). Gendering organizational theory". In: A. J. Mills and P. Tancred (eds.), *Gendering Organizational Analysis*, pp. 248-260. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

<sup>71</sup> Broadbridge, A and Hearn, J, Gender and management: New directions in research and continuing patterns in practice, 2008, *British Journal of Management*, (19), s1, 38-49. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8551.2008.00570.x>.

are placed in a dichotomous and hierarchical relation: the first term is defined positively as the One, and the second is defined by difference, as the Other<sup>72</sup>. “Both men and women are prisoners of their gender, although in different ways, with asymmetrical power positions and in a coordinated way, since the use of language has been gendered.” For example, it is considered “normal” for men to swear, but not for women.

Gherardi (1996) also contends that all social practices—including the notion of the subject and subjectivity—are not simply mediated by language but are constituted through it. The structure of an organisation differentiates individuals and places them in unequal, relatively stable, and rigid social positions, expressing a gendered symbolic order that generates a secondary difference between male and female domains, segregated occupations, and differences in status, power, and knowledge. She argues that “in organisational cultures where gender relations and boundaries between men and women are not clearly defined, women have no place, since gender relations are based on the hegemony of the One and the silencing of the Other.” In the same spirit, she claims that “contextualised, situated, and historicised gender relations assign bounded meanings to men and women in each culture and are always connected to archetypes of masculinity and femininity, which define difference” (Gherardi, 1996)<sup>73</sup>.

Smith (1990) introduces the notion of *gendered subtext*, where behind one word there is another concealed, and argues that “the appearance of neutrality and impersonality hides the subject of class, race, and gender”. The gendered subtext is embedded in written discourse, speech, and other symbolic phenomena through which the social production of meaning takes place, with dominant textual representations obscuring the gendered subject<sup>74</sup>. For example, women have been silenced in history, even though they played roles and made contributions in all liberation struggles. The same occurred in the sciences, where only male scientists are highlighted and women’s contributions are rendered invisible.

Acker’s (1992) concept of the *disembodied worker* is a typical example of this concealment and obscuring. For this reason, all “asymmetrical systemic, relational and symbolic social differentiations between men and women, produced within a given historical and socio-political context, can be considered gendered”. The disembodied worker is not gender-neutral: they both produce and are produced by the gendered subject within organisations, since the male/female relation is, as a rule, a hierarchical

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<sup>72</sup> Ο Άλλος, ήταν το μάθημα που διδάχθηκε από τη Simone de Beauvoir (1949), η οποία αναφέρεται στην έννοια του «δεύτερου φύλου», μια εξαιρετικά χρήσιμη αναλυτική κατηγορία, για να περιγράψει τις θηλυκές εμπειρίες της υποταγής.

<sup>73</sup> Gherardi, S (1996) ‘Gendered Organizational Cultures: Narratives of Women Travellers in a Male World’ Gender Work and Organization Vol 3 No 4 pp 187–201.

<sup>74</sup> Smith D. (1990). The Conceptual Practices of Power, a Feminist Sociology of Knowledge. Boston: Northeastern University Press.

one—whether by law or by custom—where the laws and rules governing the distribution of power and authority in society come into play<sup>75</sup>.

One of Acker's key arguments (1992) is that this "ideal worker", who is disembodied (neither man nor woman), is implicitly linked to organisational roles and behaviours associated with stereotypically masculine and feminine traits. These stereotypes tend to support men's greater legitimacy in organisational roles and thus sustain a series of gender biases in organisational structures, cultures, and practices. For example, this hypothetical ideal worker has no responsibilities outside work and can devote themselves fully to it. By contrast, an employee with family responsibilities will have their work affected by these responsibilities and will be perceived as unsuitable for the position they occupy or seek. Women are those who bear the bulk of family obligations, while men devote themselves uninterruptedly to their work. In this way, the very notion of work is linked to gender and is presented—incorrectly—as gender-neutral.

Thus, this hypothetical disembodied worker, who ostensibly has no gender, effectively addresses men whose lives are centred around full-time paid work, since women are burdened with caring for husbands, children, and the household. In this way, Acker shows that the concept of "work" is silently gendered, even though organisational logic represents it as gender-neutral. This logic maintains gender stratification in organisations and in society. This gendered neutrality permeates all organisational processes and ultimately conceals discriminatory practices within an organisation (Acker, 1992)<sup>76</sup>.

When organisational culture is presented as gender-neutral, this implies that employees must demonstrate full flexibility and commitment. However, this disproportionately affects women, who usually carry primary responsibility for family care. As a result, women—especially mothers—must prove their reliability and dedication by devoting themselves to work to a greater extent than their male colleagues. Consequently, women's ability to combine a successful career with other social roles is more limited than that of men. This leads to men's work behaviour, ethos, and values being treated as the standard, while women's experiences, needs, and specificities are marginalised or concealed.

Acker's (1992) approach to organisational analysis requires researchers to examine not only the structural characteristics of specific institutional and organisational settings, but also the everyday practices and discourses that are created or rationalised in order to conceal inequalities. Martin (2004) further notes that while practices represent the familiar, ongoing, and (relatively) predictable gendered content, the *practicing* of gender is emergent, episodic, variable, and often unpredictable. Gender practice in

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<sup>75</sup> Acker, J (1990), Hierarchies, jobs, bodies. A theory of gendered organization, *Gender and Society*, Vol. 4, pp. 139-158. Αυτούσια μετάφραση της γράφουσας.

<sup>76</sup> Acker, Joan. "From Sex Roles to Gendered Institutions." *Contemporary Sociology*, vol. 21, no. 5, 1992, pp. 565–569. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/2075528](http://www.jstor.org/stable/2075528). Αυτούσια μετάφραση της γράφουσας.

social life ensures the continuation of gendered institutions<sup>77</sup>. This means that in the same way we consciously or unconsciously follow gendered practices, we can also transform situations by ceasing to follow stereotypical notions of gender roles and adopting new practices. People exercise agency at work both by complying with existing rules and by resisting them (Martin, 2006).

The attention researchers must therefore pay to exploring gendering practices is crucial—especially because unintentional or spontaneous gender practice is more widespread in the workplace than deliberate gender performance. Martin (2006) notes that these gendering practices include accepted and recognisable forms of dress, behaviour, language, expressions, actions, and interests that are culturally available and normatively or stereotypically linked to one sex or the other. Certain practices are considered appropriate only for boys or men, others only for girls or women (although many are deemed acceptable for both). People actively follow styles of dress and behaviour that are appropriate for their gendered status, implying a conscious intention to comply with the prescriptions of the two-sex institution<sup>78</sup>. In other words, gender is practised at work within a framework of power where men hold most of the powerful positions and most women are subordinate to men in the formal power structure, and where gender is enacted in a context of power that often reinforces harmful aspects of gender for women<sup>79</sup>.

According to Martin (2004), social institutions:

- a) Adopt distinct social practices that are repeated, recycled, or reproduced over time by group members.
- b) Constrain but also enable the behaviour and actions of members of a society/group.
- c) Contain social positions and relations characterised by specific expectations, rules/specifications, and procedures, where behaviour is broadly shaped by shared cultural rules or norms.
- d) Are internalised by group members as identities and selves and appear as personalities.
- e) Have a legitimising ideology that proclaims the correctness and necessity of their arrangements, practices, and social relations.
- f) Are inconsistent, contradictory, and conflict-ridden.

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<sup>77</sup> Martin, P.Y. Gender as Social Institution, *Social Forces*, 82, 1249-1273.

<sup>78</sup> Martin.P.Y. Practising Gender at Work: Further Thoughts on Reflexivity Gender, Work and Organization. Vol. 13 No. 3 May 2006. Blackwell Publishing Ltd 2006.

<sup>79</sup> Martin.P.Y. Practising Gender at Work: Further Thoughts on Reflexivity Gender, Work and Organization. Vol. 13 No. 3 May 2006. Blackwell Publishing Ltd 2006.

g) Are constantly changing, as current practices modify past practices and produce slightly—or greatly—transformed practices.

h) Are organised in accordance with power and are permeated by it. Institutional positions and practices confer privilege and advantage on established holders of certain social positions and impose subordination and disadvantage on others—and each organisation, by itself, generates power (Martin, 2004)<sup>80</sup>.

McGinley (2008), linking gender with harassing behaviour, notes that gender is embedded in the workplace due to perceptions of gender differences and the inferiority of the feminine, as well as attempts to reinforce the masculinity of the group and of the work itself<sup>81</sup>. The notion of *hegemonic masculinity* was articulated by Connell (2005) and influenced thinking on men, gender, and social hierarchy. According to Connell, hegemony refers to cultural dominance in society as a whole, where specific gender relations of domination and subordination exist, including among different groups of men. She notes that the most significant case in contemporary European and American societies is the dominance of heterosexual men and the subordination of gay men. Yet the key structural fact concerns half of the world's population—women. The global dominance of men over women provides the basis for relations among men that define a “hegemonic type of masculinity” across society.

Connell defines hegemonic masculinity as “a social ascendancy achieved in a play of social forces that extends beyond contests of brute power into the organisation of private life and cultural processes.” This masculinity is constructed in relation to, but also in opposition to, “femininity”, as it staunchly defends compulsory heterosexuality, homophobia, misogyny, the possession and exercise of power, aggression and violence, as well as technical or technological competence. The issue she raises concerns the causes, not merely the fact, of male power. She seeks to identify the sources of men's power, as they benefit from women's subordination through paid work, violence, sexuality, childcare, and so on. The three characteristics of hegemonic masculinity are social position (where individuals, regardless of gender, can move), the set of “masculine” practices and traits, and the fact that, when these practices are considered normal and internalised by both men and women, they have far-reaching cultural and social effects<sup>82</sup>.

Ely & Padavic (2007) argue that the link between gender, the body, and reproduction is part of a historical process whose content and meanings change over time. Woman is defined as the opposite of man, and social gender collapses into biological sex<sup>83</sup>, as

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<sup>80</sup> Martin.P.Y. Gender as Social Institution, *Social Forces*, 82, June 2004, Volume 82, Number 4, p.p:1249-1273.

<sup>81</sup> McGinley, Ann C., "Creating Masculine Identities: Bullying and Harassment "Because of Sex"" (2008). *Scholarly Works. Paper 18*. <http://scholars.law.unlv.edu/facpub/18>.

<sup>82</sup> Connell, R.W. and Messerschmidt, J.W. 2005. “Hegemonic masculinity: Rethinking the concept” *Gender and Society* 19(6):829-859.

<sup>83</sup> Βλέπε επίσης Butler, 1993, σχετικά με το πώς το βιολογικό και όχι μόνο το κοινωνικό φύλο, κατασκευάζεται κοινωνικά.

if it were a natural fact<sup>84</sup>. All gender differences that are not rooted in biology but adversely affect women in every sphere end up being considered “natural” rather than socially constructed—even though they can gradually change. In this way, masculinity and femininity become embodied in organisations: ideal hegemonic masculinity tends to emphasise power, autonomy, and self-sufficiency, is oriented towards satisfying men’s interests and desires, and therefore accentuates women’s dependency, protection, and compliance. These ideals may not match the actual lives of most men and women, yet many people endorse and rely on them and are judged in relation to them. At the collective level, hegemonic masculinity becomes visible among those who hold institutional power. Thus, as Ely & Padavic note, femininity, like masculinity, is not a single construct, but a set of characteristics and expectations that depends on who defines the appropriate behaviours and who evaluates them. Social interactions are a key mechanism through which this process is embodied, and trade unions are central sites where such mechanisms can be observed (Ely & Padavic, 2007).

The same authors also argue that “power is central to the concept of gender” in at least three interrelated ways:

- a) Gender and power are structurally linked, in the greater representation of men in jobs with higher pay, higher status, and more formal organisational, political, and institutional power.
- b) They are culturally linked, in social practices that construct tasks, positions, and gendered characteristics—such as positioning men/masculinity as strong and women/femininity as accommodating—within a gender system that privileges men.
- c) The operation of power is both external and internal. Externally, it functions through practices, forms of knowledge, and modes of rationality that are developed to shape people’s behaviour, desires, and needs; internally, it operates as people internalise, resist, or reject these efforts (Ely & Padavic, 2007)<sup>85</sup>.

Panayiotou (2010), in her critical analysis of how masculinity is constructed in cinema, focuses on representations of managers and on the interaction between the practice of management and the practice of gender. Using a performative approach, her article centres on “the saying and doing of gender” and argues that the way organisations are portrayed in films provides a testing ground for competing forms of masculinity. She suggests that, in fact, the “organisational hero” can offer a form of resistance to dominant cultural models, especially of “hegemonic masculinity”, so that Hollywood

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<sup>84</sup> Ely, R & Padavic, I. A Feminist Analysis of Organizational Research on Sex Differences. *Academy of Management Review* 2007, Vol. 32, No. 4, 1121-1143.

<sup>85</sup> Ely, R & Padavic, I. A Feminist Analysis of Organizational Research on Sex Differences. *Academy of Management Review* 2007, Vol. 32, No. 4, 1121-1143.

films are not only responsible for disseminating dominant patriarchal discourses but also leave space for challenging them<sup>86</sup>.

Acker's position (1992) is particularly important. She identifies four "gendered processes" that theorists can study in order to examine how organisations become gendered:

- The first concerns "the construction of gender divisions", including the gendered structuring of jobs, wages, and hierarchies; power and subordination; and practices related to reproduction and resistance.
- The second refers to "the creation of symbols, images, and forms of consciousness that explain, justify, and, more rarely, oppose these gender divisions". These include language, ideology, popular and high culture, clothing, the press, and television. Even when this creation is not obvious, most organisations reproduce gender by defining success in terms of masculine values.
- The third includes "interactions between individuals that enact dominance and subordination and create alliances and exclusions".
- The fourth emphasises "the internalisation of the effects of gendered organisations by individuals, who, however, can also change their behaviour" (Acker, 1992:565–569)<sup>87</sup>.

Acker's primary example (1990) of a gendered process is job evaluation, which is not gender-neutral but rather serves to reproduce inequality. First, she notes that job evaluation is the responsibility of management, which in most cases is male-dominated. As she characteristically states, "a 'job' already contains the gender division of the labour market and the separation between public and private". The concept of "job" presupposes a particular gendered organisation of domestic life and social production (Acker, 1990)<sup>88</sup>. She also criticises bureaucratic structures and their extensive rules and documents as responsible for the false gender-neutrality of organisations (Acker, 1992). This occurs because, in the name of equality, they level out gender differences instead of addressing the longstanding problems faced by women that require specific measures.

In the fifth section, a more detailed analysis of Acker's gendered processes will be presented in relation to trade union and employer organisations in Cyprus. For example, it is observed that trade union structures do not formally exclude women from standing for positions on decision-making bodies—indeed, such exclusion would be illegal. Indirectly, however, through scheduling meetings in the evening and through the

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<sup>86</sup> Panayiotou, A. (2010). 'Macho' managers and organizational heroes: competing masculinities in popular films. *Organization*, 17(6), 659–683. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1350508410366275>.

<sup>87</sup> Acker, J. (1992). From Sex Roles to Gendered Institutions. *Contemporary Sociology*, 21(5), 565-569. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2075528>.

<sup>88</sup> Acker, J. "Hierarchies, Jobs, Bodies: A Theory of Gendered Organizations." *Gender & Society*, 4(2), 1990: 139-158.

absence of explicit recommendations to promote women, they effectively exclude and marginalise them. Moreover, they have not promoted the recognition of the social value of motherhood, nor have they practically prioritised work–family reconciliation. On the contrary, they have promoted flexible forms of employment and part-time work as measures to help working mothers rather than working parents, thereby reproducing gender roles. They have also made no significant effort to eliminate occupational segregation in enterprises nor within their own organisations.

In relation to the above description of gendered organisational culture, sexual harassment is clearly one of its outcomes and products. Pilavaki & Vakola (2007)<sup>89</sup> identify two distinct organisational factors responsible for incidents of sexual harassment: organisational climate and working conditions. The feminist movement has played a decisive role in challenging these conditions, since through its struggles and pressure it has succeeded in drawing greater attention to issues such as equality, abuse, rape, and sexual harassment. As Thomas & Kitzinger (1997) note, the feminist movement directly linked equal treatment and working conditions to issues of social development and structure, infusing women’s discourse with claims for specific, legally enshrined rights. These struggles and pressures in the United States and in Europe led both to increased public awareness of the extent of sexual harassment and its psychological, social, and economic consequences for victims, and to the mobilisation of national and international legislative bodies to address it and enshrine it in law. They also note that, from the early 1990s onwards, measures were taken in the US and Europe that contributed to the criminalisation of this problem in the workplace—a problem that violates human dignity, among other things, yet is socially tolerated and sustained by dominant perceptions of women’s position in society.

In the next section, I will briefly outline the international, European, and national institutional and legal framework adopted with the aim of preventing and combating sexual harassment in the workplace.

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<sup>89</sup> Πηλαβάκη, Α & Βακόλα, Μ. (2007). Αίτια, επιπτώσεις και τρόποι αντιμετώπισης της σεξουαλικής παρενόχλησης στον εργασιακό χώρο. Κεφ. 12 του επιστημονικού τόμου «Γυναίκες και Διοίκηση Επιχειρήσεων, Εκδόσεις Σιδέρη 2007.

## Chapter Three – Institutional and Legal Framework for the Prevention and Addressing of Sexual Harassment

Finley (1989) argues that legal language is male language, because it derives primarily from men's experiences and from their dominant social position in relation to women. The claim that the law is patriarchal does not mean that women have not been examined or understood through the law—since women have clearly been the subject or target of many legislative texts—but rather that women's condition, capabilities and experiences are perceived only through a male lens and not through a female one. The understanding of power, dominance and oppression as the underlying causes of discrimination is overshadowed by the neutralised term “discrimination.” Law is a patriarchal form of reasoning, through which the structure and rationale of law are shaped according to the socialisation patterns, experiences, and values of a particular group of privileged and educated men<sup>90</sup>.

Equality legislation emphasises equality between men and women without taking into account gender, which refers to the socially and culturally constructed distinction between individuals as male and female, along with the resulting oppression of women within the family, workplace, public and political life, etc. This means that two unequal situations, in terms of responsibilities and experiences, are treated as equal because gender as a variable—as well as the multiple gendered roles women must perform (employment, childcare, household tasks, cleaning, elder care, cooking, etc.)—is not considered. Thus, Aristotle's maxim that “there is nothing more unequal than the equal treatment of unequals” remains relevant<sup>91</sup>.

It therefore becomes clear that it is not enough to merely make verbal reference to women and their rights; what is crucial is the participation and voice of women themselves in the issues and problems that concern them, as well as the value placed on their experiences.

Let us now examine what has been institutionally and legally adopted at the international, European, and national levels for the prevention and addressing of sexual harassment, beginning with the international framework.

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<sup>90</sup> Finley, L. M., "Breaking Women's Silence in Law: The Dilemma of the Gendered Nature of Legal Reasoning" (1989). Faculty Scholarship Series. Paper 4011. [http://digitalcommons.law.yale.edu/fss\\_papers/4011](http://digitalcommons.law.yale.edu/fss_papers/4011).

<sup>91</sup> Αριστοτέλης Πολιτικά 1279a22–1281a10: Τα είδη των πολιτευμάτων,

[http://www.greek-language.gr/greekLang/ancient\\_greek/tools/corpora/anthology/content.html?t=45&m=2](http://www.greek-language.gr/greekLang/ancient_greek/tools/corpora/anthology/content.html?t=45&m=2).

### 3.1. International Legal Framework

Protection of all individuals from discrimination constitutes a universal right recognised by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 111, which prohibits discrimination in the field of employment and occupation (Council of Europe, 2004)<sup>92</sup>.

Additionally, the Istanbul Convention (2011)<sup>93</sup> of the Council of Europe is the first internationally legally binding instrument and comprehensive legal framework aimed at preventing all forms of violence against women, protecting victims of gender-based and domestic violence, ending such violence, and imposing strict penalties on perpetrators. Beyond prevention, victim protection, and prosecution of perpetrators, it extensively covers issues of harassment, stalking, and generally all forms of gender-based violence. Article 40 of the Istanbul Convention states that “*Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person, in particular when creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment, is subject to criminal or other legal sanctions*”<sup>94</sup>.

The Republic of Cyprus signed the Istanbul Convention on 16 June 2015 and ratified it in March 2018, albeit partially, deferring the implementation of significant articles requiring substantial financial resources. The signature and ratification of the Istanbul Convention are expected to upgrade the legislative framework addressing violence against women in Cyprus and significantly strengthen policy actions aimed at eliminating gender-based discrimination and empowering women.

Recently, in June 2019, the **ILO** adopted a new Convention and Recommendation on combating violence and sexual harassment in workplaces. The Convention recognises that violence and sexual harassment at work “may constitute a human rights violation or abuse and that these acts pose a threat to equal opportunities.” It views them as unacceptable and incompatible with decent work. It defines violence and sexual harassment as behaviours, practices, or threats that aim at, lead to, or are likely to lead to physical, psychological, sexual, or economic harm, and reminds States that they have a responsibility to ensure a zero-tolerance working environment. It should be noted that ILO Conferences are attended by tripartite delegations (governments, employers’

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<sup>92</sup> Council of Europe. Gender mainstreaming Conceptual Framework, Methodology and Presentation of Good Practices. Final report of activities of the Group of Specialists on Mainstreaming (EG-S-MS) Directorate General of Human Rights, Strasbourg, 2004.

<sup>93</sup> Σύμβαση του Συμβουλίου της Ευρώπης για την Πρόληψη και Καταπολέμηση της Βίας κατά των γυναικών και της ενδοοικογενειακής βίας (Σύμβαση της Κωνσταντινούπολης).

<sup>94</sup> Σύμβαση της Κωνσταντινούπολης, <http://www.domviolence.org.cy/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Σύμβαση-της-Κωνσταντινούπολης.pdf>.

organisations, and trade unions) of all countries globally. The new Convention aims to protect employees, regardless of their employment status.

### 3.2. European Legal Framework and Policies

At the European level, various resolutions, recommendations, codes, and directives have been adopted to protect women in the labour market, including protection from sexual harassment. The **European Commission** addressed the issue of sexual harassment in the early 1990s, roughly a decade after the United States. In 2002, it issued the first directive and developed a series of initiatives (resolutions, recommendations, codes of practice, framework agreements, etc.) for the prevention and combating of sexual harassment in the workplace, without, however, achieving the desired outcome, as the problem still persists.

Specifically, the European Commission has issued the following:

a) **Council Resolution (90/C157/02)** of 1990<sup>95</sup>

b) **Commission Recommendation (92/131/EEC)**<sup>96</sup> and Commission declaration of 27 November 1991. The definition of sexual harassment in the Recommendation is broad, as it presents sexual harassment as unwanted conduct toward the victim and dismissive of the victim's will, constituting an affront to their dignity. It refers to the imposition of behaviours and practices of a sexual nature on the victim by someone else. It recognises as sexual harassment both behaviours that have specific adverse professional consequences for the victim and those creating a hostile and humiliating/disadvantageous environment. It states that sexual harassment may originate from hierarchical superiors or colleagues at the same level and emphasises the link between sexual harassment and sexist discrimination, while introducing the obligation to protect the “dignity” of both men and women.

c) **Code of Practice on Measures to Combat Sexual Harassment (92/C27/01)**<sup>97</sup> of 1991.

d) **Equal Treatment Directive (2002/73/EC)** (Article 2, p.3)<sup>98</sup>, which for the first time recognises sexual harassment as gender-based discrimination and unequal treatment and introduces the following definition: “*Any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or*

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<sup>95</sup> Σχετικά με την προστασία της αξιοπρέπειας γυναικών και ανδρών στην εργασία

<sup>96</sup> για την προστασία της αξιοπρέπειας γυναικών και ανδρών κατά την εργασία, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EL/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:31992H0131&from=EL>

<sup>97</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EL/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:31992H0131&from=EL>

<sup>98</sup> Οδηγία του Ευρωπαϊκού Κοινοβουλίου και του Συμβουλίου της 23ης Σεπτεμβρίου 2002 για την Ίση Μεταχείριση Ανδρών και Γυναικών στην Απασχόληση και Επαγγελματική Εκπαίδευση (2002/73/EK), <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EL/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32002L0073&from=EL>

*physical conduct of a sexual nature, with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person, in particular when creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment*<sup>99</sup>.” This definition is also adopted for the purposes of this study.

Regarding prevention, Article 2(5) of Directive 2002/73/EC states: “*Member States shall encourage, in accordance with national legislation, collective agreements or practice, employers and those responsible for access to vocational training to take measures to prevent all forms of discrimination on grounds of sex and, in particular, harassment and sexual harassment in the workplace.*” It also introduces provisions for enforcement procedures, compensation for victims of discrimination and harassment (Antić, Milica, 2009)<sup>100</sup>.

e) **Directive 2006/54/EC**<sup>101</sup> of 2006, which consolidated several previous directives.

f) **European Commission call (2014)**<sup>102</sup> urging the adoption of a comprehensive EU strategy and a proposal for a directive on combating all forms of gender-based violence, including sexual harassment and sexual violence against women and girls.

g) **European Parliament Resolution (25 February 2014)**, its third in sequence, issuing recommendations on combating violence against women (2013/2004(INL)), including sexual harassment.

h) **Framework Agreement on Harassment and Violence at Work (2007)** between ETUC/CES, BUSINESSEUROPE, UEAPME, and CEEP<sup>103</sup>.

i) **European Parliament Resolution of 26 October 2017** on combating sexual harassment and abuse in the EU.

This resolution was issued after evidence emerged that sexual harassment exists within the EU Institutions themselves, including the European Parliament. Through it, the Parliament unequivocally condemns all cases of sexual harassment publicised by the media and expresses its full support for victims. It underlines that “if EU institutions wish to safeguard their credibility, they must oppose all forms of gender discrimination and any action undermining gender equality.” It refers to its resolution of 14 April 2014, which adopted new rules including the creation of specialised bodies such as the

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<sup>99</sup> Η Κυπριακή Δημοκρατία εναρμονίστηκε και την εν λόγω Οδηγία, και ο ορισμός υιοθετήθηκε και στην κυπριακή νομοθεσία.

<sup>100</sup> Violence in the EU examined: policies on violence against women, children and youth in 2004 EU accession countries / edited by Milica Antić Gaber. - 1st ed. - Ljubljana: Faculty of Arts, 2009.

<sup>101</sup> Σχετικά με την εφαρμογή της αρχής των ίσων ευκαιριών και της ίσης μεταχείρισης ανδρών και γυναικών σε θέματα εργασίας και απασχόλησης (αναδιατύπωση).

<sup>102</sup> <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P7-TA-2014-0126+0+DOC+XML+V0//EL>.

<sup>103</sup> <http://olme-attik.att.sch.gr/files/diethi/SIMFONIAPLAISIOVIAETUC.pdf>.

advisory committee responsible for examining complaints of harassment between Accredited Parliamentary Assistants and Members of the European Parliament and for preventing harassment within the institution, and notes with satisfaction the establishment of confidential reporting of incidents and awareness campaigns to combat sexual harassment within Parliament.

The same resolution notes that sexual harassment incidents often go unreported within official institutions because of a lack of social awareness and support structures for victims, and because it remains a taboo subject.

– It states that the persistence of gender stereotypes, sexism, and sexual harassment are widespread structural problems globally.

– It considers that unequal power relations between men and women, gender stereotypes, and sexism are root causes of all forms of violence against women, leading to male dominance and discrimination against women and hindering their full advancement.

– It condemns all forms of sexual violence and denounces the ease with which such acts are tolerated, given that they constitute systematic violations of fundamental rights and serious criminal offences that must be punished.

– It stresses the need to end impunity and that this will only occur when prosecution of perpetrators is legislated.

– It calls on Member States to take additional measures for the effective prevention and eradication of sexual harassment in the workplace, beyond the legal framework, and stresses that specialised legal procedures for addressing incidents of sexual harassment at work must be applied.

– It emphasises better inclusion of women in decision-making processes, in trade unions, and in senior positions in both the public and private sectors, and urges the Commission and Member States—together with NGOs, social partners, and equality bodies—to strengthen measures to raise public awareness regarding the rights of victims of sexual harassment and gender discrimination.

– It makes special reference to employers' and trade union organisations, urging them to promote awareness on sexual harassment and to support and encourage women to report such incidents immediately.

– It highlights the importance of providing specialised training and organising awareness campaigns on existing official procedures for reporting sexual harassment at

work and on victims' rights, to ensure the principle of dignity at work and the promotion of a zero-tolerance approach as the norm<sup>104</sup>.

EU Directives are legally binding on Member States but allow space, through exemptions, derogations, and non-binding articles, for non-uniform legislation across Member States. Most countries, including Cyprus, align with the directive but do not take into account other guiding documents or codes of practice issued by the EU, since these are non-binding documents, resulting in reluctance among Member States to implement them in practice and in the continued exposure of women to this phenomenon. It is therefore observed that more progressive countries, such as the Scandinavian ones, have advanced further by incorporating in their legislation sexual harassment by third parties (clients, suppliers, partners, etc.) and codes of prevention and response—issues considered essential for prevention yet not imposed as obligations by the directive. This confirms the argument that the law is patriarchal, as the issue of sexual harassment—affecting primarily women—is examined but its seriousness in the workplace is not adequately understood. Directive 2006/54, although consolidating previous directives and including the two aforementioned prerequisites for prevention and response, does not oblige Member States to incorporate them as mandatory elements of their national legislation.

The **Council of Europe (2004)** recognises that *de jure* equality (formal equality) does not automatically lead to *de facto* equality (substantive equality), emphasising the difference between formal and substantive gender equality. It highlights two particularly important aspects: the social construction of gender and gender relations. It further states that the policies and structures of each Member State play a crucial role in shaping living conditions and, in doing so, often institutionalise the maintenance and reproduction of the social construction of gender. “*It is increasingly acknowledged that society is characterised by this male bias, which is reflected in policies and structures that often inadvertently reproduce gender inequality*”<sup>105</sup>.

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<sup>104</sup> Ψήφισμα του Ευρωπαϊκού Κοινοβουλίου της 26ης Οκτωβρίου 2017 σχετικά με την καταπολέμηση της σεξουαλικής παρενόχλησης και κακοποίησης στην ΕΕ για την Καταπολέμηση της σεξουαλικής παρενόχλησης και κακοποίησης στην ΕΕ, (2017/2897(RSP)).

<sup>105</sup> Council of Europe. Gender mainstreaming Conceptual Framework, Methodology and Presentation of Good Practices. Final report of activities of the Group of Specialists on Mainstreaming (EG-S-MS) Directorate General of Human Rights, Strasbourg, 2004.

### 3.3 Countries with progressive legislation and good practices for the prevention and addressing of sexual harassment

This subsection includes countries which did not limit themselves to the provisions of the EU Directives and whose legislation on the prevention and addressing of sexual harassment and the protection of victims is more enriched, creating a new culture. As Walby (1999) notes, the EU constitutes an emerging polity which has a significant impact on the modernisation of gender regimes, both at Community level and within the Member States. She considers that the EU is an important driving force for the development of a wide range of policies to address the subordinate position of women in paid work, as well as the legal system which so significantly influences the implementation of policies for the prevention and addressing of sexual harassment<sup>106</sup>.

In Finland, sexual harassment is defined as “unwanted and one-sided”, expanding the definition of the Directive. Harassment in its most extreme form (rape or attempted rape) is considered a crime and not a criminal offence (in general, a criminal offence entails lighter penalties than a crime). In other words, great weight is attached to the offence of sexual harassment, since on the one hand perpetrators will be punished very severely and, on the other hand, this severe punishment functions both preventively and repressively. Ministries / government departments and specialised bodies are obliged to provide information on Codes of Practice dealing either directly or indirectly with sexual harassment on the basis of sex. Under Finnish law, the employer may be liable for sexual harassment in the workplace if the alleged harassment has been reported and the employer did not act, since as an employer they have a duty to act immediately when the issue has been reported, either by the victim or through another person<sup>107</sup>.

In Ireland, sexual harassment at work was criminalised for the first time through the Employment Equality Act (EEA) of 1998. Irish law also provides for the obligation of employers to take all necessary measures to prevent incidents of sexual harassment and discriminatory treatment in their workplace. An Office of Equality Investigations has also been established, whose mission is to investigate complaints of sexual harassment in the workplace, to develop mediation actions and to provide legal support to victims.

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<sup>106</sup> Walby, Sylvia (1999). ‘The new regulatory state: the social powers of the European Union’ *British Journal of Sociology*, 50, 1, 118-140, <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/sociology/people/swdocs/Gender%20and%20the%20new%20economy.pdf>.

<sup>107</sup> The Irish Presidency of the European Union in association with FGS Consulting and Professor Aileen McGolgan (2004). *XReport on Sexual Harassment in the Workplace in EU Member States*.

The decisions of the Office's management are binding on the court and may be appealed (KETHI, 2001)<sup>108</sup>.

In France, sexual harassment at work was first criminalised in 1994. The introduction of this provision in the Penal Code was the result both of pressure exerted by women's organisations, social movements and trade unions, and of coordinated efforts by all women members of the French National Assembly (KETHI, 2001)<sup>109</sup>. On 4 May 2012, the Constitutional Court annulled the law in force since 2002 because it did not define with sufficient clarity the acts constituting sexual harassment, leaving room for too broad an interpretation. As a result, all pending cases before the courts were cancelled. The French government, recognising the legal gap, hastily introduced a new law in July 2012, which establishes three degrees of sexual harassment, with the most serious one carrying a prison sentence of up to three years. Among other things, aggravating factors include the perpetrator's hierarchically superior position in relation to the victim, harassment of persons under the age of 15, or harassment committed by a group of perpetrators. The Law introduces gender equality as a mandatory dimension of collective bargaining at national and sectoral level, as well as in all bargaining processes concerning wages and working time. Under the new law, sexual harassment constitutes a crime and carries prison sentences.

According to a study by the Committee on Gender Equality in Employment and Vocational Training – EIF (2011), the majority of EU Member States cover sexual harassment by persons of the opposite sex (twenty-one countries) and by persons of the same sex (nineteen countries). The majority of Member States also do not specify the number of incidents required for sexual harassment / gender-based harassment to be deemed to have occurred. In eleven countries, there are Codes of Practice for dealing with sexual harassment / gender-based harassment (Austria, Finland, Ireland, Italy, Malta, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Slovenia, Spain and the United Kingdom), four of which are legally binding (Austria, Lithuania, Italy and the Netherlands) and two are codes of good practice in Ireland and the United Kingdom which may be taken into account by the courts. Codes of practice have been shown to be important when the legislation on which they are based does not explicitly define sexual harassment, or even when it is regulated by law. In such cases, codes of practice may help interpret abstract legislative provisions, particularly when they are taken into account by the courts (EIF, 2011).

The EIF (2011) study also reports that eight workers' trade unions and three employers' organisations from eight countries (Czech Republic, Denmark, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland and Spain) concluded collective agreements with binding force, which include references to sexual harassment. A further fifteen

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<sup>108</sup> Κέντρο Ερευνών για Θέματα Ισότητας (Κ.Ε.Θ.Ι.). Η Σεξουαλική Παρενόχληση στην Εργασία. Πρόταση ποινικοποίησης της συμπεριφοράς στην Ελλάδα Ιούνιος 2001

<sup>109</sup> Κέντρο Ερευνών για Θέματα Ισότητας (Κ.Ε.Θ.Ι.). Η Σεξουαλική Παρενόχληση στην Εργασία. Πρόταση ποινικοποίησης της συμπεριφοράς στην Ελλάδα Ιούνιος 2001

countries (Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Malta, Slovakia, Sweden and the United Kingdom) have not included articles on dealing with sexual harassment / gender-based harassment in collective agreements. In all countries, under their legislation, the employer is responsible for sexual harassment committed by senior staff or co-workers at the same level as the employee.

The situation concerning sexual harassment committed by employers' clients (suppliers, partners, buyers) varies. With regard to employer liability for sexual harassment outside normal working hours / outside the workplace (business trips, training seminars, etc.), ten countries report that the employer could be liable in such cases (Cyprus, Finland, France, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia and the United Kingdom). It is noted, however, that neither the Directive nor the national laws of the Member States make explicit reference to the protection of workers inside or outside workplaces. In sixteen countries, the perpetrator is also individually liable for acts of sexual harassment. In general terms, employers may be liable for sexual harassment / gender-based harassment, but this liability is reduced if they have taken measures to prevent it. Such measures include preventive actions such as awareness-raising, setting clear rules on behaviour, training employees, establishing procedures, submitting complaints, adopting a code and imposing sanctions (EIF, 2011).

In all EU Member States, there is an institution / mechanism where complaints relating to sexual harassment / gender-based harassment may be submitted, as required by the relevant EU Directives. Trade unions and other specialised organisations are described as providers of legal advice and other support to victims. As far as compensation is concerned, this varies. Respondents in most countries highlighted gaps and shortcomings in existing mechanisms in terms of collecting information relating, among other things, to the frequency / extent and nature / type of sexual harassment / gender-based harassment, the profile of the victim, the profile of the perpetrator, the nature of the organisation where the harassment occurred and the outcome of legal proceedings (The Irish Presidency, 2004)<sup>110</sup>.

It thus appears from the information gathered that, while there is a broadly common legal basis in the various Member States as regards the definition, there is no uniform policy on specific issues such as harassment / sexual harassment by third parties, the place and time where such an incident occurs, the mandatory adoption of a code of practice, the inclusion of a clause in collective agreements, the establishment of equality counsellors, etc.

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<sup>110</sup> The Irish Presidency of the European Union in association with FGS Consulting and Professor Aileen McGolgan (2004). Report on sexual harassment in the workplace in EU member states.

It is therefore demonstrated that the legal protection and protection of victims of sexual harassment differs from country to country, and that culture and the level of progressiveness of each country contribute to this. The important point is that the law deals with a real social problem, which it elevates to a criminal offence, which is punishable. However, the general reference in the EU Directive to the adoption of preventive and repressive measures by employers, without specifying the minimum acceptable elements of such measures, constitutes a gap, since this remains general in the legislation of many Member States. Also, the fact that there is no sufficient reference to the causes of the problem of sexual harassment explains the inability to eliminate or prevent these phenomena, since, essentially, services and institutions do not deal with the root of the problem, but only with its consequences, confirming both Acker (1990 & 1992) and Finley (1989).

### 3.4 Cypriot Institutional Framework

Harassment and sexual harassment are forms of gender-based violence. Cyprus introduced these concepts into its domestic law shortly before its accession to the EU (1/5/2004), specifically on 1.1.2003. Cypriot Law 205(I)2002, on Equal Treatment of Men and Women in Employment and Vocational Training, was harmonised with the minimum provisions laid down in the articles of all EU Directives and, consequently, with those relating to sexual harassment. The perpetrator's intention when committing the act is irrelevant; what matters is the effect or purpose of the act. In other words, the victim is the only person who determines which behaviour of a sexual nature, according to their own subjective assessment and regardless of the perpetrator's intention, violates their dignity and, consequently, constitutes sexual harassment. The Cypriot Industrial Disputes Court correctly interprets the Directive in its judgments and bases itself on the effect of the behaviour as experienced by the victim of sexual harassment.

The definition used by trade unions and employers' organisations is that contained in Directive 2006/54/EC<sup>111</sup>. The definition is general and states that "sexual harassment" means any unwanted conduct of a sexual nature, expressed verbally or by actions, which has the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person, in particular when creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment, during employment or vocational training, or during access to employment or vocational training<sup>112</sup>.

For a deeper understanding of the definition with clear examples, European case-law was used, which analyses both verbal and physical sexual harassment, as well as the purpose, effect and environment created by the act of sexual harassment.

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<sup>111</sup> Οδηγία 2006/54/EK του Ευρωπαϊκού Κοινοβουλίου και του Συμβουλίου, της 5ης Ιουλίου 2006, για την εφαρμογή της αρχής των ίσων ευκαιριών και της ίσης μεταχείρισης ανδρών και γυναικών σε θέματα εργασίας και απασχόλησης (αναδιατύπωση), <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/el/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32006L0054>.

<sup>112</sup> Άρθρο 2, ερμηνευτικές διατάξεις του Ν. 205(I)/2002.

Cypriot legislation has indeed been harmonised with the EU Directives, but it has not gone further as regards covering sexual harassment by third parties (customers / partners). There is no explicit coverage for the occurrence of such incidents during work carried out outside working hours and/or outside the workplace. It is also not mandatory in law for employers to introduce a code of prevention and dealing with sexual harassment, despite the fact that this is considered a preventive measure that employers can take. There is also no legislative provision requiring the inclusion in collective labour agreements of provisions on the prevention and dealing with sexual harassment.

As regards persons with different sexual orientation, the law makes no explicit reference, but neither does it exclude them, if the behaviour they face is of a sexual nature and based on sex. In the Penal Code (Cap. 154), however, Article 151 {64(I)/2009} refers only to women and bears the title “Indecent assault against a woman” and provides that: “*Whosoever unlawfully and indecently assaults a woman is guilty of a felony and is liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding five years.*” Article 152 likewise criminalises “*Indecent assault against a man*”<sup>113</sup>.

An important provision is the reversal of the burden of proof in judicial and extra-judicial protection. Specifically, Article 14(2) states that “*in any judicial proceedings, other than criminal proceedings, if the party alleging that they are aggrieved by a breach of the provisions of this Law establishes facts from which the breach may be presumed, the Court shall require the other party to prove that there has been no breach of this Law.*”

With regard to extra-judicial protection and the burden of proof, Article 17A(3) states that “*in any proceedings falling within subsection (2), if the person alleging that they are aggrieved by a breach of the provisions of this Law invokes and establishes facts from which the breach may be presumed, the Commissioner for Administration shall require the person against whom the complaint is directed to prove that there has been no breach of this Law*”<sup>114</sup>.

It is noted that in 2002, when this legislation was enacted, until 2004, this provision was not correctly transposed / interpreted into national law, as it forced the victim to “*invoke and prove facts from which the breach was presumed...*”. Despite the existence of the relevant provision, the exclusion of criminal proceedings from the reversal of the burden of proof (which is also excluded in Directive 2006/54) does not help victims, since the burden of proof is shared equally between the victim and the employer. Victims, in order to seek compensation, resort to civil proceedings, because if they

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<sup>113</sup> Έκθεση της Αρχής Ισότητας αναφορικά με τη διερεύνηση καταγγελίας για σεξουαλική παρενόχληση αλλοδαπής οικιακής βοηθού, Αρ. Φακ.: Α.Κ.Ι. 67/2010.

<sup>114</sup> [http://www.cylaw.org/nomoi/indexes/2017\\_3\\_14.html](http://www.cylaw.org/nomoi/indexes/2017_3_14.html).

follow criminal proceedings, punitive penalties are imposed on the perpetrator, but the victim is not compensated through that procedure.

As far as complaint mechanisms / bodies are concerned, in Cyprus there are three official bodies:

- a) The Office of the Commissioner for Administration and the Protection of Human Rights,
- b) The Department of Labour of the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance,
- c) The Committee on Gender Equality in Employment and Vocational Training (of which the author, at the time of completion of the thesis, is a scientific associate).

The first two bodies also have the competence to investigate complaints, while the third one has the competence to receive complaints but not to investigate them. It does, however, have the power to provide free legal aid to victims of gender discrimination.

Beyond the above legislation, the signature (16/6/2015) and ratification (14/7/2017)<sup>115</sup> of the Istanbul Convention by the Republic of Cyprus and the adoption of the relevant ratifying Law are considered an important tool. The signature of the Istanbul Convention constitutes the first legally binding instrument of the Council of Europe for the prevention and combatting of all forms of violence against women, including sexual harassment, through a comprehensive framework of policies and actions. It upgrades the legislative framework for addressing violence in Cyprus and substantially strengthens policy actions for eliminating gender discrimination and empowering women. The Convention requires the operation of specialised services and infrastructures and the adoption of specific measures. Some of the measures required by the Convention include the operation of preventive programmes, the sound collection and analysis of statistical data, as well as the proper coordination of all relevant governmental and non-governmental services and continuous monitoring and supervision.

Cyprus ratified the Convention with three reservations, concerning provisions that require high cost and time for implementation. The first reservation concerns compensation to victims of violence, while the second concerns the jurisdiction of Cypriot courts in cases of violence committed not only on the territory of the Republic, but also in other states and by non-citizens of the Republic, regardless of whether the state in which the offence was committed punishes the specific act or not. The third reservation concerns the Convention's requirement to grant residence status to victims of violence. This reservation was made because the Ministry of Interior considered that this provision was too general and that it could allow for "abusive exploitation".

The competent Minister of Justice and Public Order stated that the reservations apply until 2019, although there is provision for extending this period so that states may

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<sup>115</sup> [http://www.cylaw.org/nomoi/indexes/2017\\_3\\_14.html](http://www.cylaw.org/nomoi/indexes/2017_3_14.html).

prepare for implementing the provisions. It appears, however, that the state is still not ready to lift the reservations, since neither the structures nor the relevant laws are ready. To date, there are no shelters, no multidisciplinary teams for dealing with victims have been set up and there are no proper legal arrangements for defining and punishing offences against women, or procedures that protect and encourage a victim to speak out. In addition, there is no policy to combat the prevailing mentality which allows violence against women to be treated by the state and society as of secondary importance or as the only offences for which the victim itself might be to blame.

It is noted that a few months after the entry into force of the Istanbul Convention, a political decision was taken to create the “Women’s House”, which was expected to operate by the end of 2019. The aim is for this House to operate as a multidisciplinary centre, friendly to victims of violence, where professionals from various specialties and state officials, such as clinical psychologists, social workers and specially trained members of the police, will work under the same roof in order to provide appropriate support to victims of violence and their families, in a way that promotes the rights and interests of victims of violence and members of their families. Nor is this decision expected to be implemented by the end of 2019.

The cost of implementing all provisions of the Convention for the Republic of Cyprus amounts to several million, whereas with the three reservations it amounts to only 820,000 euros. What is now awaited is the practical implementation of the Convention, with the hope that cost will not become a pretext for further delays.

## Chapter Four – Methodology

### 4.1 Purpose of the research

The purpose of this research, as mentioned in the introduction, is a critical feminist analysis of the way in which trade union and employers' organisations in Cyprus have dealt with the issue of sexual harassment in the workplace, with organisational theory (power, structure, organisation) as the main analytical axis.

The study examined the experiences of the victims of sexual harassment themselves and the way they experienced the handling of their complaints by their trade unions. At the same time, it explored the internal, external and organisational factors that influenced this handling and which, more generally, led trade union and employers' organisations to downgrade such a serious, long-standing problem faced primarily by women in their work.

### 4.2 Feminist Research

Feminist research studies the social conditions of women in a sexist, male-dominated and patriarchal society, while at the same time informing the public about sexist practices that are taken for granted and which lead to a deeply gendered social order with very significant gender inequalities and discrimination. It is grounded in the firmly held belief that, historically, women have not enjoyed the same power and privileges as men and that they continue to live in an oppressive society. The aim of feminist research is to facilitate the emancipation of women and to understand their worldviews<sup>116</sup>.

According to Sielbeck-Bowen et al. (2002), the feminist perspective falls under the transformative model of qualitative research and its basic principles are the focus on gender inequalities that lead to social injustice and the position that gender biases and inequalities are systemic and structural, as they are rooted in key institutions and other bodies that shape social norms<sup>117</sup>. An important part of these social structures is organisations, which reflect gender inequalities.

Feminist research differs methodologically from traditional social research in three respects:

a) it actively seeks to eliminate the power imbalance between the researcher and the researched;

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<sup>116</sup> Η Φεμινιστική προσέγγιση στην κοινωνική έρευνα, Πηγή <http://socialpolicy.gr/2013>.

<sup>117</sup> Sielbeck-Bowen, K, Brisolara, S, Seigart, D, Tischler, C, Whitmore, E (2002). Exploring feminist evaluation: The ground from which we rise, <https://doi.org/10.1002/ev.62>.

b) it is motivated by political aims and plays a major role in changing social inequalities; and

c) it begins from women's perspectives and experiences. Studying / investigating women on the basis of their own standpoint and starting point makes the researcher part of the research, in the sense that their convictions shape the research and produce feminist inquiry<sup>118</sup>.

It is also noted that, although feminist theory focuses on recording the unique characteristics of each person's experience in relation to a phenomenon, it simultaneously attempts to understand the social dimension of that phenomenon. That is, it accepts that the phenomenon is part of a shared experience that all participants have in common (the social structure of experience), through the recall by participants of specific experiences that are described in detail.

This research is called upon to answer specific research questions using the lens of critical feminist analysis with the ultimate aim of documenting and highlighting the gendered organisational culture of the participating organisations and its relationship with sexual harassment, as analysed below.

## 4.3 Research Questions

The research questions that this study seeks to answer are the following:

- What are the experiences of women victims of sexual harassment regarding the handling of their complaints by their trade unions?
- What is, and in what way is, the organisational culture of trade unions in Cyprus manifested?
- In what way did other internal, external and organisational factors influence trade unions in addressing sexual harassment? (Here are included perceptions, values, habits, traditions, practices, symbols, beliefs and behavioural norms. These may be expressed through management style, language, communication, dress, "non-standard" behaviour, gendered perceptions and the expression of sexuality, as explained in Section 2).
- How is the existence and handling of sexual harassment in the workplace in Cyprus interpreted within the framework of critical feminist approaches and gendered organisational theory?

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<sup>118</sup> Κέντρο Ερευνών για Θέματα Ισότητας (Κ.Ε.Θ.Ι.) (2005). *Γυναίκες και Ανθρωπολογία: Έρευνα στις Γυναικείες Φυλακές Κορυδαλλού*.

## 4.4 Methodology

As mentioned above, a feminist approach was followed in combination with gendered organisational theory in order to record, analyse and interpret the data of this research and to answer specific research questions concerning:

- the experiences of women victims with respect to the handling of their complaints by trade unions,
- the way in which the organisational culture of trade unions is manifested, and
- the way in which other factors influenced trade unions in dealing with the phenomenon.

The study follows the basic principles of qualitative research. Qualitative research is an approach which makes it possible to understand, describe and interpret social phenomena and processes through a different lens – micro-sociologically. This method offers a better understanding of social reality and of the various phenomena and processes within it. The same strict procedures and specifications as in quantitative research are followed, such as design, control, systematicity and the safeguarding of validity and reliability (Silverman, 1998).

Cohen & Manion (1994) note that qualitative research focuses on the individual, is personal, requires the active involvement of the researcher and seeks to interpret the particular, understanding actions rather than causes. Through qualitative research, theoretical explanatory models are formulated that aim to provide as holistic an interpretation as possible of social phenomena and processes, rather than generalising results at the level of the population (Bryman, 2001).

This qualitative study can be regarded as a case study of the organisational culture of trade union and employers' organisations in Cyprus with regard to the promotion of gender equality and the way they address the phenomenon of sexual harassment in workplaces. According to Sarafidou (2011), the case study method constitutes a particularly flexible empirical research strategy which focuses on a phenomenon, situation or organisation, examining it in depth within its specific context. The "case" under study has a uniqueness, in the sense that it is a particular situation distinguished by certain specific aspects. The investigation concerns a whole ("case") with a clear and delimited identity in time and space (geographical, political, social, etc.), and the internal and external context of operation of the specific system is examined in detail. The aim is a holistic description so as to understand as fully as possible an individual or organisation. Emphasis is placed on processes; the researcher is involved and taken into account as part of the context. The researcher spends a great deal of time in the field and becomes embedded in the functioning of the system<sup>119</sup>.

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<sup>119</sup> Σαραφίδου, Γ.-Ο. (2011). *Συνάρθρωση ποσοτικών και ποιοτικών προσεγγίσεων. Η εμπειρική έρευνα*. Αθήνα: Gutenberg

As Giorgos Maggopoulos (2014) states, when research interest is transferred to a specific, complex and functional situation, the term “case study” is used to characterise the research strategy. The “case” is purposive, has spatial-temporal boundaries, functional parts and its own “identity”. Cases are usually people, groups, programmes, educational institutions or bodies, and more rarely events and processes<sup>120</sup>.

#### 4.4.1 Sampling

Sampling was carried out using two basic tools, as summarised also in [Table 1](#): interviews and micro-ethnography. Interviews were conducted with women victims who were members of trade unions and with representatives of trade union and employers’ organisations. Micro-ethnography focused on the study of organisational culture through visits to their premises, observations, etc., as explained below.

For the research sample, an effort was made to collect data from:

a) Ten women victims of sexual harassment, in order to record their experiences regarding the handling of their complaint by their trade union<sup>121</sup>. Despite efforts, only five finally participated, as it proved impossible to find more ([Annex IV: Victims’ Demographic Data](#)). Specifically, the researcher asked all the trade unions participating in the study to identify women victims of sexual harassment. Unfortunately, only two organisations (through their Women’s Sections) identified one victim each; once the organisations themselves had first spoken to them and they had agreed to participate, their details were given to the researcher.

It was established upon completion of the research that no trade union kept records of complaints and the outcomes of their investigation. It is also possible that victims do not trust their trade unions enough to submit complaints. This does not of course mean that incidents do not exist, since both international and national surveys record a high number of cases.

The remaining three victims were found by the author, who, through her professional position, knows many victims of sexual harassment (who did not turn to a trade union, but to her). Despite the small number of participating women victims – given that qualitative studies recommend a sample of more than ten people – both the subject under investigation and the lack of statistical data and records kept by trade unions made it impossible to find a larger number. The first thought was to abandon the attempt to investigate the experiences of women victims, but it was later decided to use these

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<sup>120</sup> Μαγγόπουλος, Γ. (2014). Η μελέτη περίπτωσης ως ερευνητική στρατηγική στην αξιολόγηση προγραμμάτων: θεωρητικοί προβληματισμοί. Το Βήμα των Κοινωνικών Επιστημών Τόμος ΙΣΤ, τεύχος 64 4

<sup>121</sup> Παρουσιάζονται με ψευδώνυμο

data, since they shed direct light on the main issue of how incidents are dealt with by trade unions.

It should be noted that there is no corresponding qualitative study with victims of sexual harassment who lodged complaints with trade unions. There is, however, a mixed-methods study conducted by the UNESCO Chair in 2012 on behalf of the Committee on Gender Equality in Employment and Vocational Training, where the qualitative part also includes a small number of victims of sexual harassment and records their disappointment with official institutions and trade unions<sup>122</sup>. In Cyprus, more generally, there are studies which record forms of sexual harassment experienced by individuals, the percentage of victims, the position of perpetrators, etc., the most recent being that of 2017 by Insights Market Research (IMR) of the University of Nicosia<sup>123</sup>. Studies that focus on the voice of the victims themselves do not exist.

For the purposes of this research, the snowball sampling method was used which, according to Kalton and Anderson (1986), is a sample-generation technique starting from a core of known cases which are then expanded by adding new cases emerging from the initial core. Such samples are often used when there is no available sampling frame listing all members of the population and are therefore used mainly with populations that are hard to access<sup>124</sup>. Thus, in this case, one person recommended another, and so on. This also enhanced access to victims, since, in a sense, the woman who recommended another would already tell her that the interview was a generally positive experience, that it contributed to the study of the serious issue of harassment, etc.

Thus, the final sample of women victims consisted of five.

**b)** Of the nine largest trade unions in Cyprus, seven participated<sup>125</sup>. It should be noted that two sectoral trade unions, whose membership is predominantly female, avoided participating by not responding to my repeated calls and messages. However, the sample did cover almost all economic sectors (commerce, construction, services, education, public and semi-public sector, etc.). Representatives of three women's sections / committees of the three largest trade unions also took part in the study ([Demographic Data of Trade Unions](#))<sup>126</sup>.

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<sup>122</sup> [http://www.eif.gov.cy/mlsi/dl/genderequality.nsf/page07\\_gr/page07\\_gr?OpenDocument](http://www.eif.gov.cy/mlsi/dl/genderequality.nsf/page07_gr/page07_gr?OpenDocument).

<sup>123</sup> Επιτροπή Ισότητας των Φύλων στην Απασχόληση και Επαγγελματική Εκπαίδευση (2017). Κυπριακή Νομοθεσία και Νομολογία. Συγγραφή - επιμέλεια Άννα Πηλαβάκη,

[http://www.eif.gov.cy/mlsi/dl/genderequality.nsf/5A8EA302041882A1C22579BA00371ABC/\\$file/KYRPIAKH%20NOMOTHESIA%20KAI%20NOMOLOGIA.pdf](http://www.eif.gov.cy/mlsi/dl/genderequality.nsf/5A8EA302041882A1C22579BA00371ABC/$file/KYRPIAKH%20NOMOTHESIA%20KAI%20NOMOLOGIA.pdf).

<sup>124</sup> Kalton, G., Anderson, D.W. (1986). "Sampling rare populations", *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, vol. 149 (1), pp. 65-82.

<sup>125</sup> They are presented with the acronym SO1,2,3,4,5,6,7.

<sup>126</sup> They are presented with the acronym WTUDO1,2,3.

Sampling of trade unions was purposive, with strategic selection of cases so as to provide a wealth of information with the aim of in-depth understanding of the situation. To deal with the limitations of purposive sampling, the largest trade unions were selected.

c) The two largest employers' organisations in Cyprus ([Annex VI: Demographic Data of Employers' Organisations](#)). Sampling of employers' organisations was also purposive, with strategic selection of cases.

For reasons of anonymity and confidentiality, the participating organisations are referred to by acronyms instead of their names and the names of interviewees, so that the information provided does not “expose” organisations or individuals<sup>127</sup>. The same applies to interviews with women victims, where pseudonyms are used.

A brief description of the profile of the victims and of the representatives of the organisations that participated in this research is presented in the results section of the study.

In addition to the interviews, visits were also carried out to the premises of the participating organisations to explore the perceptions, values, habits, traditions, practices, symbols, beliefs and behavioural norms that constitute organisational culture, as analysed in Section Two – Theoretical and Conceptual Framework. Based on the basic principles of organisational ethnography (Kostera, 2007), the study examined management style, language, communication, dress, “non-standard” behaviour, gendered perceptions, etc. At the same time, some limited document analysis of texts, positions, policies, etc. was carried out to fill possible “gaps” in the depiction of organisational culture.

Specifically, from March 2017 to September 2017, the following were completed:

- a) Individual interviews with five women victims of sexual harassment, in order to record their experience of how their complaints were handled by their trade unions.
- b) Individual interviews with seven senior officials of trade union and employers' organisations and three of the persons heading the Women's Committees of the three largest trade unions in Cyprus, in order to collect data / testimonies on their actions and policies.
- c) Archival policy analysis of documents, positions and policies of the above-mentioned organisations to detect any stereotypical patriarchal perceptions and reproduction of stereotypes.

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<sup>127</sup> Χαραλάμπους, Χ. Ποιοτική Έρευνα στην Εκπαίδευση, ΕΠΑ 682: Εαρινό Εξάμηνο 2012-2013: Συνάντηση 5<sup>η</sup>.

In particular, an effort was made to gather information on:

- i) the experiences and feelings of women victims concerning the handling of their complaints by their trade unions;
- ii) the obstacles that remain to eliminating the phenomenon, as experienced and understood by victims of sexual harassment and by the participating organisations.

The detailed methodology followed in order to answer the above questions is recorded in [Table 1](#).

Table 1 – Research Methodology

Sub-questions	Methodology of Investigation
What are the experiences of women victims of sexual harassment in the handling of their cases by their trade unions?	Semi-structured interviews with female victims who are members of trade unions. Investigation of how they were treated, how their complaint was handled, whether they were protected, etc. (through a narrative of their experience that will later be situated within organisational frameworks during the analysis).
What is the organisational culture of Cypriot trade unions and how is it manifested?	On-site visits and archival/policy analysis. Semi-structured interviews with representatives of trade unions to record their own interpretations. The investigation explores perceptions, values, habits, traditions, practices, symbols, beliefs and behavioural norms. These may be expressed through leadership style, language, communication, dress, 'non-formalised' behaviour, gendered perceptions and the expression of sexuality.
How did internal, external and organisational factors prevent workers' and employers' organisations from addressing the phenomenon of sexual harassment?	Semi-structured interviews with representatives of trade unions to record their interpretations, as well as archival and policy analysis. Includes examination of complaint handling, investigation procedures, protection from retaliation, record-keeping, psychological support, awareness of impacts, inclusion in collective bargaining, representation of women unionists, and prioritisation of gender equality.
How is the existence and handling of sexual harassment in Cyprus interpreted within the framework of feminist organisational theory and feminist critical analysis?	Semi-structured interviews with representatives of workers' and employers' organisations and archival/policy analysis. The narrative and interpretation provided by participants will be analysed through feminist critique and feminist organisational theory.



#### 4.4.2. Interviews

Specifically, two semi-structured interview guides were developed for data collection. The choice of the semi-structured interview for conducting the research aimed at achieving understanding, description, and interpretation of both the experiences of women victims, as well as the policies and measures adopted by the organisations in question for the prevention and handling of sexual harassment. This type of interview differs from strictly structured interviews in several ways, since *measurement* is not the primary objective, and greater weight is placed on the views of the interviewees rather than on testing the ideas or hypotheses of the researcher. Researchers can “move away” from the interview guide, adjust the phrasing of questions, explore the interviewees’ answers in depth, and encourage detailed responses; it is also possible to conduct more than one interview with each organisation (Silverman, 1998).

A semi-structured interview guide was developed for women victims of sexual harassment ([Appendix II: Victim Interview Sheet](#)), with the aim of documenting their experience and their feelings regarding how their cases were handled by their trade unions (how they were treated, how their case was managed, whether and how they were protected, etc.).

Additionally, a semi-structured interview guide was developed for the representatives of the organisations that participated in the research ([Appendix III: Interview Sheet for Organisation Representatives](#)), in relation to demographic information, the number of sexual harassment complaints received, programmes/policies implemented for the prevention and handling of the phenomenon, their views on sexual harassment, future actions, etc. For the organisations in particular, the purpose of the semi-structured interview was to achieve understanding and interpretation of the deeper reasons why they did not manage to integrate the serious issue of sexual harassment effectively into their policies and collective bargaining processes.

These guides were initially pilot-tested by the researcher in 2014, in order to correct any weaknesses, and were subsequently used as the main tools for conducting the research with women victims and with trade-union and employer organisations.

The final interviews were conducted from March to September 2017. Meetings with representatives of trade-union and employer organisations, as well as with victims, were arranged through telephone communication, during which the purpose of the requested meeting was explained, and an interview time and place were agreed.

The interviews lasted approximately 30–90 minutes, depending on the person and the case. With the consent of the participants, the interviews were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed verbatim. Before the interview, all participants were informed of the purpose of the research and gave permission for recording and transcription. They were also informed that they could stop the interview at any time and that, in case of any concern or observation, they had the contact details of both the researcher and the supervisor. Furthermore, they were assured that all data would be destroyed upon completion of the dissertation. Confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed throughout the entire process.

Regarding victims of sexual harassment, since interviews involved recalling traumatic experiences, the name and contact of the supervising professor were provided for referral to psychological support if needed.

### 4.4.3. Micro-ethnography

The research also followed basic principles of organisational ethnography, as previously described (Kostera, 2007). Within this framework, through visits to the organisations' premises, observation, and daily interaction, field notes and photographs (where permitted) were collected, focusing on the following, based on Acker (1992) and Martin (2004) as analysed in Section 2: managerial style, dress code, behaviour, customs and traditions (e.g., annual celebrations, events), communication, language, expressions, logos, office layout, statues, paintings, stamps, etc.

In parallel, limited document analysis was conducted (e.g. statutes, policy papers, conference decisions, speeches, website characteristics), to fill possible “gaps” in understanding the organisational culture. These were considered secondary data; thus, no detailed linguistic analysis was performed, but they were used as general indicators of organisational culture.

As is customary in qualitative research, interviews and other data sources complemented one another. That is, cultural elements informed the semi-structured interview questions—especially in the pilot phase—while at the same time forming the analytical basis for the micro-ethnography conducted to deepen understanding of organisational culture.

## 4.5 Ethical Considerations

Social research inherently involves significant interaction between researcher and participants—particularly in feminist research, as explained earlier. Consequently, certain ethical considerations arise, meaning rules governing that relationship (Cohen & Manion<sup>128</sup>, 1994; Mason, 2002<sup>129</sup>). A core precondition of any scientifically sound research is the voluntary participation of subjects, that is, obtaining informed consent and cooperation.

As mentioned earlier, all participants were asked to sign a consent form (Appendix I: Consent Form) prior to the start of their interview. No pressure or coercion was exerted on participants, who in all cases had the option to refuse participation. At the same time, the researcher provided all necessary information on the aims, nature, and procedures of the research and ensured the anonymity of all participants. All information was handled with strict confidentiality. Participants were informed that only the researcher and the supervising professor would have access to their data, and that the data would be stored only until completion of the dissertation and graduation from the University.

For sexual-harassment victims specifically, due to the emotional burden of revisiting traumatic experiences, the name of the supervisor was provided for referral to psychological support if needed.

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<sup>128</sup> Cohen, L. & Manion, L. (1994). *Research methods in education* (4th ed.). London: Routledge.

<sup>129</sup> Mason, J. (2002). *Qualitative Researching*. London: Sage Publications.

## 4.6 Reflexivity

Within the framework of reflexivity, the researcher's reflections and experiences become part of the research. As Harding (1987) states, the researcher should avoid an objectivist stance that attempts to make their own cultural beliefs and practices invisible, because these are crucial for generating understanding and explanation. They form part of the empirical evidence that supports the research arguments<sup>130</sup>.

Tsekers (2012) notes that the researcher requires a high degree of honesty, precision, systematicity, and reflexivity through all phases of the emergent research process—data collection, analysis, interpretation, and presentation. This refers to *epistemological reflexivity*, whereby researchers are encouraged to reflect on their values, actions, expectations, and choices throughout the research (e.g., formulating the research question, generating data, writing results). Personal reflexivity is also important—understanding one's own position, thoughts, emotions, and potential biases relating to the phenomenon under study. This includes investigating how the research may affect the researcher's personal and professional life. Through reflective practice, experience becomes a learning process, since reflection engages the researcher both emotionally and cognitively<sup>131</sup>.

Willig (2008) further notes that qualitative methodologies differ in the extent to which they emphasise reflexivity and the role of language, as these two characteristics are linked. Reflexivity requires awareness of the researcher's contribution to the construction of meaning throughout the research process and recognition that the researcher cannot remain “outside” the topic during the inquiry. Reflexivity prompts exploration of how the researcher's involvement—shaped by personal exposure to the phenomenon—acts upon and informs the research.

There are two types of reflexivity: personal and epistemological. Personal reflexivity includes reflecting on how the researcher's values, experiences, interests, beliefs, political commitments, broader life goals, and social identity have shaped the research. Researchers differ in the emphasis they place on reflexivity. For some, both personal and epistemological reflexivity are central elements of the research process. Others recognise its importance but do not integrate it extensively into the analysis<sup>132</sup>.

In this research, reflexivity is a central and integral component. Recognising the contribution I make to the construction of meaning throughout the entire process, I acknowledge my inability to remain “outside” the topic. My long-standing experience with the issue under examination—26 years as a trade-union official (sixteen in the Equality Department), seven years in a Gender

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<sup>130</sup> Sandra Harding. *Feminism and Methodology*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987.

<sup>131</sup> Χαράλαμπος Τσέκερης, *Επιθεώρηση Κοινωνικών Ερευνών*, 137-138 Α΄-Β΄, 2012, 233-251.

[https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Charalambos\\_Tsekeris/publication/286881335\\_STRONG\\_REFLEXIVITY\\_WEAK\\_THEORY/links/598cf288aca272e57ad1b07d/STRONG-REFLEXIVITY-WEAK-THEORY.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Charalambos_Tsekeris/publication/286881335_STRONG_REFLEXIVITY_WEAK_THEORY/links/598cf288aca272e57ad1b07d/STRONG-REFLEXIVITY-WEAK-THEORY.pdf)

<sup>132</sup> Willig, Carla (1964). *Introducing qualitative research in psychology: adventures in theory and method*.

Equality Promotion Organisation, and ten years in an official state mechanism promoting gender equality in employment—means that I inevitably bring personal influences to the study.

My long involvement with sexual-harassment cases—both empirically (supporting victims, handling complaints) and academically (authoring a guide and Code of Conduct on sexual-harassment prevention and response, as well as a study on Cypriot legislation and case law)—enables me to critically understand organisational practices and procedures.

Additionally, my long professional engagement with workers' issues, especially women's issues, and my strong sense of empathy, mean that victims tend to trust me easily and feel comfortable sharing their experiences. I can help them recall and articulate events central to their experience, assisting them in structuring their complaint without self-blaming. This is an emotionally demanding process and inevitably affects me as well, reinforcing my determination to advocate for better conditions for working women. This process was, in part, what sustained my motivation to complete this dissertation.

At the same time, careful attention was paid to avoid a “self-fulfilling prophecy”. While my prior knowledge of organisational structures and the typical reactions of victims is extensive, the conclusions drawn are based on the empirical findings, not on my personal experience.

Furthermore, I consider that my knowledge and experiences form part of the data, especially in the study and documentation of organisational culture. Following Geertz's (1973) notion of “thick description”, research is conducted through personal experience to form the basis of understanding. Geertz argues that one cannot comprehend a culture without understanding its meanings and symbols, and that descriptive detail is essential to avoid overlooking important aspects. Since culture is more than habits and skills—it derives from the meanings that individuals assign to them—the researcher must understand these meanings to accurately interpret what is observed<sup>133</sup>. Within this framework, my personal and professional immersion in the topic was not an obstacle but a significant and positive contribution.

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<sup>133</sup> Geertz, C. "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture". In *the Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. New York: Basic Books, 1973. 3-30.

## 4.7 Data Analysis

For the analysis of the data, the transcriptions and the field notes from the interviews were used. Once these were studied with the aim of forming an overall picture and identifying the most essential information and themes emerging from them, initial notes and ideas were recorded for the coding process that would follow.

Specifically, the NVivo software program was used, which proved very helpful in classifying the data into the appropriate thematic categories. The software was provided to the researcher by the University of Cyprus.

The beginning of the qualitative data-analysis process required the import of all data into the software. Once the interviews were transcribed and recorded in digital form (Word), they were imported into NVivo and various separate internal sources were created—such as interviews with victims, and interviews with representatives of trade-union and employer organisations—containing data that were stored in the program and available for analysis. In addition to the interviews, other data were also imported into the software, such as organisational statutes, congress decisions, speeches, website content of the participating organisations, and observations by the researcher from visits to the organisations' premises and from the general conduct of the interviewees. All data were then organised, managed, and coded. The software allowed the researcher to search for and retrieve data per victim and per organisation.

The organisation and management of the NVivo data offered many functionalities. Systematic organisation made data retrieval easy. The most important organisational capabilities included the creation of files and node classifications. There was no need to revisit the raw transcripts because NVivo allowed the researcher to retrieve all interviews grouped under each code (node classification) and each organisation separately.

Coding then began—during which the empirical material is examined closely and possible interpretations are sought. The data were divided into discrete segments, which were assigned a conceptual descriptor in the form of a code, identified by the researcher within the empirical data.

The codes arising from the coding process are referred to as nodes. Assigning a code to the data was more than simply matching a title or label: it corresponded to concepts, properties, categories, or relationships. The interpretive work performed during node creation enabled the researcher to continuously identify new meanings or new relational patterns in the data, supporting a deeper theoretical understanding of the social problem examined.

Regarding the coding logic, the process selected was one that facilitates classification and organisation of the data based on predefined conceptual categories or thematic units derived from the researcher's conceptual framework (such as thematic analysis or content analysis), since the codes had been identified before analysis.

The codes (nodes) identified by the researcher to answer the research questions of this study concerned the following themes, also based on the literature review from Section 2: women's lived experiences, women's qualifications and hierarchical positions, organisational culture, organisational practices and procedures, cooperation among organisations, perceptions of victims and organisations regarding reconciliation, sexism, quota, gender mainstreaming, sexual harassment, degree of women's responsibility, prevention and response procedures, patriarchal perceptions of victims and organisations regarding gender equality and sexual harassment, role of organisations in promoting gender equality, distinct roles, demographics of victims and organisations, women and participation in public life, organisational statutes, written and oral discourse, internal and external spaces of organisations, etc. ([Appendix VII: Coding](#)).

NVivo also offered the capability to draft memos and comments. At every stage of the analysis process, the researcher recorded observations and theoretical reflections in memos. The titles of the memos referred to the source with which they were linked. A key advantage was that each memo's content could easily be retrieved and viewed. At the same time, NVivo's search and query functions supported text searches and word-frequency searches. The outputs showed the data sources (e.g., interviews, statutes, etc.) in which the searched term appeared, the location of each source, the frequency of the term in each source, and the percentage of total words for each particular term in each source.

#### 4.7.1 Analytical Framework

The research findings were analysed using content analysis. The aim of the analysis was to produce a critical study of social reality and the gendered social roles, stereotypes, and biases that underpin and shape the position of women in the Cypriot labour market and more broadly—including sexual harassment at work.

Following Acker (1992), presented earlier, whose framework involves four “gendered processes” through which organisations can be examined in terms of how they produce gender, a feminist critical analysis was conducted on all data (interviews, printed material, publicly available electronic material from organisational websites, the researcher's field notes, the language and tone of interviewees, office décor—paintings, photographs—external premises, etc.).

Specifically, the following were examined:

- a.** The extent to which the organisations themselves reproduce gendered occupational segregation by failing to promote women as union officers/negotiators, or men as secretaries/receptionists; the existence of a glass ceiling preventing women's advancement; whether and how they promote work–family reconciliation enabling both men and women to participate more fully in organisational structures.
- b.** The extent to which paintings, photographs, statues, customs, seals, logos, symbols, website layouts, oral and written discourse, dress codes, and their explanations of gender

inequalities—especially sexual harassment—reflect a male-dominated culture. According to Acker (1992), even when not obvious, most organisations reproduce gender, defining success through male-coded values. This happens, for example, when seals, logos, website images, written materials, and the pictures that decorate their offices promote a male tradition—men as “heroes” or leaders—because historically, women’s advancement in organisational hierarchies was not allowed.

c. The importance placed on women’s career progression within the organisations, women’s participation in decision-making bodies (primary or secondary), whether the specific challenges affecting women members and officers are acknowledged, and the degree to which women’s voices are heard and considered.

d. The reforms/changes introduced by organisational leaders when assuming leadership positions, and whether these aimed—among other things—to change the gendered organisational culture inherited from predecessors or whether they assumed everything functioned well and simply maintained “tradition.”

## 4.8 Significance and Originality of the Research

This study undertakes, for the first time, an in-depth feminist examination of the organisational culture of Cypriot trade-union and employer organisations, focusing on their structures, policies, and actions promoting gender equality in the workplace—including sexual-harassment prevention and response. It simultaneously investigates the gap between their rhetorical commitments and actual practice.

The approach integrates women’s experiences with the institutional dimension of sexual harassment, thus avoiding the dualism between psychological and social/institutional/organisational factors. It provides a dialogic perspective that combines individual experiences with the broader institutional and organisational culture—reflecting wider cultural issues in Cypriot society.

Its most important contribution lies in linking feminist analysis with gendered organisational-culture theory as an analytical tool, to detect and uncover practices and procedures within the participating organisations which may ultimately hinder targeted, effective efforts to advance gender equality in employment—including the fight against sexual harassment.

A feminist critical analysis is applied to trade-union and employer organisational policies, as reflected in the phenomenon of sexual harassment under investigation—with the hope of identifying deeper problematic practices and procedures.

Simultaneously, the study records victims’ lived experiences regarding the lack of support and marginalisation they faced, as well as the support they needed from their unions—bringing their silenced voices into the public domain.

The study moves beyond sociological descriptions and foregrounds the political/legal dimensions of the problem, leading to policy proposals aimed at improving and transforming the current situation.

## 4.9 Limitations — Validity/Reliability Issues

A key aim of the interviews was to understand the experiences of women victims of sexual harassment and the culture of the trade-union and employer organisations. One limitation of the study is that two sector-specific unions in important industries did not participate (one declined despite documented cases of workplace sexual harassment in that sector according to a 2006 OEB study, and the other did not reply to repeated calls/messages).

Another limitation is the small number of women victims who participated. In attempting to identify victims who had first approached their union, it became clear that the union movement also lacks systematic record-keeping, since, as the findings show, no statistics, case registers, or case-outcome records are maintained.

Naturally, the aim of a qualitative study is not population generalisation but to provide a framework for deeper understanding of practices, experiences, and organisational cultures within the sample. Nonetheless, detailed descriptions were offered where possible to allow some degree of comparison and facilitate transferability of findings where relevant.

This is counterbalanced by the researcher's 26-year involvement in the trade-union movement and long-term experience in gender-equality issues, including sexual harassment—giving her insight into union practices and policies.

The fact that the researcher conducted all interviews and knows the gender profile of the sample enhances the validity and reliability of the study's findings. However, it also introduces potential subjectivity and bias due to prior knowledge and long experience.

Recognising this subjectivity and engaging in reflexivity—as well as actively identifying blind spots—is a requirement in research, especially since no “ideal researcher” exists.

The trust granted to the researcher by both victims and organisational representatives contributed to credible results, as participants spoke honestly, without fear, anxiety, suspicion, or attempts to embellish the situation.

Because qualitative research is dynamic and evolves constantly, the researcher needed to remain flexible (e.g., postponed interviews, follow-up clarifications). Moreover, to ensure validity, extensive observation is required both in terms of time and volume—since attitudes and perceptions often appear in subtle, concealed ways. Therefore, to ensure validity, the researcher maintained records of both field notes and all audio and transcribed interviews.



## Chapter Five – Presentation of Findings

### 5.1 Victims' Experiences of the Handling of Their Complaints

The victims of sexual harassment described the experiences they went through both with the perpetrator and with their trade union organisations. From their interviews, it emerges that their experiences of sexual harassment do not differ from those recorded in many other studies conducted either in Cyprus or abroad. These are experiences associated with increased anxiety, reduced self-confidence, self-blame, headaches, tension, resignation from work or even dismissal due to non-acceptance of the harassment or its reporting.

These problems and many others are not perceived or understood, even by trade union officials who inspect workplaces. It is evident that they do not grasp the extent of the problem and its consequences for victims, as in at least one case the victim was pressured by the trade unionist not to file a complaint because the perpetrator was “party affiliated”.

In another case, where the complaint proceeded to court, the trade unionist supported the perpetrator before the employer, turning against three victims of sexual harassment by a senior official of the union in that workplace, because they delayed submitting a complaint, considering that they had initially enjoyed the sexual harassment and later changed their minds<sup>134</sup>.

It is noted that both of the above cases concern professional officials as well as members of large trade union organisations with thousands of women members. This fact highlights the indifference shown by both the trade union organisations and their officials, who should have been trained and sensitised in such a way that these phenomena would be clearly condemned and that the emotional and psychological support of victims of sexual harassment – and not the support of perpetrators – would be placed among their priorities.

Many myths and stereotypical perceptions have been associated with the phenomenon of sexual harassment, and in this way, on the one hand, the phenomenon is not recognised as a problem and, on the other hand, responsibility is effectively shifted onto the victims. The attribution of blame to victims is unfortunately also observed among women victims of sexual harassment themselves, as the perception prevails that in some cases it is the woman herself who is responsible for the harassment she suffers.

Below, basic demographic data and other information about the victims are presented briefly, in relation to the sexual harassment they experienced and the development of their complaint. It is noted that, for the purposes of the present study, pseudonyms are used instead of their real names.

**Dimitra** is 28 years old and single. She holds a college diploma in secretarial studies and has been working as a secretary in a small community council (semi-public organisation) for the last 7 years. She is a member of the trade union organisation SO2, but not an official. The sexual harassment was

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<sup>134</sup> Αρ. Αίτησης 491/06, 67 Δικαστήριο Εργατικών Διαφορών - Ημερομηνία: 30.6.2009.

perpetrated by her supervisor and started in her second year of employment. It included messages, touching, caresses, compliments, attempts to hug and kiss her, and he was becoming increasingly persistent. She tolerated all of this for two years before proceeding to lodge a complaint. She reported the sexual harassment to her trade unionist, but she was neither encouraged nor guided to refer her complaint to an Official Investigation Body<sup>135</sup>. She received no support from the day she reported the sexual harassment onwards. She feels disappointed with the way her trade union organisation handled her case, due to the lack of support and the discouragement she encountered.

After her official complaint, retaliatory actions against her began on the part of the community leader: arbitrary salary reduction, radical change and downgrading of duties, change of workplace, delays in payment of her wages, delays in approving her annual leave requests – all with the aim of forcing her to resign. In addition, damage was inflicted on her car, with scratches and slashing of the tyres. Her complaint was eventually submitted to the police, and she states that she is satisfied with the way the police handled her case and with their attitude. She also noted that, regarding the retaliatory actions against her after the complaint, she sent numerous letters to various bodies, such as the Commissioner for Administration and Human Rights, the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance, her trade union, the Minister of the Interior and even the Minister of Finance. The reply she kept receiving was that an investigation was necessary, that time was needed, and that since the case was before the courts, she had to await the outcome of justice. It is noted that the complaint to the police was made in 2013 and the trial was concluded in 2018 with the conviction of the perpetrator. In other words, for six years the victim was subjected to retaliatory measures by her employer because she reported him.

**Athina** is 41 years old, married with two children. She is a high school graduate and has been working for 22 years as a sergeant at the Ministry of Defence. She was sexually harassed by her supervisor, the harassment being both verbal and non-verbal, similar to the previous case. Although she is not a member of a trade union, she turned to the Women's Office of SO1 and states that she is satisfied with the information and support she received there. She is equally satisfied with the police officers to whom she made her complaint. This victim also states that what she lacked was psychological support.

It is noted here that two days before her trial she visited the Gender Equality Committee in Employment and Vocational Training, accompanied by the representative of the Women's Office of SO1, and stated that she could no longer bear this soul-destroying process and would withdraw her case. Following discussion and recognition of the courage she had shown in lodging a complaint and pursuing a court case, she was encouraged and empowered and made to believe that she should not back down; she was persuaded that she could endure one more day in court. She was vindicated in court in this case as well.

**Nikoleta** is 37 years old, married and without children at the time she experienced the sexual harassment. She is a high school graduate and is studying accounting while working. She has been employed as a secretary in a small community council for the last 17 years. She is an ordinary member of SO1. She experienced sexual harassment from her supervisor, both verbal and non-verbal, with

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<sup>135</sup> Σημειώνεται ότι οι συνδικαλιστικές και εργοδοτικές οργανώσεις στην Κύπρο απασχολούν έμμισθο προσωπικό και συνδικαλιστές/συνδικαλίστριες, το οποίο επισκέπτεται τους χώρους εργασίας με σκοπό να ακούει και να επιλύει προβλήματα των εργαζομένων μελών τους, να εισπράττουν τις συνδρομές των μελών τους, να μετέχουν στις διαπραγματεύσεις, ανεξάρτητα από τα τοπικά στελέχη τους σε κάθε χώρο εργασίας που είναι οργανωμένα σε συντεχνία.

various acts of sexual harassment against her: sexually-oriented comments, questions about her personal life, sexually-oriented propositions, gestures, pressure to enter into a sexual relationship and exposure to pornographic websites. She stated that she made her discomfort with the acts of sexual harassment clearly apparent and tried to deter him.

She informed her trade union representative, who neither guided her on what to do, nor showed any interest in finding out whether the sexual harassment was continuing or not, nor did he take any initiative himself, leaving her abandoned. Subsequently, once community councillors had been informed of the incident, he stopped harassing her sexually, having realised that she would not yield to his sexual urges and desires, but he proceeded to create a bullying and hostile working environment for her, constantly finding fault with the way she carried out her secretarial duties. She states that she is dissatisfied with the information and support she received from her organisation.

Her case resembles that of Athina, due to the small community in which they live and work, as well as the retaliatory actions by the community leader after the complaint, who attempted to humiliate her and even succeeded in causing her separation from her husband. The case was reported in 2012 and the trial was completed at the end of 2017, with the court ruling in her favour. It is noted that in this case the victim turned to the Gender Equality Committee in Employment and Vocational Training and was granted free legal aid, which enabled her to proceed to court.

**Vicky** is 54 years old, divorced (43 years old at the time of the sexual harassment) and the mother of one child. She is a high school graduate and had worked for 8 years as a secretary in a small trade union organisation. She was sexually harassed by a leading official of the union where she worked, both verbally and non-verbally. The harassment started with various notes of sexual content which he left in her office, tasteless jokes or remarks, exposure to images and comments of sexual content, various invitations for dates, sexual innuendos, questions about her personal life, questions about her sexual life and pressure to enter into a sexual relationship.

After her consistent refusal to yield to his advances, he became more persistent and his behaviour continued and intensified over the last two years of her employment. The victim reported the perpetrator orally to the President of the Union and to his colleagues, and then in writing through a letter to the Union. After her complaint, the Executive Secretariat of the Union convened; instead of proceeding to investigate her complaint, it summoned her, in a peremptory manner, to “document” and not merely substantiate her complaint, as the legislation provides.

She requested that a new meeting be set and that she be allowed to present her evidence accompanied by a person of her own choosing. This was considered an insult to the body, and subsequently she was asked to leave the meeting and was placed on compulsory leave. Before being placed on compulsory leave, she was asked to withdraw her complaint against the perpetrator and she refused. She was then dismissed on the pretext that she had been “disrespectful” and had not provided evidence. The victim feels that her Union victimised her.

Unfortunately, this case was not won at first instance, as the court ruled that she had failed to prove that she was sexually harassed during the period 2003–2008. She has filed an appeal against the first instance decision and the judgment is pending.

**Andriana**, now 57 years old, experienced sexual harassment when she was 45. She is married and the mother of two children. She holds a university degree and currently runs her own business. She was a member of a trade union organisation and was sexually harassed by an official of that organisation. The harassment involved messages, phone calls, touching, caresses, sexually-oriented questions and propositions. She tolerated this situation for two years and when things became much worse, she submitted a complaint. She feels that the organisation handled her complaint properly and that she never felt disbelieved or revictimised. She also emphasised the confidentiality that was maintained and the support she received.

It is noted that with all of the women victims I had spoken either when they made their complaint – providing them with the support they needed – or beforehand, when I had encouraged them to submit a complaint or to proceed to court.

In describing her experiences of sexual harassment, Dimitra very characteristically stated:

*“It was just me and him in the office, there was no other secretary, and he always found that 8.00 to 8.30 in the morning slot, before he went to his work; in that half hour he wanted to do everything, and I wasn’t telling anyone anything, I was trying on my own, with a thousand words, and I even ended up swearing at him and saying, what else do you want, what are you asking for? And he simply told me one day, I don’t see you as Dimitra or as a secretary, but as a woman. I used to tell him that first of all you should be ashamed because you have a daughter my age, we’re close friends, we’re neighbours... and I don’t think I gave you the right to do what you’re doing now and to keep doing it.”*

The practices and procedures of trade union organisations discourage the submission of sexual harassment complaints. At the same time, these practices do not allow them to act decisively, in a coordinated and effective manner, but rather in a fragmented and superficial way.

As Dimitra characteristically said:

*“Even if you do make a complaint, they’ll say to you, but he’s a good person, he’s a family man, etc. More or less, don’t make a complaint and just keep quiet and put up with it.”*

No one cared about her feelings. On the contrary, as she said:

*“Things are still bad now, generally in the small community where I live. I’m the downgraded girl who destroyed the man and his family.”*

She very strongly highlighted the absence of any structure to provide psychological support and said, characteristically, about her trade unionist:

*“Not even a phone call to find out what actions I’ve taken or to tell me ‘stay strong’. I expected that they would call the community leader, that they would come to support me, not only over the phone, but to come here to the office, here to the workplace, to confront him and insist on what is lawful. I didn’t ask for something that I just wanted; I asked for something that is right and fair, and the truth is I didn’t have that. Coming here and confronting him face to face – everything was done by phone and by letters. I faced many problems and retaliatory actions both outside and inside my workplace: with my sick leave, if I want to take my summer leave I can’t apply, it takes a month for him to approve it with great difficulty, after a lot of hassle; he leaves it to the last day to decide whether I’ll go on leave. They even damaged our home; they scratched our cars, slashed our tyres, threw stones at our house.”*

Reinforcing the above, Vicky stated characteristically:

*“The system of my organisation was and still is male-dominated and they cannot feel the needs of women. The majority of its members are men in male-dominated occupations and the few female members work in the offices. There was a male-dominated leadership that dealt with men’s problems and promoted their resolution. The prevailing mentality views women as sexual objects.”*

Dimitra stated that one of the things lacking in Cyprus is psychological support:

*“Yes, there is none, and you need support, and yes, I had none, and I sent letters everywhere. I sent one to the Commissioner for Administration, I sent one to the Ministry of Labour because of my job here, I sent one to my union, I sent one to the Minister of the Interior and even to the Minister of Finance and I don’t know where else, to many places. But okay, I get a reply. They just say they need to investigate, they need time, etc. And because the case is in court, it will await justice. And I have to wait... I’m not a lawyer, but when you see someone (the accused) bringing a witness after four years, a witness who had not been declared, to me that’s simply a false witness, and in my case there was no one present for anything my supervisor did to me.”*

Nikoleta also said:

*“Yes, I wanted encouragement and for them to stand by me and to have psychological support. I mean, to talk, for them to give me strength, because I entered into this whole thing (process) and it was very soul-destroying for me.”*

Vasso said that she simply wanted:

*“To be heard and understood and not to have their official supported. After the complaint I faced many problems – psychological, financial, social...”*

The experience of the women victims shows that there were cases where the victim was asked not to file a complaint because the perpetrator was party-affiliated, or because she had no evidence, or because she would lose her job, etc. There was also a case where a trade unionist from a major organisation supported the perpetrator before the employer and not the three victims, because he was an official of his organisation<sup>136</sup>. With such an approach, it becomes obvious that women victims prefer either to endure silently and in torment, or to leave their job to find peace.

The findings of the present study show that women victims of sexual harassment did not receive the necessary support and understanding from their trade union organisations, since from the moment they lodged their complaint they were given no support at all.

They also believe that, more broadly, the system and structures prevailing in Cyprus do not facilitate the promotion of gender equality.

As Athina characteristically stated:

*“There are people who have power and feel that the whole world belongs to them. You know, some colleagues jokingly would say to me, well, he liked you, or ‘it’s his difficult age’. I didn’t understand what that means, his difficult age; if he had urges, let him go and do whatever he wants somewhere else. I thought about it and thought about it very carefully, whether to do it (file a complaint) or not. In the end I now say that if I hadn’t done it, I would be worse inside myself, and many colleagues called me and told me that they had experienced the same thing. After that incident, with all the directors I worked with, I never again went next to them to take papers for them to sign.”*

To the question whether sexual harassment is a real phenomenon and what needs to change, Dimitra said:

*“Yes, basically from my own experience, from the day I reported it, I’ve heard of so many incidents of harassment. Basically, it’s the legislation, because it’s not strict at all. It helps those people and not us. Even in court, they favour someone who is accused of something like this. Cases take years, there is no protection at all for a girl who is being harassed. First of all, she goes through it alone with her family, and if she doesn’t have her family, again she is alone and may end up with psychologists or doctors.”*

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<sup>136</sup> Περιγραφή σε απόφαση του Δικαστηρίου Εργατικών Διαφορών, Αρ. Αίτησης 491/06, Χριστάκης Ηλία v. D.E.L Kirzis Tourist Enterprises Ltd (PARK Beach Hotel), 30.6.2009

Self-blame is part of the consequences of sexual harassment, and Athina did not escape this trap, as she explained that she struggled with it and blamed herself:

*“It was the first thing I thought, whether I had done something myself, but no, we are not to blame if the other person sees us sexually; someone might say it’s the way you dress. We wear uniforms – what sexual element can there be? Okay, I also have the other thing: I’m polite, I always have my smile, I’m a very positive person and I was thinking maybe it’s that, that because they see me smiling they misunderstand it, I even went through that process. Since then I’ve changed; I no longer talk much to male colleagues if I don’t know them. And with women it’s the same, because I experienced – the worst thing, okay, was the incident itself, but the worst was what followed, what was said by female colleagues and male colleagues. Those two days that the trial lasted, I will never forget them in my life, the psychological warfare waged on me by his lawyer I will never forget. He stood up angrily and said to me, why didn’t you report him the first time he sexually harassed you, why didn’t you report it?”*

Many myths and stereotypical perceptions have been associated with sexual harassment and in this way, on the one hand, the phenomenon is not recognised as a problem and, on the other hand, responsibility is essentially assigned to the victims. The attribution of responsibility to the victims themselves is unfortunately observed even among women who have been sexually harassed, as the perception persists that in some cases the woman herself is responsible for the harassment she suffers.

Nikoleta said:

*“It depends; there are women who may provoke, but again that doesn’t mean that a man, especially in the workplace, should have the right to do anything.”*

Vicky, very firm in her position, stated:

*“Even if the clothing is provocative for some, that does not give them the right to touch or make comments.”*

Athina, being herself a victim of sexual harassment, said:

*“There are women who think that ‘my weapon is my appearance and the way I can handle men’, yes, and there are women who like to provoke. There are women who can, however, manage the situation, who handle it in a way that they gain something they want, or the favour of their supervisor; there is a small percentage, I’m not saying...”*

Nikoleta stated characteristically:

*“It depends; some women are a bit against women. In the previous community council, especially with one woman who was a member of the council, she was very much against me and criticised my clothing and everything; now we don’t have so many problems.”*

Andriana very emphatically stressed:

*“No, women victims have no share of responsibility; they are simply victims of the prevailing culture in Cypriot society. Women bear no responsibility for the discrimination they suffer, nor for sexual harassment.”*

Nikoleta said that there is a need for awareness-raising not only among employees but also among employers regarding sexual harassment:

*“Because every five years we have new community leaders, there should be, for example, a code of conduct on how you should behave and not only rules about how employees should dress and so on, but also how they (employers) should behave towards employees.”*

Vicky, visibly angry and disappointed, agrees that sexual harassment is a form of sexual, gender-based domination which undermines and further worsens women’s position in the socio-economic environment:

*“Yes, of course; they try to belittle her, to humiliate her, and they place importance on her external features rather than on her professional qualifications.”*

She also believes that the practices and procedures of trade union organisations discourage such complaints:

*“Yes, because they did not deal with the problem, and if something arises, they simply gossip about it and place the blame on women.”*

Sexual harassment, however, is only one of the many problems that working women face. Problems which, once again, trade union organisations – despite their declarations – have not worked on collectively and systematically in order to resolve.

Andriana said, displeased:

*“Priority is always given to general demands and these are promoted. They don’t care about women’s problems. They even seem bored hearing about them all the time. In the end, women become ‘tiresome’ and ‘annoying’ with the constant repetition of their demands.”*

Dimitra would have expected:

*“I think they should understand women more generally, let’s say even in gynaecological matters or in matters of motherhood, that a woman needs time to be at home with her baby, and I think they should understand her in matters of illness but also in matters of fairness, I mean in her salary and if you have children, to help you; or if you need even 10 minutes to leave work for some serious reason, anything, they create a problem even for those 10 minutes, or if you are 5 minutes late, again you have a problem.”*

Nikoleta, deeply disappointed, said:

*“They need to change their system (the trade union organisations), that old system where they don’t deal with anything. Especially now when there are no raises, no cost-of-living allowance, nothing – they have nothing to tell us. They come once to collect our dues and once to sell us the union’s lottery tickets. They need to change, to deal more with the personal issues we have in the workplace, with everything.”*

From the above, it becomes clear that trade union organisations, because of their patriarchal structures, have not dealt in depth with the problems faced by working women and have not managed to resolve them.

Andriana stated very emphatically:

*“Trade union organisations are male-dominated. They do not have women elected to positions of responsibility and if they do, they are an invisible minority, one person. They think in male terms, even with regard to the problems women face. They say, ‘we have equality’, so they see no reason to think about women’s specific problems. Even during Holy Week, they equated the work a woman has to do at home, beyond making flaounes, etc., with the idea that men too should be allowed to leave work earlier because they will help their wives. At the same time, they were promoting equality.”*

No victim believes that active involvement in public affairs is a male domain. On the contrary, they state that many women have already begun to become involved in public life and believe that women can and have much to offer from positions of responsibility.

Dimitra said:

*“Personally, I would have expected to have a woman in Parliament, to put it that way – I mean a woman as President of Parliament. I think women still have a lot to offer.”*

Andriana said:

*“Women have the academic qualifications, they are more responsible and organised than men, they are methodical and cooperative.”*

Vasso also said:

*“I believe women can, especially nowadays when we have many educated women and they are more hard-working and responsible.”*

Women believe in women’s capabilities and trust them, because they consider them more responsible and hard-working.

When asked whether they were encouraged to participate in decision-making bodies of their trade union organisations, Dimitra said:

*“No, I didn’t get involved and I don’t want to, to tell you the truth. Not because I have something against them, but I wasn’t encouraged and I didn’t get involved.”*

Regarding the promotion of gender equality by trade union organisations, the women who participated in the study – and who dared to report, even belatedly, the sexual harassment they experienced – believe that these organisations could and can do more and should engage more actively with gender equality. Victims believe that trade union organisations must understand and engage with women’s specific problems, whether they are issues of pregnancy and motherhood, family responsibilities, advancement, dismissal, etc.

Athina said:

*“They can play a very important role. First of all, by helping women; it’s very important to have someone to listen to you or help you with a problem. I believe that in the past things were worse, in my opinion, but this also has to do with our mentality as people, as a people, I think.”*

Vasso said:

*“They could, if they wanted, do a lot, but they didn’t do what they should have (the trade union organisation).”*

Andriana, reinforcing the above, said:

*“Although they can, they don’t in practice. It’s all theory so they can look ‘European’. They could push more for the practical implementation of the laws. They could promote a sexual harassment code in enterprises, some paid days at least of parental leave, etc. Men are much more privileged than women, both at home and at work. They are more carefree; they are considered from the outset as likely to succeed, they have a lot of self-confidence even when they don’t deserve it at all, they claim and they take more risks. Women are not encouraged, not empowered and not promoted.”*

Women have identified the problem of their downgrading and marginalisation and express their grievance. They also view trade union organisations as male-dominated institutions in which women's voices are not heard. Even the issue of sexual harassment has not been thoroughly examined, since in many cases victims are either not believed or responsibility is sought in their physical appearance, clothing or behaviour.

Dimitra said characteristically:

*"I think they should give a little more attention to women; they still have us downgraded..."*

Andriana very emphatically stated:

*"In theory they showed interest, organising events, seminars, conferences, etc. In practice they did not show interest, because their meetings were in the evening or on Saturday mornings. Even if I didn't work on Saturday mornings, I had so many other things to do inside and outside the house that I couldn't attend. They also couldn't understand what I would face as a woman when I returned home after a meeting late at night. Men, however, were calm, relaxed, without stress because some other woman would have everything ready for them. They had the same expectations from men and women, ignoring the existing differences and our different position at home."*

Nikoleta stated characteristically:

*"They never asked me if I needed anything; they don't help me, they don't find ways to help me."*

There is no support mechanism for victims of sexual harassment, and this is a major gap.

Women victims believe that the prevailing perceptions of gender roles marginalise them, as they burden them with multiple responsibilities at home and at work. The prevailing view is that family responsibilities (children, house cleaning, cooking, etc.) are the exclusive responsibility of women. At the same time, they admit that changing mentalities is a time-consuming process and that, therefore, it is no coincidence that while progress is being made, it is very slow.

Andriana said:

*"Trade union organisations are male-dominated. They do not have women elected to positions and if they do, they are an invisible minority, one person. They think in male terms, even about the problems women face. They say 'we have equality', so they see no need to think about women's specific problems. Culture does change, but the pace is slow. It may take more than 20 years to see change and progress. Priority is always given to general demands and these are promoted."*

*They don't care about women's problems. They even seem bored hearing about them all the time. In the end women become 'tiresome' and 'annoying' with the constant repetition of their demands."*

Vasso said:

*"There is a male-dominated leadership, belittling of women and glorification of men."*

As Athina stated:

*"Women have many responsibilities; we are mothers on a 24-hour basis, and a woman, I believe, if she wants her career, will leave her family not at 100% but at 60%, or she will leave her career. We have to make compromises in general, sacrifices. Men need to understand us more."*

We therefore see that the organisational culture of trade union organisations is male-dominated and that the specific problems faced by women are relegated to second place.

When asked to comment on the fact that when men show sexual activity they are commented on by others as being "a man", whereas similar behaviour by women is condemned because they are expected to be more passive, Dimitra said:

*"Totally wrong. It's culture that's to blame, but I think these things start in schools and especially at home, in my view – the values you have and basically the values of your family and your parents, your behaviour. Now if you are born with this and bring it with you, I think the problem can't be solved."*

Andriana, clearly annoyed, said:

*"Unfortunately that's how they grow up; they are taught to place excessive value on their sexual activity, more or less that all women belong to them, so they test the limits, and the worst thing is that they consider this behaviour almost normal."*

Overall, then, the culture of Cypriot society needs to change in order to become more women-friendly.

Regarding the reconciliation of family and work life, a serious problem and obstacle mainly faced by working women, the women's views do not differ.

Athina said:

*"Yes, let me tell you how I have it in my mind; I'm a person who believes strongly in equality even within the family, that there are no jobs for men and jobs for*

women. Any job a man can do, a woman can do as well. Okay, there are some jobs which, due to physical strength, are difficult, but I believe that in the home, if a man realises this and helps his wife, then his wife will be able to... yes. Mentalities must change; they should create structures for our children. For our children, yes, because in our generation I don't think many things will happen, but little by little we must start working on this as a society."

Nikoleta considers that children are a major problem:

*"The main issue is what you do when the children get sick. Men don't face this problem."*

Andriana said:

*"First of all, women must be relieved / freed from family responsibilities, the burden must be shared. It is not possible for them to contribute equally financially and still have so many responsibilities. The state must help, create structures and not shut them down, using the economic crisis as a pretext. Yes, more women should be promoted to all the bodies of trade unions. Women's voices and the specific problems they experience must be heard. These problems must be prioritised and they must work systematically and in a coordinated way to solve them. They stick to slogans, because their own structures, their patriarchal system and their patriarchal thinking do not allow them to do otherwise. In everything, the majority are men, decisions are taken by men and they feel satisfied that everything is fine. Personally, I was very involved in their structures, facing many problems: reconciliation problems, working hours, housework, minimal free time, problems of acceptance and recognition, the difficulty of being seen as an activist and not as a woman, sexism and sexual harassment."*

Continuing, Andriana agreed that sexual harassment represents an abuse of power and that it must be examined at the level of power and authority between the sexes:

*"Men are, by definition, more powerful. That's how they were taught, that's how they grew up, that's how they believe they must behave in order to prove that they are men. Women do not have to prove their femininity, but their worth. When a woman is subjected to behaviour that humiliates her and she herself wonders what she did wrong, 'I am to blame, perhaps', etc., how will she be able to stand up and claim and shout and demand her rights? Most prefer to change employer, often losing their rights as well."*

Women victims believe that trade union organisations must and can undertake more initiatives to promote gender equality in the workplace and, in particular, to address the problem of sexual

harassment. Some felt alone and unsupported, without any help, and some were pressured to withdraw their complaint and not to proceed.

## 5.2 Characteristics / Demographic Profile of Organisation Representatives

At this stage, it is deemed appropriate to present the characteristics of the representatives of the participating organisations (trade union, employer organisations) and of the Women's Sections of these organisations that took part in the study, as well as very briefly those of the organisations themselves. It is noted that, for the purposes of this study, pseudonyms are used for victims and numbered acronyms are used for trade union organisations (ΣΟ), employer organisations (ΕΟ) and Women's Sections of trade union organisations (ΓΤΣΟ), instead of their real names.

### 5.2.1. Trade Union Organisations

**SO1** – Male, 47 years old, with tertiary education. He has 22 years of service in the Organisation, 5 of which in leadership positions. In his organisation, the General Council is composed of 90 members, of whom 5 are women. In the Executive Secretariat there are no women and no quota system is in place. His organisation is active in the private and semi-public sector and is one of the oldest and largest trade union organisations in Cyprus (over 70 years of activity, founded in 1944). The Women Workers' Section of the Organisation was established in 1965.

**SO2** – Female, 57 years old, with tertiary education and 31 years of service in the organisation. She has held a leadership position for 11 years and is the first woman in her organisation to hold office. No quota system has been adopted. In the Organisation's General Council, women's representation stands at 1%, again without quotas. Her organisation is active in the private and semi-public sector and is the oldest and one of the two largest trade union organisations in Cyprus (over 70 years of activity, founded in 1941). The Women Workers' Section of the Organisation was established in 1952.

**SO3** – Male, 60 years old, with tertiary education and 20 years of service, 7 of which in the top leadership, with a total of 16 years in institutional roles. In the Central Council, which is the Organisation's highest decision-making body, there are 7 women out of 37 members, with a quota system in place. His organisation is active in the private and semi-public sector and is the third largest trade union organisation in Cyprus (over 55 years of activity, founded in 1962). The Women Workers' Section of the Organisation was established in 1989.

**SO4** – Male, 74 years old, with secondary education and 50 years of active involvement in trade unionism. He has been in the leadership pyramid since 2007. On the Organisation's Board of Directors, women are represented at a rate of 33%, without quotas. Women members of his organisation who work as technicians account for 20%. They do not have a Women Workers' Section.

**SO5** – Male, 74 years old, with tertiary education. He has been in the leadership pyramid of his organisation since 2007 and is serving his 6th term. In the 9-member Secretariat there are two women, while in the 23-member Executive Committee there are 6 women, again without quotas. The majority of their members are women (51.09%). They do not have a Women Workers' Section, but rather a committee which is not enshrined in their statutes.

**SO6** – Male, 45 years old, with tertiary education. He has been in the leadership pyramid of his organisation for 7 years. Eighty per cent of their members are women, who are represented by one woman in their 7-member Secretariat, without quotas. They do not have a Women Workers' Section.

**SO7** – Male, 47 years old, with tertiary education. He has been in the leadership pyramid for 5 years. Their 11-member council currently includes one woman. The majority of their members are men, and there is no quota system. They do not have a Women Workers' Section.

It is noted that the author had worked for several years with the representative of SO1 on issues relating to gender equality in employment, and he was highly sensitised and knowledgeable about the specific problems faced by women workers. Unfortunately, once he assumed the leadership of his organisation, no changes were observed in its structures or activities. He acknowledged this during our meeting and stated that time is needed to change the prevailing mentality of his colleagues in the Secretariat and to convince them of the need for change.

The author had an excellent relationship with the representative of SO2 when she herself was dealing, for many years, with the promotion of gender equality in employment. I was greatly struck by the significant change in her mentality and statements now that she holds a hierarchical leadership position in her Organisation. There was no difference between her and the other representatives of the remaining organisations, despite the fact that she herself had previously worked to promote gender equality.

The representative of SO3 was very well-versed in gender equality issues, acknowledged the problems, but at the same time considers that they are doing what is required to promote gender equality.

The representative of SO4 was known to the author, who had cooperated with his Organisation's Women's Committee. He was adamant in his views and believes that because they have two women in their highest decision-making body, they are promoting equality. He was also in a hurry because he had to attend a Parliamentary Committee meeting, but did not want to interrupt the interview and rearrange it for another time. Before the end of the interview, two other male officials entered his office and sat down, as they were to accompany him to Parliament (no women).

The leader of SO5 was the oldest of the interviewees. Despite his willingness to participate in the research, it became evident that he was unfamiliar with basic concepts of gender equality, such as gender mainstreaming or quotas. In addition, the author was aware of a sexual harassment

complaint against one of their officials (reported to me in 2008). When I asked whether such a complaint had ever been made in his organisation, his answer was negative. When I informed him that I remembered such a case (the complainant is one of the victims in the present study), he replied: “Yes, but the court ruled in our favour”. Even this organisation, against which a complaint had been brought that reached the courts, did not consider it necessary to implement the legislative provision requiring the introduction of a code of practice with procedures for prevention and response.

The representative of SO6 was articulate and felt very self-confident about what he was saying. He believes that everything is going well in his Organisation, that there is equality, and that the under-representation of women – who constitute the majority of its members and of the sector – is not due to the Organisation’s procedures, but to the women themselves, who do not vote for women.

The representative of SO7 was the only one the author did not know personally. From what he said, it appeared that they have no problem in promoting gender equality, but women members constitute a minority of their membership and their sector is male-dominated, since women, “quite understandably”, do not choose the natural sciences.

### 5.2.2. Employer Organisations

**EO1** – Male, 55 years old, with tertiary education. He has 26 years of service and has been in the leadership pyramid of his organisation since 2000, as Deputy Director, and during the last year as Director General. The Organisation’s members are companies, not natural persons. However, they are represented in decision-making bodies by natural persons. No quota system has been adopted, but members are encouraged to ensure a gender-balanced participation of women and men in their decision-making bodies. The percentage of women in their decision-making bodies stands at 0.8%. His organisation represents companies and organisations in the private and semi-public sector.

**EO2** – Male, 57 years old, with tertiary education. He has 31 years of service and has been in the leadership pyramid of his organisation since 2004, as head of department. The Organisation’s members are companies, not natural persons. However, they are represented in decision-making bodies by natural persons. No quota system has been adopted, but members are encouraged to ensure a gender-balanced participation of women and men in their decision-making bodies. The percentage of women in their decision-making bodies stands at 20%. His organisation represents companies and organisations in the private sector.

### 5.2.3. Women’s Sections of Trade Union Organisations

**WSTUSO1** – Female, 52 years old, tertiary education graduate, with 20 years of service in the organisation, Secretary of the Women Workers’ Section for the last 15 years. The Organisation has not adopted quotas.

**WSTUO2** – Female, 50 years old, tertiary education graduate, with 26 years of service, 11 years as Head of the Women’s Office and 26 years as District Secretary. The Organisation has not adopted quotas.

**WSTUO3** – Female, 54 years old, with 25 years of service, tertiary education graduate, Secretary of the Women’s Committee. The Women’s Committee is not enshrined in the organisation’s statutes. The Organisation has not adopted quotas.

**WSTUO4** – Male, 46 years old, tertiary education graduate, Secretary of the Women’s Committee with 15 months’ service. The Women’s Committee is not enshrined in the organisation’s statutes. The Organisation has not adopted quotas.

As we shall see below, the women’s sections of trade union organisations are fully dependent on the leadership of their organisations. This means that their organisational culture cannot differ significantly from that of their parent organisations.

The women’s sections of the trade union organisations that took part in this study are three; it is noted that in the third section two persons (one man and one woman) participated in the interview, because that is what they wanted. It is also noted that in no case did the man disagree with his female colleague; on the contrary, he was equally critical of the almost complete inactivity of his organisation on gender equality issues in general and specifically on sexual harassment. The women’s sections form part of the trade union organisations and deal exclusively with “women’s issues” and problems. This does not mean that those in charge of these sections deal exclusively with equality issues, since they are at the same time burdened with other duties. Some of these sections are enshrined in the organisations’ statutes, while others are not.

The author has excellent relations with all three representatives of the women’s sections. The representative of GTSO1 was very honest and made admissions without feeling the need to “cover” her Organisation. The representative of the second women’s section moved strictly within her Organisation’s line and justified both the reduced participation of women in decision-making bodies and the non-introduction of a code of practice, etc. The representatives of the third women’s section were extremely critical of their Organisation, sparing it nowhere and calling things by their name.

There are also Women’s Sections / Committees where the presidents / secretaries are appointed – and not elected – by the male leadership of their organisations.

Specifically, the leadership pre-decides who will be the secretary and the members of the section. No electoral procedures are held in any organisation. At their conferences, a report is given on the work carried out and the goals set, and it is always deemed necessary for the General Secretary to speak in order to “remind” them that gender equality is high on their agenda and that he will be “by their side”.

For **WSTUO1**, the Federation's Statutes state in Article 16(i), entitled "Powers and Functioning of the General Council", that the General Council "establishes Sections such as Youth, Women Workers, Pensioners, draws up their Rules of Procedure and ratifies the Heads of the Sections".

For **WSTUO2**, it is stated that "the Secretary of the Women's Office is elected by the Organisation's General Council..., immediately after the Federation's Pan-Cypriot Congress. The Section holds a Pan-Cypriot Congress every five years, with the participation of women from all the unions that form the Federation. The Federation Congress... elects the Central Women's Office, which is the Section's governing body between the two congresses". It is noted that the Secretary of this Section is a member of two of the Organisation's highest decision-making bodies.

For **WSTUO3**, it is stated that "it is administered by a six-member Committee with an equal number of men and women, appointed by the Organisation's Central Council. The Committee is composed of the President, the Vice-President (of a different sex), the Treasurer and three members. Its decisions become enforceable after approval by the Federation's Executive Secretariat...".

**SO4** does not have a Women's Committee enshrined in its statutes.

**WSTUO5** is not enshrined in the statutes either and constitutes a Committee of the General Council, appointed by it, without predetermined action goals.

**SO6** and **SO7** do not have women's sections. It is also noted that the two unions which did not participate in this study likewise have no Women's Sections.

In the following section, the results will be presented on the basis of Acker's (1990) theoretical framework, with its four gendered processes.

## 5.3 Patriarchal Structures

As we shall see below, patriarchal structures dominate within the participating organisations, creating, maintaining and reproducing gender divisions within their structures. At the same time, they articulate their positions and perceptions regarding the prevailing situation.

### 5.3.1 Hierarchy / Positions of Responsibility

In general, the needs of working women and the obstacles they face are not investigated in a comprehensive, collective and coordinated manner. Almost all the participants in the study believe that men are more privileged because of their sex. Although they acknowledge the existence of patriarchy, they stop at the level of stating the obvious.

The representative of SO5 said:

*“Men are more privileged because they have more time than women to emerge, not because they deserve it more. There is also male ego, as we say, but it’s not absolute.”*

The representative of SO3 believes that:

*“Men are generally the dominant sex at all levels. At work, at home, in politics and in society. We know that our system is patriarchal, very conservative, it downgrades women’s role in every field and gives more ‘rights’, opportunities and visibility to men. There is the stereotype that women’s role is generally inferior in society and that women cannot take on such roles, that men are more capable. It is a powerful stereotype, not just an opinion held by men, but a perception that is passed on to women and to society as a whole.”*

No organisation has sought, through practical measures, or managed to promote women into its leadership pyramid, apart from a very small number that have one or two women. All organisations stated that women are under “pressure” when it comes to getting involved in decision-making bodies. Yet they did nothing to change this discouraging picture so as to help women overcome the barriers that keep them away from pursuing leadership positions. When you do not start from “your own house”, when you have not cultivated this culture internally, how can you pursue such a goal externally?

Most organisations agree that numerical equality alone will not solve the problems of unequal treatment of women in employment. Symbolically, it may have some significance, it may send the message that women can assume important positions and responsibilities, but on the other hand, at the base of society, men remain the dominant sex at all levels – in employment, in the home, in politics and in society.

All participating organisations acknowledge that, more broadly, the system in Cypriot society is patriarchal and very conservative, that it underestimates women’s role in every field, and that it gives men more “rights”, opportunities and visibility. They agree that women have additional responsibilities in the home, that they are subjected to harsher criticism than men and that, generally, everyone is more tolerant and lenient towards men and more critical and strict towards women.

The representative of SO1 stated:

*“When an organisation has not created the possibility for women to access the leadership pyramid, it is much more difficult for a woman on her own – especially if we are talking about unpaid officials – to take the initiative and try to claim leadership positions and to claim a place in the system. There is a mistaken perception that women are for the home. This is where you can see that a lot of steps have been taken, but also where you can see the superficial*

*approach. I think everything starts from stereotypical perceptions. It is a matter of perception and of how gender equality is managed. There is an identification of the woman with her sexual image, with an element of downgrading and devaluing her role. So we are referring to a long-standing mistaken perception of women, which means that even if she manages to climb the hierarchy of an organisation, for some she remains an object of desire, downgrading and devaluation. Otherwise it cannot be explained...”*

As noted above, some organisations identify the causes of the problems and are aware of possible solutions, which they nonetheless do not promote, taking into account that SO1 has no woman at all in its highest body.

They admit that, as far as trade union organisations are concerned, the promotion of gender equality in employment is carried out in a superficial, fragmentary manner; they also express satisfaction with the fact that a small number of women have progressed within their patriarchal structures.

The representative of SO1 said, among other things:

*“We do piecemeal, superficial work and yes, we need a coordinating body to coordinate us.”*

However, the creation of such a coordinating body, which they themselves say they need, has never been discussed or promoted. A body that would guide, co-decide and implement joint and coherent action among trade union organisations seems to be expected to appear “by itself”.

They also admit that an institution which is considered “male” limits the possibilities and probabilities of being represented by women and, even worse, if it is represented by a woman, that she may not be identified with the role and may not be accepted as an institutional actor. Some believe that equal opportunities are provided to men and women to progress, but they agree that there is an “informal” setting that benefits men more. No organisation claimed that women do not deserve or should not be promoted. Responsibility is placed entirely on the prevailing culture, the structure of society and the patriarchal perceptions that are embedded in society itself.

A representative of SO1 noted:

*“There is no limit to how far a woman can go. It’s a matter of culture, of the structure of society, of perceptions that have been embedded in society itself. There is a strong, unfortunately, stereotypical perception – we tried to change it at the Organisation’s last congress and we did not manage – which refers to the logic that trade unionism is essentially a male affair, male-dominated. An institution that is considered male limits the possibilities and probabilities of being represented by women and, even worse, if it is represented by a woman, that she will not be identified with the role and will not be accepted as an institutional actor... The most important thing is that, from the moment a process is in its*

*infancy, you must have mechanisms to examine whether a decision may affect gender positively or negatively...”*

Patriarchal attitudes prevent the organisational culture of trade union organisations from being reformed and modernised with a view to effectively promoting gender equality and moving from theory to practice.

The problem of stereotypical gender perceptions was mentioned by all organisations. They know that a major, consistent and continuous effort is needed to change culture; they locate the root of the problem in patriarchal society or in “women’s nature”, but seem to expect other institutions to work towards eliminating these perceptions, while the problem is also identified within their own organisations and they do absolutely nothing, despite the fact that they themselves propose possible solutions.

Women are expected to prove that they deserve a place in the hierarchical structure of a trade union organisation, and this is treated as normal. Others believe that they have already done what they had to do, that women are equal to men and that the elimination of gender stereotypes that hinder women is an individual responsibility. Under this logic, they will of course not engage with solving gender problems, since they already consider that it is not a collective and social responsibility and that gender inequality exists to some extent only in certain individuals – almost as a “misconception”.

The representative of SO5 sees the situation as improved:

*“I wouldn’t see it as men vs women; on the contrary, I see many male colleagues getting actively involved in their family responsibilities rather than in trade union activities. I wouldn’t say it has to do with gender, but with each person’s priorities and hierarchies.”*

By contrast, the representative of SO7, externalising his own gender stereotypes, said:

*“I generally believe that equal opportunities are provided to men and women to progress, but I will agree with you that there is an informal, shall we say, setting that helps men more... There are, however, some occupations that women cannot perform, e.g. metalworker; such examples exist in all occupations.”*

Providing equal opportunities to men and women within organisations, and ensuring women’s access to and progression into leadership positions, appears to be a difficult undertaking. Some organisations, when they refer to women who have managed to distinguish themselves, insist on stressing that women progress without discrimination and that this is “proven” by their work and contribution – in other words, women must constantly prove their worth.

The representatives of most trade union organisations admit that there is a strong, unfortunately, stereotypical perception, which some organisations have tried – as they say

– to change, but have not succeeded, and they conclude that trade unionism is essentially a male domain.

The representative of SO6 declared himself satisfied, stating that there is equality in his sector and that he feels they are doing what they ought to as an organisation. It is noted that women members in his Organisation constitute the overwhelming majority (80%), but women's representation in leadership positions does not exceed 16%, and he cannot – or does not want to – interpret this fact.

*“We have resolved equality issues. Now, if there are some who carry stereotypes, that's another matter and work is needed for that to change. Equality, it has always been so. From its foundation until today, the organisation is not recorded anywhere as male-dominated or female-dominated. On the contrary, one can see the participation of both men and women. Equality is not 50–50, since the membership ratio is 80–20. Now, you will ask, why is your secretariat male-dominated? Don't women claim positions? Women do claim positions.”*

On the one hand, he believes that they have resolved equality issues; on the other, he admits that some of their members hold stereotypical views. He does not, however, enter into the process of identifying the causes or explaining why their women members – who are the majority, who “claim” positions – are not elected.

The role of education in eliminating stereotypes and gender-based occupational segregation was emphasised mainly by the education sector organisations, which argued that subject and field choices are a matter of character. They do not attribute inequalities in choosing STEM subjects to gender, but to the character and temperament of individuals, and specifically of girls.

The representative of SO7 said:

*“The reason why the number of women is small is because the fields of study we offer are aimed more at boys, at men. The fields of automobile engineering, mechanical engineering or electrical engineering are mostly male and the students are mostly male. There are women in the organisation's hierarchy and, in fact, a few years ago the President was a woman. Today we have one woman on the 11-member central body; a few years ago there were two. It's certainly a small percentage. It depends on everyone's character and temperament. As regards the advancement of women teachers, everyone knows that the promotion system, at least until now, had nothing to do with gender.”*

When the researcher pointed out that statistics show that, while the majority of teachers are women, the majority of assistant heads and heads of schools are men rather than women, he replied:

*“I can’t think of a specific reason; the inspectorate system works through the evaluation of each teacher. Now, if you are implying that the male inspector, when grading, evaluates men and women differently, I don’t know about that and I find it hard to believe. I generally believe that equal opportunities are provided to men and women to progress, but I will agree with you that there is an informal, shall we say, setting that helps men more. I do not approve of this, but I believe it still exists.”*

The representative of SO3, with some scepticism, said:

*“The point is not just to elect a woman so that we can say we have solved the equality problem. That would be completely misleading. There are countries that have had women presidents but in reality have no idea what equality means. I say that a more structured effort is needed and in a direction that will allow women to participate in positions of political responsibility to a much greater extent... And to achieve this, many other institutional, social and political obstacles must be overcome. In the area of equality we still have a long way to go. Above all, we must build a proper understanding within society, in all institutions and in the education system.”*

The representative of GTSO2, indirectly placing responsibility on women for their low representation, but at the same time claiming that gender does not matter in decision-making bodies, said:

*“We are in an organisation that functions somewhat differently; advancement is not an end in itself, but I believe opportunities are provided. However, in order for this opportunity to be given or to materialise, a great deal of work and effort is required by the women themselves to prove that they are worthy – more than men... It doesn’t matter whether a person in a position is a man or a woman, but which policies they develop and whether these policies serve the issues and the basic principles we have. I say that behind the numerical data we should look for other things as well, qualitative elements. Numerically, I would say that women’s role is small in terms of their participation in bodies and decision-making centres. On the other hand, their role is significant, taking into account that we have a woman in the leadership, that we have women as organisational officials, whereas in the past there were only male trade unionists; we have a number of women, which I understand does not exist in other trade union organisations, or at least not to the extent and number that we have.”*

The representative of GTSO4, expressing her own view with great dissatisfaction, said:

*“Even in our sectors that are female-dominated, e.g. secretarial staff where 90% or 85% are women, the Board of Directors is made up of four people – the President, the Vice-President, the Secretary and the Treasurer – and it is*

*customary for the President to be a man. Even in our sectors that are female-dominated, the President, the official, the person who will go to see the General Secretary is a man. The leader is a man. I don't think that as long as I'm in my organisation I will see a woman as General Secretary. I hope the younger ones will see this."*

A representative of the women's section of GTSO2 said:

*"Everything has to do with mentality, with what we shape in our minds, the so-called stereotypes, according to which a man can cope better at work, a man can sit and wait for his food... I see it as a matter of pure mentality, not privilege. The perception is widespread in our minds, in most of us, that men can be much more successful in all issues in general."*

The representative of EO1 believes that women face more obstacles in their career progression:

*"They have to prove themselves much more than a man. There is still a stereotype on this issue."*

The saying "men lead and women are led" is confirmed by the above.

The representative of SO6, in an organisation where 80% of the members are women, offers his own explanation for his organisation, without having actually investigated the causes of this situation:

*"They may have other priorities of their own, priorities that have to do either with their personal life or with their other social activity. I know colleagues who are active in charity or in party politics, etc. They choose – possibly because their family has other priorities – to be more active in family life, not necessarily as wives or mothers, but in activities that their family is involved in. Another factor that may be related to the organisation is perhaps the priorities set by the organisation itself, which does not express them. In other words, a purely trade union organisation pushes away many people who might have liked there to be something more. For example, cultural activities – and you will see many women being involved in sub-groups of the Organisation, such as cultural groups or sectoral committees dealing with specialised issues. Therefore, it is a combination of factors which, I believe, warrants a sample survey to be carried out. We have not done this because women are not reacting in a way that would cause concern. They appreciate the work being done and do not wish to 'get mixed up' with trade union affairs."*

Recognition of the problem, regardless of inaction to solve it, is recorded by some trade union organisations, which even propose solutions that they could have promoted, but did not, or failed to implement.

The maintenance of sex-disaggregated statistics does not appear to be a priority, as they do not understand their importance. They only have gender data regarding the number of their members, because they are obliged to submit such data annually to the Registrar of Trade Unions.

From the interviews – especially in the case of the larger organisations – it is clear that they identify the problem as stemming from institutional procedures and outdated gender perceptions in Cypriot society and its institutions, excluding their own institutions and themselves, and they do not implement or propose solutions and remedial measures. There is a superficial and purely theoretical approach, without in-depth reflection and without ideas about what should be done to improve the situation.

The representative of EO1 said:

*“We are trying to promote women and I would be particularly pleased to see a woman President and Director General in our Organisation. At European level we have a woman President. We amended our statutes and our founding document in 2016 and the amendments, among other things, attach weight and emphasis to the equal participation of both sexes in our governing bodies. Every time I send a notice for the renewal of the Board of Directors, I state that women are particularly encouraged to participate.”*

The representative of EO2 stated that in the past, men, due to existing patriarchal perceptions, were more privileged than women simply because they were men, whereas today:

*“It still exists, but to a lesser degree. Because we have now realised that women can contribute – and in many cases more than men. And this message has been received and is being implemented by large companies.”*

Employer organisations do have the mitigating factor that their members are organisations / enterprises and not individuals; however, they too could do more to raise their members' awareness so that they understand the benefits of gender equality for their organisations and work towards achieving it. It is noted that EO1 has involved women internally in positions of responsibility and has implemented European projects aiming to promote gender equality. It is, however, understandable that they place at the top of their priorities the interests of their members – the employers – which means that wherever there is a cost, they are reluctant to accept proposals to promote gender equality in their workplaces.

The representative of GTSO4, expressing her own view with great dissatisfaction, said:

*“There is a Women’s Committee and it has a male secretary, who, as part of his duties, keeps the Committee’s minutes and conveys its recommendations to the decision-making bodies for approval. In 2009 we tried to create a Women’s Section with statutes, etc., and the Statutory Congress rejected it, so we do not have a Women’s Section to elect its members; they are appointed. Even in our sectors that are female-dominated the President, the official, generally the person who will go to see the General Secretary is a man. The leader is a man; I don’t think that as long as I’m in my organisation I will see a woman as General Secretary. The organisation’s culture is not equally friendly to men and women. Even on issues that I handle myself, after so many years of service and experience, the General Secretary will refer them simultaneously to me and to a male senior official. However, if something concerns equality issues, it will be sent only to me. As soon as he sees the word ‘woman’ or ‘equality’, he sends it only to me. These are not issues that seriously concern the men in the leadership.”*

By contrast, some express satisfaction simply because there is one woman in their leadership. The representative of GTSO2 stated:

*“Numerically, I would say that women’s role is small in terms of their participation in bodies and decision-making centres. On the other hand, their role is important, taking into account that we have a woman in the leadership.”*

However, when the Secretaries of Women’s Sections are not only “appointed”, but at the same time – in most cases – are not represented, even ex officio, in the bodies where decisions are taken, how can they voice opinions and suggestions and help improve the situation?

For **WSTUO1**, the Federation’s statutes state in Article 16(i), entitled “Powers and functioning of the General Council”, that the General Council “establishes Sections such as Youth, Women Workers, Pensioners, draws up their Rules of Procedure and ratifies the Heads of the Sections”. The Secretary of the Section does not participate in any top-level body.

For **WSTUO2**, it is stated that *“the Secretary of the Women’s Office is elected by the Organisation’s General Council..., immediately after the Federation’s Pan-Cypriot Congress. The Section holds a Pan-Cypriot Congress every five years, with the participation of women from all unions forming the Federation. The Federation’s Congress... elects the Central Women’s Office, which is the Section’s governing body between the two congresses”*. It is noted that the Secretary of this Section is a member of two of the Organisation’s highest decision-making bodies.

For **WSTUO3**, it is stated that “it is administered by a six-member Committee with an equal number of men and women, appointed by the Organisation’s Central Council. The Committee consists of the President, the Vice-President (not of the same sex), the Treasurer and three members. Its decisions become enforceable after being approved by the

Federation's Executive Secretariat...". The Secretary of the Section does not participate in any top-level body.

When asked what is discussed at the lunches or dinners that follow meetings, the representative of EO1 said:

*"Maybe we talk about 'women's chores' if something relevant is in the news, but generally it's about our children, our health, our cars, our finances, our children's studies, our holidays, etc. We don't have sexist tendencies."*

The statement by the representative of GTSO2, when asked what she would do if she herself assumed the leadership of her organisation, was *particularly striking*:

*"More systematic monitoring of collective agreements, of how legislation is implemented and of how equality issues are a priority for all unions. I would give more opportunities to women in recruitment and, internally, I would try to look into situations where there were weaknesses, etc. Inequalities that the General Secretary may not perceive, but that some female employees may feel. I would try to see whether what they feel is subjective or objective – whether there is a basis for what they feel, because many times, for example, the fact that women are in low-paid positions, in paid staff positions, as field officers, and women are the secretarial staff, this in itself makes stratification gendered."*

A representative of GTSO2, setting out her own views, said:

*"Care, family roles within the family, the fact that women may not be interested in advancement, that they are satisfied with the roles they have and do not want to move beyond them. And on the other hand, as women demand participation, we must defend every woman's right to choose a specific path, provided that her choice is conscious and not imposed. If a woman decides to stay at home to raise her children, that is her right; what is not acceptable is for her to want to work but to be forced to stay at home because her husband or her family gets angry."*

They believe that there are still some practical obstacles, structures and institutional barriers in the trade union movement that unintentionally exclude women. They agree that women face more obstacles in career progression and that efforts must be made to remove these obstacles. They refer to gender stereotypes and perceptions that still exist in Cypriot society and to the difficulties in reconciling family and work, which prevent women from progressing and from holding equal positions in Cypriot society and the economy. Overall, their action and rhetoric is similar to that of the trade union organisations.

Employer organisations likewise agree that women must prove themselves much more than a man.

As we saw in the literature, organisational culture is influenced by senior management / leadership and can have a strong impact on shaping the style of organisational culture that it wishes to transmit to staff and members. It is clear that what is lacking is the political will to promote a gender-sensitive culture and to truly engage with the promotion of gender equality.

It is shown that employer and trade union organisations in Cyprus did not dare to confront entrenched patriarchy and “force” the existing socio-political system to recognise the value of gender equality in employment and, more broadly, in the socio-economic life of Cyprus. Nor did they succeed in reforming this system so as to ensure not only de jure legal equality between women and men, but also substantive equality, thereby giving practical support to their institutions and policies in promoting gender equality in employment and in Cypriot society.

We therefore see that, while they know that the existing culture and outdated patriarchal perceptions need to change, and they know that they must work towards this goal, they simply acknowledge that the road to equality is still long.

### 5.3.2 Quotas

The idea and adoption of quota measures to reduce gender inequality in the hierarchy has not really occupied the organisations, with the exception of one; they have not adopted it as a measure, regardless of whether they agree or disagree with it. They do, however, agree that a more balanced or even strengthened representation of women would have positive results, even though there are organisations that fear women might “create problems”.

The only organisation that has institutionalised quotas is SO3. Yet, in its small but highest executive body, which actually takes and implements decisions, there is not a single woman – in other words, the quota has not been implemented in practice. Its representative stated:

“We have introduced quotas and included them in our statutes. Quotas are not a panacea, but they help. We do not consider that quotas solve the problem, but I think they send some messages to society that women can participate in positions and contribute, they can deliver, and thus certain taboos may be broken.”

Some other organisations report that their efforts remain at the level of “encouragement” to reduce this enormous gap, and they state that what they are trying to change is the mentality of women themselves. They admit that work is needed on their part to change the system and that this will be time-consuming; a rapid evolutionary process of change within the next 5–10 years is not to be expected, until a new culture is built.

The leader of a large trade union organisation, SO4, stated emphatically that quotas create inequalities and do not promote gender equality:

*“We disagree, I am against it. If we are talking about equality, we cannot talk about quotas. I say ‘equality’, but we must be honest – when we say ‘equality’, we must mean it, not say ‘equality’ but at the same time not leave room for the other.”*

Some consider quotas to be a form of disparagement of women and believe that, although they are a temporary measure, they nevertheless tend to become entrenched, and this is something they evidently fear.

Other organisations believe that women’s presence in bodies must clearly reflect the participation of women in the trade union system and see it as inconceivable that an organisation with 40% women members should not reflect this in its structures.

The representative of SO6 stated strongly:

*“As an Organisation, but also personally, I disagree. I consider it a kind of disparagement of women and especially in our case, where women are the majority. There are many women who contest at the first and second levels... While it is a temporary measure, it becomes entrenched if you look at political parties... In our Organisation it is not necessary for it to operate, in the sense that the percentage of women is huge; women colleagues put themselves at the disposal of the electorate, receive a considerable number of trust votes and are elected to various bodies. From there on, it is also a matter of personal... In any case, many factors come into play as to whether they want to stand and no one will deny them that, as long as, through interaction and mutual acquaintance, people see who can best represent the whole. No one will prevent it.”*

The representative of SO2, disagreeing with the philosophy of the measure, stated that her Organisation has adopted another way of increasing the number of elected women:

*“We followed a method that did not go down the administrative road of quotas... but instead focused on targeted, systematic work having to do with what our understanding of equality is and why it is important for this to be implemented in our policies and in the structures of the unions and the federation. That is, even now, when unions rank their priorities, equality issues are low in the hierarchy of their priorities and they need more visibility... What we are doing now is at the level of encouragement, that is, when a new position is created, from the perspective of resignations, for example, on the Central Council, women should be promoted and preferred. To reduce this huge gap. In the General Council we have ninety people and five of them are women – a negligible share, it’s almost laughable. The problem is that you ‘don’t have’ [women there]. Quotas are an administrative measure that may solve some problems immediately, but I believe it is a side-*

*step that relieves us of the real responsibilities for the fact that women do not participate in these bodies to the extent they should – bodies that require either election or appointment, etc. In other words, the problem will not be solved just by having quotas. Numerically it may be solved. In substance, however, the problems that prevent a woman from standing for election, at least the main problems, remain... I am not so sure that it would benefit the wider social whole or society at large.”*

The representative of SO3 believes that:

*“By getting some women into power we cannot claim that we have solved the problem. Symbolically, it may have some significance, we may send the message that women can assume important positions and responsibilities, but on the other hand, at the base of society...”*

The representative of SO7 stated:

*“I believe that a strengthened representation of women would probably have positive results. I don't know what would happen if women had the majority, but having some personal experiences in mind, women become tough when they come to power...”*

There is also an underlying fear expressed that women will not be good leaders – this, despite the fact that few women have actually been tried in leadership positions, and judgments are being made based on isolated cases. The reasons why women do not stand for election do not concern or interest them; they merely assess the outcome – the negligible presence of women – and ascribe it to women's reluctance or indifference to positions in decision-making bodies. Essentially, they are equating unequal situations in the name of “equality” and thus perpetuating gender inequalities.

As for employer organisations, quotas are a measure they view positively, but, as they say, they cannot impose them.

The representative of EO1 stated:

*“Yes, we discussed it, but we cannot impose it, which is why we did not adopt it. Only through encouragement, exhortation. The Council would not be able to function legally. Equal representation would yield better results, because we also need the gender perspective in our important decisions. And because there are many themes from time to time that we have to discuss and take a position on, which have to do with protection, with facilities, with promoting women's participation in the labour market. I think the results would be much better.”*

### 5.3.3 Gender Mainstreaming in Collective Bargaining

In the history of trade union organisations over at least the last thirty years, no strike has ever been organised to support gender-related issues, even though they acknowledge that there are serious problems in the practical implementation of important legislation, such as maternity protection, equal pay for equal work or work of equal value, sexual harassment, etc.

The representative of SO3, engaging in self-criticism with great honesty, stated that although equality is among the Organisation's priorities, they have not achieved what they would have wished:

*“We have a general direction as regards collective agreements, where the conclusion is that there is a major problem: what happens with collective agreements is invisible. Over time, since 1960 – because we must say that from EU accession onwards there has been a new culture on equality issues in Cyprus; not that stereotypes and practices have changed, but there has been a new direction in terms of the government... We now have laws, but here we see that collective agreements have not changed at all, until recently. In recent years we have observed – to a very small extent – that some elements relating to equality can be included... First of all, as regards the language of the texts, the feminine gender is completely invisible. And it is clear that occupational segregation is blatant, both horizontal and vertical. It is also clear that there is unequal pay and that job evaluation is not carried out; there is no evaluation tool that classifies occupations and jobs, not on the basis of gender but on the basis of some objective criteria. And it is most obvious that, within the texts of collective agreements, there are no provisions that would somehow facilitate the reconciliation of family responsibilities.”*

Here again, it is apparent that actions are limited to words, thoughts and “nice ideas”. Their discourse does not match their practice, since this particular trade union organisation has actually been paid to prepare a guide for eliminating linguistic sexism in government documents, while at the same time failing to promote the elimination of linguistic sexism in its own documents.

The representative of SO6 stated that he was satisfied and that he feels they are doing what they should as an organisation:

*“We always include, among our demands, the provision of more facilities in relation to maternity. So there is a sensitivity – I was looking for the word – not in order to flatter women, but to recognise the difficulties a woman faces because of her role as a mother, yes, primarily as a mother, and this recognition is very strong on the part of all of us.”*

The issue of maternity is put forward as a kind of alibi to justify that they have taken steps in the right direction and that they are promoting gender equality by prioritising the protection of maternity and the difficulties women face because of their role as mothers. Even on this issue, though, there is the fact that the female members of this organisation (public service) have paid maternity leave for fewer weeks than women in the private sector; thus, we effectively have a two-tier maternity leave benefit – 18 and 12 weeks. In other words, they have not done what they claim to have done or what they ought to have done.

Regarding cooperation between organisations, they admit that there is no synergy; they only work together in collective agreements, and there they state that they give priority to protecting motherhood and the difficulties women face because of their role as mothers. They also admit that they do not gender-disaggregate their demands and do not look separately at the needs and experiences of women and men.

For more general problems of their members, trade union organisations join forces and claim rights collectively; for the specific problems of their women members, however, they act autonomously, and in this way their voice is weakened.

Some organisations acknowledge that gender is invisible in collective agreements and identify the problem in the extremely conservative political and social system in Cyprus. They state that things are difficult to change and that, for this reason, they face difficulties also in dealing with sexual harassment. The issue of gender equality is not improving overall and is not included on the political agenda – not in the sense of declaratory rhetoric, but in the sense of specific policy actions.

A representative of SO7 stated:

*“Nothing different is done between men and women, but we have not entered into the process of looking at needs by sex; we put everyone in the same pot, unintentionally.”*

They thus admit that they do not deal with the specific problems of women and do not enter into such a process.

Some representatives of trade union organisations believe that they are justified in not having included gender issues in collective bargaining, since they call for laws to be respected and also issue circulars or notices stating that sexual harassment must be avoided because it attracts penalties. It is noted that, in respect of maternity protection, there is also relevant legislation, but when it was found that many employers did not implement it in practice, trade unions then campaigned and secured provisions within collective agreements.

*The representative of SO5 stated:*

*“We did not include it because we did not consider it to be a matter for collective bargaining, since we say that we respect the laws and we also send special circulars or notices on many occasions that sexual harassment must be avoided because it carries these penalties...”*

Circulars, however, do not solve problems when legislation is not effectively implemented in practice. Much more action is required – action which, however, we do not see any real interest in undertaking. There is no drive to move towards substantive equality; they are satisfied with the mere existence of legislation, i.e. with formal equality.

Trade union organisations have historically been led and managed by men. As a result, even today, management is identified with the male model and, of course, with gendered perceptions, values, habits, traditions, practices, symbols, beliefs and behavioural norms, which are expressed through their leadership style, language and communication, dress and “non-standard” behaviour. The phenomenon of sexual harassment, however, does not seem to be perceived as “non-standard” behaviour; on the contrary, from what is said, it is treated as something almost natural, when it is attributed to “human nature” or “men’s nature”.

A representative of SO1, when asked how gender is integrated into a decision they take, said:

*“...the most important thing is that, from the moment a process is in its infancy, you must have mechanisms to examine whether a decision may affect gender negatively or positively... To establish some things, time is needed – continuity. Ongoing effort is needed in order to achieve a change that is also a change in mentality.”*

The representative of SO3, feeling that he is doing what he can, stated:

*“I think that, at least as regards the organisation’s policies, efforts are being made to always take into account the gender dimension... On sexual harassment, not everyone had the right approach and the right mindset on equality issues, and I must say that, together with employer organisations, in the body that was created to certify companies with good practices, we have included equality issues as a precondition. We follow developments...”*

Reference is thus made to a need for continuous action in order to have results – before anything tangible has really begun.

The representatives of the employer organisations appear satisfied with the existing situation and feel that they are doing everything they can to promote gender equality.

In response to the question of how employer organisations integrate gender into collective bargaining, the representative of EO2 said:

“We do not integrate it, it does not exist... We do not do it through agreements, but we do implement it with our members... Employers now look at the result and the effort made by each person. They no longer distinguish whether someone is a man or a woman.”

The representative of EO1 stated:

*“Beyond the issues in agreements that concern women only because of their sex, such as maternity, change of working hours, transfers, etc., there is otherwise no differentiation, because the provisions concern both men and women, e.g. teleworking, reconciliation [of work and family life], stress at work, etc. It would be better if the gender dimension were integrated, because we need the gender perspective in our important decisions. And because there are many themes we have, from time to time, to discuss and take a position on, which have to do with protection, with facilities, with promoting women’s participation in the labour market. I think the results would be much better. Not that things are bad now, because there is already a fairly good level of sensitivity, but they would be much better.”*

The representative of EO1 also said:

*“We are trying to promote women and I would be particularly pleased to see a woman President and a woman Director General in our Organisation. At European level we have a woman President. We amended our statutes and founding document in 2016 and the amendments, among other things, emphasise equal participation of both sexes in our governing bodies. We... encourage, through the statutes – because we cannot impose it – the nomination of suitable individuals of both sexes. Each time I send a notice for the renewal of the Board, I state that women are particularly encouraged to participate.”*

The representative of EO2 stated that in the past, men, given prevailing patriarchal attitudes, were more privileged than women simply because they were men, whereas today:

*“It still exists, but to a lesser extent. Because we have now realised that women can contribute – and in many cases more than men. And this message has been received and is being implemented by large companies.”*

#### 5.3.4 Sexual Harassment

A particularly important factor in addressing sexual harassment, as highlighted in the literature, is the organizational culture of trade union and employer organizations. In practice, however, Cypriot trade union and employer organizations have not succeeded in tackling the phenomenon of sexual harassment, as they have remained at the level of rhetorical declarations without any collective or coordinated effort to address it. As will be shown later in this chapter,

the indifference of the organizations is further confirmed by the statements of their own representatives—who, importantly, were not lower-level staff but senior leadership figures.

Even though the value of women is acknowledged rhetorically, these acknowledgements simultaneously reveal a lack of practical interest in removing the barriers women face. At the same time, responsibility is often shifted to the “patriarchal system” that exists in Cypriot society, as if this system were something external, rather than something the organizations themselves also reproduce—either unintentionally or deliberately. Several representatives admitted that they implemented actions through externally funded programmes, but they did not continue these actions at the organizations’ own expense.

Sexual harassment in the workplace is not understood or interpreted uniformly across trade union organizations. Some confuse sexual harassment with flirtation; others attribute part of the responsibility to women due to “provocative” clothing; and some admit they have not dealt with the problem at all. Even those who believe they “engaged” with the issue do not maintain records of complaints, do not have established procedures for prevention and response, and did not ensure that sexual harassment was integrated into collective bargaining. Nevertheless, they all acknowledge that sexual harassment exists in workplaces and that it affects the overwhelming majority of working women.

Representatives of Women’s Sections<sup>137</sup> express a markedly different approach from their organizations’ leadership. They speak directly, without attempting to conceal structural problems, and in many cases their statements contradict those of their leadership. Several appeared disappointed and openly voiced their dissatisfaction on certain issues.

They admitted—explicitly or implicitly—that more could have been done; that Women’s Sections are not independent, neither financially nor in their decision-making; and that their decisions require approval from the leadership. No organization employs dedicated staff working exclusively on gender equality issues: such responsibilities are always combined with multiple unrelated duties.

Overall, there is clear inactivity within trade union organizations regarding the prevention and response to sexual harassment in the workplace—even starting with their own internal structures. They have not adopted internal Codes of Practice; most have not introduced formal procedures; and they do not keep complaint records or statistical data.

Given that trade union organizations are meant to protect all employees—women and men—it is legitimate to ask whom they actually protect in practice, and whether they ultimately function as another gendered, patriarchal institution that sidelines women’s issues or fails to engage in the systematic, coordinated work needed to resolve them.

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<sup>137</sup> Οι συνδικαλιστικές οργανώσεις στα πλαίσια λειτουργίας τους δημιουργούν διάφορες επιτροπές, όπως επιτροπή νεολαίας, γυναικών, καταναλωτών, συνταξιούχων κτλ. και οι ηγεσίες των οργανώσεων αποφασίζουν ποια άτομα απαρτίζουν αυτές τις επιτροπές.

Regarding their understanding of the phenomenon, the representatives acknowledged the existence of sexual harassment and provided various explanations for its causes.

The representative of SO5 acknowledged the phenomenon and attempted to outline the profile of perpetrators, while also leaving open the possibility that some women “want it”:

*“People who use such methods ... must have little sense. They have no dignity. These things are unacceptable to me. Now if there are some women who want it ...”*

The representative of SO6 stated:

*“Of course it exists. The fact that there are not many complaints does not mean it does not exist. I think there is a deficit of education, centred on a lack of respect for human dignity.”*

The representative of SO7, taking a more historical view, noted:

*“When this phenomenon started, it may have been because men wanted to impose their hegemony. Later, personal career-advancement motives entered. The way we grew up—the man must show his masculinity.”*

Some union representatives thus identify root causes, yet do not appear to feel their organization bears responsibility for addressing them.

The representative of SO3 explained:

*“There is an effort, and we guide our staff to always include such provisions—for example, to demand that there is a code on sexual harassment and that a mechanism is established—but it is not enough for us that a code simply exists.”*

Although they claim that a code alone is insufficient, in practice even this basic step remains at the level of recommendations rather than institutional obligation.

The representative of SO1 highlighted the gendered power relations inherent in sexual harassment:

*“The phenomenon of sexual harassment exists. It is part of a broader perception that women and men are not equal and, using the particular characteristics of gender, they build a layer of discrimination linked to sexual harassment. It has to do with how women are perceived as part of a wider social understanding. And of course, a significant part of sexual harassment in the workplace has to do with hierarchy and economic power.”*

The representative of SO6 pointed to confusion between flirtation and harassment, and to the non-acceptance of refusal:

*“In my view there is a deficit of education focused on a lack of respect for human dignity, and a mistaken notion of what flirting between two people is. (...) Not accepting a refusal is also a matter of education, because ego issues begin to act. (...) Exploiting the other person’s fear of job loss, fear of exposure, and the fact that society has not developed the culture to recognise that the woman is not to blame—this gives the perpetrator the comfort to proceed.”*

This confusion between flirtation and harassment appears in several organizations, including in some Women’s Sections, demonstrating a lack of understanding about what constitutes sexual harassment.

A particularly striking statement came from the representative of employer organization EO1:

*“There is first of all simple physical attraction, which is not sexual harassment until one party expresses desire and the other expresses discomfort. When sexual harassment comes from a woman towards a man, you must be very damaged to consider it harassment, according to social codes. Kazantzakis says that one of the greatest sins is for a woman to want you to make love to her and for you to refuse as a man. That’s why we don’t have many incidents from men. Human nature is very difficult to control; when you acquire power, if your character is not strong, you easily become a cannibal.”*

The two employer organizations did not coordinate their actions on sexual harassment, nor did they operate on a shared basis. One (EO1) engaged more substantially and in the right direction, but without sustained or structured follow-up:

*“The first code was created in Cyprus in 2004 by our organization, and by me personally. Sexual harassment concerns both men and women but mainly women. We will prepare a national-level memorandum stating that we adopt this code of practice and call on our members to incorporate it as part of their collective agreements.”*

The other employer organization (EO2) limited itself to informing employers of their legal obligations and offering seminars—while also expressing openly stereotypical views:

*“In an interview you can understand whether she wants the job or is trying to provoke you to get the position; for that, yes, her clothing matters depending on the job she seeks.”*

When asked whether incidents of sexual harassment occurred within their own organization, the representative of EO1 replied:

“Not that anything has been formally reported.”

Meaning that attention is placed only on official reporting—not on whether incidents occurred and how, if at all, they were handled.

The representative of the Women’s Section of SO4 expressed strong disappointment:

*“We do not participate in institutional bodies, so we do not participate in bodies that deal seriously with these ‘new’ issues, sexual harassment, equality. We go as observers, as decoration. It is a matter of priorities: in which organizations, in which sector, are equality issues priorities? They are treated as issues for women’s organizations only. These topics are not viewed with the seriousness required. We are not ready to accept complaints; we have no procedures; we will refer them to the official state mechanisms.”*

Regarding the deeper causes of sexual harassment, Women’s Section representatives referred to entrenched attitudes, patriarchal beliefs, erosion of ethical boundaries, objectification of women, and the influence of media—without offering critical reflection on their own organizations’ inaction.

The representative of WTSO1 stressed:

*“I think everything starts from stereotypical perceptions. It is a matter of understanding and managing gender equality. There is an association of women with their sexualised image, reflecting the devaluation of their role. Even if a woman rises in hierarchy, some still view her as an object of desire, devaluation, and belittlement.”*

The representative of WTSO2 added:

*“As I said, the law alone is not enough; the law often allows many to avoid responsibility. I hide behind the law and consider everything fine. (...) The sexual issue in our society is so vulgarised; moral barriers have fallen. From morning to night you are bombarded on social media with the objectification of women.”*

She continued, linking sexual harassment to patriarchal norms and desensitisation:

*“Patriarchal attitudes, lack of respect, the idea that nothing will cost you, no one will find out... There is too much ‘availability’ nowadays. Many issues have never been addressed or placed on the right basis.”*

Finally, the representative of WTSO4 added:

*“This will never stop. I believe it is also in human nature, and that’s why men can also be victims. It is also social and cultural. We never managed to see men and women simply as colleagues. (...) We also don’t do many things that should be done. If we encourage people and give them mechanisms to report, we will have even fewer incidents. Women may have minimal responsibility in very few cases, but not to a significant extent. It is overall behaviour that creates space. On the other hand, a woman who dares to come to work dressed up or wearing a mini-skirt should be able to defend herself.”*

These views ultimately naturalise the phenomenon (“it will never stop”, “it is in human nature”), while also acknowledging organizational inactivity—revealing a tension between recognising the problem and simultaneously resigning to its inevitability.

#### *5.3.4.1 Introduction of a Code of Practice*

An important tool for the prevention and handling of sexual harassment in the workplace is the introduction of a Code of Practice. Unfortunately, the introduction of such a code has not been a priority for trade union and employer organizations, as they either admit that they have done nothing or consider that they address the problem in other ways.

The leader of SO6 stated that they have not introduced a code and do not have procedures, but that when an incident of sexual harassment occurs, they handle it differently, through a friendly conversation, confidentially and not as a formal complaint:

“Because, in most cases, these matters must be handled in a different way, colleagues prefer that we handle them confidentially and not as a complaint. There are unfortunately no procedures in the public service. We do not keep a record of complaints; we mostly have a friendly conversation, where counselling support is needed.”

The representative of SO2 stated:

*“No, we do not have a sexual harassment code in our organization; we are trying now. But if such an incident arises, I believe that both the training we provided to our staff and the way the organization operates give us the possibility to handle it within the framework provided by the law. We want to create the code, but the idea must mature so that it is not booed. We have not introduced procedures, apart from some advice—no procedures that have gone through bodies. As trade unionists, the law is a tool to help me do something, but to do something I do not impose it; it has to become a matter of culture. We have reached a point as a society where we are law-obsessed; as trade unionists, we should not ‘want’ laws. The law covers up weaknesses.”*

Very few organizations that adopted a Code of Practice did so very late. Many organizations invoked, as an alibi, the problems caused by the economic crisis in Cyprus, forgetting that the

problem of sexual harassment is long-standing and not a phenomenon of just the last decade, and yet it was not resolved by trade union organizations and social partners more generally.

A representative of trade union organization SO3 said:

*“We do have a code; we drafted it 6–7 years ago. The code explains issues relating to sexual harassment, sets out the procedures that a person must follow if they are a victim of sexual harassment, explains to everyone the responsibilities they have and the provisions of the Law, and where a person can turn if they find themselves in such a situation... All cases that we have accepted as complaints are recorded, but I do not know if they are properly filed.”*

Sixteen years after the adoption of the relevant legislation, under which sexual harassment creates civil and criminal liabilities for perpetrators and employers, representatives of some trade union organizations admit that they did not push for the introduction of a code, some acknowledge that they did nothing, but say they have “no problem” looking at it. When they will “look at it” seems to be postponed for several decades, judging by their interest to date and given that it does not appear to be among their immediate priorities.

Other trade union leaders declare that they are not competent to deal with the problem, claiming that it is the “job” of the police. They therefore consider sexual harassment to be a personal problem that concerns only the victim, who must resolve it by filing a complaint with the police. In this way, they absolve themselves of responsibility as leaders of a trade union organization whose membership is predominantly female—although this majority is nowhere reflected, even minimally, in their leadership bodies. They admit that they have done nothing, but say they want the phenomenon to stop. They also stated that if they receive complaints, they have no procedures and will refer them to the competent authority, which, when it was pointed out that it also has no procedures, the representative replied that it is wrong that it does not—without exercising any self-criticism or criticism of his own organization for also having done nothing.

The representative of SO4 declared that his organization is not competent to deal with the phenomenon and such incidents. He confuses flirtation with sexual harassment and considers it impossible that such a problem does not exist:

*“In the public service there is a very big problem. The Republic of Cyprus should be a model employer. To be honest, we did not push for the introduction of a code, we did nothing, but we have no problem looking at it. I have nothing specific to say; I cannot intervene in matters investigated by the police. Basically, I am not the one who handles them, but we did nothing, although of course we want this unacceptable phenomenon to stop. We cannot rule out a man flirting with a woman... so as not to confuse things. If we receive a complaint, we will refer it to the competent authority. If the competent authority has also not introduced procedures, it is wrong that it has not; we will not go directly to court. In any case, the phenomenon exists everywhere; it cannot not exist.”*

It should be noted that this organization ought to have been exerting pressure on the competent authority for years to introduce procedures. The majority of its members are women, while men predominate in its leadership. Yet they did not see fit to promote prevention and response measures for a serious problem faced primarily by their women members. Another organization, again with a majority of women members, reported that it does not treat such cases as complaints, but handles them confidentially and, once the situation has calmed down, asks the victim what they want to do.

The representative of SO2, attempting to justify the situation, stated:

*“I believe that the issue of sexual harassment had first and foremost to be recognised as existing, and once we have a problem, to sit down and look at it in depth—what is happening and how the problem is addressed. At the point when we should have entered the stage of applied policies, the crisis came. It was not a priority because we were fighting for survival. No matter how much someone might say ‘What stopped you from promoting some things?’, the workers themselves... if we had done something then, they would have told us ‘We have no bread and you are bringing radishes for appetite.’ We do not keep a record of complaints and we do not have a support plan for victims. From the moment we receive a complaint, the union will become involved and then the Women’s Office. There is follow-up, how we protect the person, but not psychological support, although we may guide them and say it would be good to see a specialist—but not in a structured way.”*

Beyond the fact that they did nothing for the prevention and handling of sexual harassment in the workplace, they attempt to justify the unjustifiable by blaming the economic crisis and the reaction they would allegedly have faced from their members (by which they clearly mean male members) if, during a period of economic downturn, they had tried to promote such a “minor” issue compared to the “serious” ones. This serious problem was thus ranked as secondary, expected to wait until the economic crisis passed.

Only in 2018 did an effort begin to draft a Model Code for the Prevention and Handling of Sexual Harassment in the Private Sector, which would be incorporated into collective agreements. Even in this case, a number of weaknesses become apparent upon closer examination. Firstly, it is not a binding provision; its adoption is left to the goodwill of the employer, although they could have invoked Article 12 of the Law on Equal Treatment of Men and Women in Employment and Vocational Training and made it binding, at least by giving emphasis to the penalties provided by law. Secondly, no control mechanism has been foreseen to monitor the results of the Code’s introduction, so as to allow for monitoring, comparison and corrective measures.

In the public service, also only in 2018, a relevant Code of Practice was approved by the Council of Ministers and seminars have begun to disseminate and present it to employees in the public sector. It provides for the establishment or designation of Equality Committees or Equality Officers, but this code is likewise not binding, as it is neither a law nor a regulation.

For both codes it is too early for any evaluation, as they have not yet been applied in practice.

#### 5.3.4.2 Procedures for Handling Complaints

All representatives of Women's Sections admitted that there are no written procedures for handling complaints and that efforts are being made to adopt such procedures. The representatives of the Women's Sections of SO1 and SO2, however, consider that they are in a position to handle complaints.

The representative of **WSTUO2** described the complaint-handling process as follows:

*“Based on my experience, it is not only about vindictively going to file a complaint. I also try to focus on prevention... I try to help the woman who calls me to clarify some things for herself—for example, ‘Did you tell him to stop and he did not?’ or did you, at the first sign of suspicion, immediately have to report him? Because there is a first step, a second step, a third step before she takes that action. I can say that I make them think. It is human for some relationships of sympathy or antipathy to develop in the workplace... But we do not have written procedures. We intend to adopt a code, but I am waiting for it to emerge through the training school they will attend.”*

The representative of **WSTUO4** stated:

*“We are not ready at the moment to accept a complaint; we have no procedures. We will refer them to the official state bodies.”*

The representative of **WSTUO1**, referring to the procedures, said:

*“Within the union itself, a circular had been sent in the past which, apart from the dress code, informed members that such actions cannot be accepted and that the movement would be very strict in cases of sexual harassment. We provide training very often through the trade union school. Secondly, our organization's involvement in the Gender Equality in Employment and Vocational Training Committee was, I think, a decisive factor in our sensitisation to sexual harassment issues. Our involvement as an organization concerns problems that arise in workplaces, about which we are informed by our organizing secretaries who visit workplaces. First of all, I can say with great satisfaction that all the Organizing Secretaries have realised that they can turn to the Women's Section and ask for information on these issues and on how they can investigate a case. This is very positive, because a few years ago each Organizing Secretary was, in quotation marks, acting ‘on their own’. Now you see them calling and asking different things or referring their members directly to me so that we can handle their cases. I am*

*truly surprised at how very often we receive phone calls, including anonymous ones, on sexual harassment issues—it is unbelievable.”*

It is evident that through circulars, recommendations and training seminars, the problem of sexual harassment cannot be effectively addressed. Much more practical measures are needed, which they are still merely considering.

The representatives of the Women’s Sections of trade union organizations admit that the necessary steps for the prevention and handling of sexual harassment have not been taken. Some speak in line with their organization’s narrative, while others are more critical. None, however, explicitly placed responsibility on the organizations’ own inaction, which essentially amounted to organizing a few seminars and issuing circulars.

More generally, trade union organizations have accepted—either silently or with their consent—backtracking on gender equality issues, such as the 2012 reduction of the 3% rate from the maternity allowance during the crisis, demonstrating that they do not take into account the specific problems and issues that concern women exclusively because of their reproductive role. Non-unionised women workers in Cyprus, whether by their own choice or that of their employers, are paid only 72% of their salary during maternity leave instead of the 75% they received before the crisis, while suffering a significant loss of at least 28% of their wage, in contrast to those workers who are unionised.

#### *5.3.4.3 Procedures for Supporting Victims*

Beyond procedures for the prevention and handling of sexual harassment, there must also be procedures for supporting victims – not only in order to encourage them to report, but also so that they receive the support they will need after the complaint (psychological, legal, emotional, etc.). As we shall see, trade union organizations have not done this, not only internally, but neither have they promoted it through tripartite social dialogue.

As regards procedures for supporting victims, these are not a priority for the organizations, even though they recognise that victims need psychological, emotional and other forms of support. We therefore observe a highly theoretical approach by trade union organizations to problems in general and, more specifically, to the problem of sexual harassment. They do acknowledge it as a problem that must be addressed and eliminated, but they do not propose or promote any concrete practical measures.

The representative of SO6 stated that, in order to prevent such an incident from occurring in their own space:

*“Because, in most cases, these matters must be handled in a different way, colleagues prefer that we handle them confidentially and not as a complaint. However, when things calm down, I ask, ‘What do you want us to do?’ And it is not only from men towards women but also the other way around. We ask, ‘Do*

*you want us to proceed with an official complaint?’ In most cases they do not want an investigation. They simply want us to tell them what to do. And we tell them to keep their distance, to make it clear to the other person that the behaviour is unwelcome. It bothers me that two women ministers did nothing. Unfortunately, there are no procedures in the public service. We do not keep a record of complaints, there is no such file; we mostly have a friendly conversation, which requires counselling support.”*

The representative of trade union organization SO3 added:

*“Support is needed not only from us but also from the family environment. Overall, the action we take in such a case is multi-layered, as we are aware of the vulnerable position in which the person finds themselves.”*

An important tool, with practical measures, for promoting gender equality, as well as for preventing and tackling sexual harassment in the workplace for trade union and employer organizations, is the 2017 resolution of the European Parliament<sup>138</sup>, which, among other things, calls on the social partners to strengthen measures to raise public awareness of the rights of victims of sexual harassment and gender-based discrimination and to promote awareness of sexual harassment, as well as to support and encourage women to report such incidents immediately. It makes a specific recommendation concerning the existing official procedures for reporting incidents of sexual harassment in the workplace and the rights of victims, in order to ensure the application of the principle of dignity at work and the promotion of a zero-tolerance approach as the norm.

Unfortunately, despite recommendations, codes of practice and a plethora of resolutions, no particular mobilization for the sensitisation of workers has been observed, either by trade union organizations or by the government.

#### *5.3.4.4 Keeping a Record of Complaints*

A significant organizational gap is that, with the exception of one, the trade union organizations stated that they do not keep a record of complaints and have no plan for supporting victims, even though trade unions and other specialised organizations are described in various EU documents as providers of legal advice and other forms of support to victims.

The representative of SO2, trying to justify the situation, stated:

*“We do not keep a record of complaints and we do not have a support plan for victims. From the moment we receive the complaint, the union will deal with it*

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<sup>138</sup> Ψήφισμα του Ευρωπαϊκού Κοινοβουλίου της 26ης Οκτωβρίου 2017 σχετικά με την καταπολέμηση της σεξουαλικής παρενόχλησης και κακοποίησης στην ΕΕ (2017/2897(RSP)), [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/RC-8-2017-0576\\_EL.html?redirect](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/RC-8-2017-0576_EL.html?redirect).

*and then the Women's Office. There is follow-up as to how we protect the person, but not psychological support, although we may guide them and say it would be good to see a specialist – but not in a structured way.”*

The keeping of gender-disaggregated statistical data does not appear to be a requirement or a priority for trade union organizations, as it is left to the discretion of their trade union officials whether they will keep and submit such data or not.

The representative of WTSO2 stated:

*“I try to keep them. A circular was sent to all colleagues that, when a complaint comes in concerning a breach of legislation on equality, they should inform the office and fill in a special form. They do not do it systematically; we try to keep some data but not everyone complies. Many times it may simply be a piece of information, that is, someone called just to ask; our particularity is that we are not only in the office, taking a phone call and arranging an appointment – we are also in the workplace itself. There they may not have the form to fill in the details, or they may give the answer directly, or call me to get an answer and pass it on – but it is not so systematic. In general, however, there is a culture, for our members, of so many thousands of women and so many men. We are obliged by the Registrar of Trade Unions to submit every year the data on the increase or decrease in our membership. And for positions, hierarchy, how many women, etc. We are obliged, if a congress took place, if the composition of bodies has changed, etc. There is the Trade Unions Law.”*

By contrast, the representative of SO1 stated:

*“As regards our member enterprises, I have no picture of whether they are managed by men or women – I do not have it.”*

Ultimately, is keeping gender-disaggregated statistics really such a difficult undertaking, or does this simply demonstrate indifference to the importance of this action?

Keeping gender-disaggregated statistics is considered an important part of efforts to promote gender equality, as it provides the opportunity to monitor developments and, where there is the will, to introduce corrective measures. Consequently, there does not appear to be such political will or interest in monitoring and checking the existing situation, even numerically/quantitatively, so that qualitative changes might follow.

Unfortunately, we see a very superficial handling of the problem and of the consequences of sexual harassment by organizations that should have resolved this issue long ago.

## 5.4 Creation of Symbols

### 5.4.1 Written and Oral Discourse

As we saw in the literature, the use of language plays an important role and encompasses separation and differentiation, as well as power, and all social practices are not merely mediated by language but are constituted through language. Nevertheless, many trade union organizations do not consider that language has any impact on gender equality.

The written and oral discourse of the organizations contains linguistic sexism, as the feminine gender is rendered invisible in most cases. The organizations do not believe that linguistic sexism has any particular significance or contribution to the reproduction of stereotypes and the devaluation of women.

A leading member of trade union organization SO1 characteristically stated:

*“To be honest, we do not pay particular attention to the use of language. I believe that this in itself cannot solve problems; it is not what will make the difference. But it is a matter of proper education. We do not pay as much attention to it as we should, but again, quite frankly, I say that this alone will not change things for us.”*

All organizations, in their written discourse – on websites, in announcements, speeches, statutes, press material, etc. – consistently use the masculine gender, implicitly including the feminine. There is also a strong political tone, as some organizations agree with government policy while others are in opposition.

SO2 criticises the government and what it calls its anti-labour austerity memorandum, which seriously affected the limited progress previously made in the area of women and employment and in gender equality between men and women. It uses neutral references, such as in relation to the minimum wage, without noting that the minimum wage mainly covers “female-dominated” occupations and therefore affects women more. It calls on the state to pay off its “debt” to women by promoting gender equality through various programmes, including reconciliation of family and work, without any reference to sexual harassment and certainly placing responsibility on “others” deemed to be at fault, without any critique of its own responsibilities.

SO6 – one of the organizations with an overwhelming majority of women members – in its written language refers to facilities for breastfeeding and care of the newborn for mothers, thereby equating women with their reproductive role and motherhood and reproducing stereotypes, without realising it, judging also from the interview they gave me.

The written discourse of employer organizations is clearly masculine and does not differ from that of trade unions. They clearly address (men), and there is no gender perspective in their texts. In their positions on health and safety at work, they do not include the phenomenon of harassment or sexual harassment, even though it is a problem that falls within these domains.

In their oral discourse, the feminine gender is also absent; they consider it to be “covered” by the use of the masculine, whereas the opposite is unthinkable for them.

The representative of SO1 characteristically stated:

*“As regards the use of language, we have learned and it is common practice to use the masculine gender everywhere. Conversely, if we were to use the feminine gender, men would be offended because it would allude to a different sexual orientation.”*

The representative of SO2 stated:

*“Again, to be honest, we do not pay particular attention to it. And this concerns all of us, even us as officials who are supposed to be more sensitised. I believe that, without claiming that this in itself can solve problems – and perhaps here I differ from other friends working on equality issues – I do not believe... it is not this that will make the difference. But it is a matter of proper education. We do not pay attention to it to the extent that we should, but again, very frankly, I say that this alone will not change things for us.”*

The representative of SO3, referring to the language of collective agreements, stated:

*“First of all, as regards the language of the texts, the feminine gender is completely invisible.”*

The representatives of the trade union organizations agree that they do not pay particular attention to the use of language and do not believe that this on its own will solve problems or make a difference. They do, however, consider it a matter of proper education and admit that they do not pay as much attention to it as they should, while again stressing that this alone will not change matters. In other words, they acknowledge that they must do many other things in order to achieve progress in promoting gender equality.

In general, their written discourse lacks a gender perspective; in some organizations there is no reference at all to the promotion of gender equality in their texts, not even among their objectives, and they use a “wooden”, highly formalised language. There is linguistic sexism in leadership speeches at their congresses, and many make no reference whatsoever to the achievement of gender equality.

### 5.4.2 Dress

External appearance is presented as an alibi for men – and for others – ignoring the fact that even what is deemed “provocative” is purely subjective and overlooking that the causes and factors which encourage and sustain such behaviours must be sought elsewhere, and in particular in the patriarchal organizational culture of institutions.

The representative of SO4 stated:

*“Generally, in my personal view, whether man or woman, a person should be decently dressed, with their jacket and, if they want, a tie. A woman should be made up, fine, to have a nice appearance but not be provocative. Look, we do not want a girl who is dressed like a nun or something. When I said ‘decent’, I meant not provocative in the sense of wearing a skirt up to here and then when she sits it rides right up and you say to yourself, ‘Did she come here to work, or...?’ Let’s be honest and fair, because someone could argue that a girl who comes properly dressed is, first of all, an ornament in her workplace, as long as she is not, as we said, provocative.”*

The representative of SO2 stated very earnestly:

*“We are a specific trade union organization with a specific background; the way our ideology and behaviour are expressed cannot differ from our sartorial choices. If you, for example, came to a discussion in extreme clothing – you understand what I mean... I would be wrong if I did not tell you that, from time to time, male colleagues, even if a female colleague wears something provocative, do not comment on it. Yes, they do comment. I have no taboos; what matters, however, is how we will be perceived and, let me tell you, this was something I myself had to balance. Unfortunately, society imposes certain codes. For example, I tried not to show through my clothing that I stood out in our environment. The way we dress, the way we behave, what we do – our life is not outside the life of every worker we represent. The people we represent want us to align our life with theirs; in this way they feel that you can understand their problems.”*

We can therefore see that the external appearance of employees – and especially of women – plays a role, as particular importance is attached to women’s clothing and it is equated with their sexuality.

On the other hand, the representative of SO3 stated:

*“In no case does the woman herself bear responsibility for the sexual harassment she suffers. It has nothing to do with clothing; no one has the right, even if the woman is naked. No one owns her body; only she does. The woman is often considered inferior to men in many matters. There is the belief that the woman is the weaker pole in the relationship between man and woman.”*

It also emerges from their views on the role of external appearance of their officials that this is something which concerns them; they believe it plays a role in the image formed of a person, regardless of their qualifications.

According to the representatives of the Women’s Sections, external appearance does play a role and therefore women must pay attention to it and adapt it to the circumstances. Responsibility is thus attributed to women according to the way they dress and their general behaviour.

A representative of WTSO2 stated:

*“I do not like vulgarisation, rudeness, obscenity – neither in men nor in women. That is, with men as well, many times, when they cross the line, it has the opposite effect. And with women. I like modesty, simplicity, decency. I do not consider these to be puritanism; I consider that at least, when you maintain serious, proper and equal distances, many other problems that arise are avoided. I am not saying that spontaneity and so on cannot exist, but there must be a distinction between what happens in a friendly environment and what happens in a professional environment. Depending on the case, you must also have the appropriate behaviour.”*

Agreeing that external appearance plays a significant role, the representative of WTSO4 added:

*“It happened that they promoted a girl to the Central Secretariat because she was very beautiful. However, when gradually she also showed that she had opinions on many issues, she ceased to be liked by the leadership – that is, by the General Secretary. This exists everywhere in society: a woman who is both beautiful and wants to dress more ‘sexy’, so to speak, has a very long road to travel to reach the point where a man will start.”*

## 5.5 Interactions

The present research shows that not all workers are supported; priority is given to more general labour issues. Workers are supported, often unintentionally, depending on their gender, the problem or issue at stake, the trade-union strength/power of those affected, and the number of workers impacted by a given problem in the labour market.

We therefore see that, while trade union organizations try to convince us that they do not marginalise equality issues, they nevertheless admit that they have done nothing in practice about the specific problems faced by their women members. Other organizations, as we saw above, acknowledge that the economic crisis relegated gender equality issues to second place, both within their own organizations and more broadly in society, while at the same time claiming that they have no ideological “hang-ups”, even on equality issues. What is missing, however, is any mechanism to coordinate these organizations; as a result, their work is piecemeal and superficial, and they themselves state that they need a coordinating body to coordinate them. Clearly, such a coordinating body will not be established by some external actor, but by the organizations themselves, if they have the political will to sit down and find ways to work in a coordinated and effective manner in the field of gender equality.

We also saw frequent reference to the fact that gender equality is lacking in all sectors of Cypriot society: in the family, in political and economic life, and in the workplace. Wherever power exists, oppression and exclusion dominate.

## 5.6 Internalisation

The dominant culture of the organizations is reproduced in their Women's Sections, as we saw above. Cooperation for collective action among the Women's Sections of the trade union organizations is absent, just as it is among the organizations themselves.

The representative of WTSO1 stated:

*“From time to time, yes, also through our participation in the National Machinery for Women's Rights and through the Committee on Gender Equality in Employment, where we participate...”*

They act sporadically and autonomously, outside the framework of their participation in tripartite committees (employers, trade unions and employer organizations) or other bodies. In other words, they follow in the footsteps of their trade union organizations.

A leading figure in employer organization EO2 believes that they are doing all they can, and that family responsibilities for mothers constitute an obstacle and therefore facilities must be provided to them, equating family responsibilities with women and not with parents. She considers that family responsibilities for mothers constitute a barrier for women/mothers and thus facilities must be provided.

*“We had created a kindergarten in the past. These things help. What we have done is to encourage large companies, also through the seminars we organize, to promote equality. That is what we do. We cannot do anything else beyond this. We make efforts to change certain attitudes and I think that to some extent we succeed. Here we are talking about attitudes that must change in both men and women. And you can see that, gradually, things are changing in families. The traditional model is changing. They have understood that if women are liberated, they can contribute more.”*

They believe that family responsibilities are a brake on women's professional careers. They agree that gender is socially constructed, that everything has to do with mentality and stereotypes that are internalised also by women, and they cite as an example the dominance of women in the home in relation to raising and educating children.

As regards women's role in trade union organizations, the majority believe that it is not what it should be and agree that trade union organizations constitute a microcosm of patriarchal Cypriot society, which reproduces gender stereotypes instead of combating them through its actions. They do not, however, mention anything about changing this situation; they seem to consider it inevitable and that they cannot do anything different.

The representative of WTSO1 stated very emphatically:

*“Unfortunately, the role of women in our trade union movement is not what it should be. If there were a possibility for there to be a male secretary of the women workers’ section, he could very well be a man – and I say this very openly, without wishing to be misunderstood. This situation, as you can understand, does not honour society, not to mention the trade union, because it is now a question of mentality. Our trade union organization is part of society, and we see this phenomenon replicated wherever we are. If the movement is to implement in practice what it says, it should strengthen its influence... When we say we are in favour of equality, when there is a section of women workers that promotes equality, at the critical moment it will become apparent to what extent we have cultivated it.”*

The representative of WTSO4 states, with disappointment:

*“Cypriot society, although changing, continues to be male-dominated and yes, it favours men. This happens everywhere – in employment matters, in politics and in families. The man is the ‘person’ and the woman is the one who will be at home doing the housework, and this gives priority to men...”*

As we also saw above, representatives of most trade union organizations acknowledge that there is a strong stereotypical perception which some organizations attempted to change, but did not succeed, and they conclude that trade unionism is essentially a male affair – essentially male-dominated.

However, the recognition of the impact of gendered organizations, particularly by the Women’s Sections of trade union organizations, gives a faint hope of possible change, provided they react and claim more within their own organizations. It is not enough to make demands of other bodies; these changes must first be implemented in their own organizations if they are to be more convincing in their demands.

## Chapter Sixth – Discussion of Findings

To interpret and understand the findings of this research, a critical feminist approach and gendered organizational theory are employed in relation to the culture of trade union and employer organizations – a culture which persists in excluding women from organizational power and leadership, despite their growing share in the Cypriot labour force and in trade union membership.

For many years, these organizations have expressed their concern about the lack of gender equality and have proclaimed that promoting it is one of their priorities. In practice, however, these declarations have not resulted in gender proportionality in their decision-making bodies, nor in resolving the gender-specific problems faced by women workers. This creates the paradox that trade union organizations do not differ at all from employer organizations in terms of their discourse or their actions for achieving gender equality.

Moreover, as we have seen, gender equality issues have their ups and downs: in periods of economic growth, we see some issues being promoted and resolved, while in times of economic recession, we see not only their marginalisation but also cuts. In this way, gender equality issues in employment are treated as a luxury, rather than as problems affecting over 50% of Cypriot society, as Malakasiótu (2015) notes.

With cultures of near-exclusive masculinity and traditional male leadership, as in the trade union organizations of Cyprus and beyond, we see hard-won gains being trimmed back or not further advanced; instead of progressing with more benefits for women, we regress, confirming Ledwith (2012).

Trade union and employer organizations in Cyprus constitute a microcosm of the patriarchal organization of Cypriot society, where, according to Stratigaki (1996), “men – in relation to women – enjoy more privileges, rights and access to power, both economically and ideologically, and this is reflected in their governance and organizational culture”.

### 6.1 Experiences of Women Victims

As we saw in the presentation of the findings, the organizational culture of trade union organizations did not allow them to address the problems faced by victims of sexual harassment before and after lodging a complaint, nor the consequences of reporting or refusing sexual harassment. There are victims who felt abandoned by their trade union organizations, without guidance either before or after reporting, and without any psychological or emotional support.

This reveals the superficial approach of trade union organizations to such a serious issue. It also shows that it is not enough to provide training seminars for their officials on legislation; they must also delve into its consequences and find ways to ensure that victims do not have to bear them.

In general, women victims' experiences are not very positive, as they feel that trade union organizations prioritise general labour issues and fail to focus on the specific problems that women face.

The results from the organizations that took part will now be presented, following Acker's (1990) theoretical framework.

## 6.2 Organizational Culture of Trade Union Organizations and Its Modes of Expression

As we saw in the previous chapter and in the literature, the organizational culture of trade union organizations includes, among other things, perceptions, values, habits, traditions, practices, symbols, beliefs and behavioural norms, expressed through their management style, language and communication, dress, "non-standard" behaviour and gendered attitudes (Rutherford, 2001; Zavlanos, 1999; INE GSEE, 2015).

### 6.2.1 Creation and Maintenance of Gendered Divisions<sup>139</sup>

The long-standing dominance of men in leadership positions in trade unions and more broadly in organizations has contributed to the identification of leadership with the male model and to the perception that successful, effective leadership is linked to a masculine stereotype of management. Trade union and employer organizations, therefore, have not rid themselves internally of discriminatory behaviours and practices in relation to women's participation in their governing bodies.

It is noteworthy that both victims who participated in this research and representatives of some trade union or employer organizations agreed that women allegedly provoke harassment themselves through their appearance or behaviour, or that in many cases they report "imaginary" incidents in order to take revenge on their supervisors or colleagues and gain financial benefits.

There is a lack of understanding that it is not easy for women victims to report sexual harassment and that victims are hesitant to lodge complaints because they fear revictimisation – whether by their employer, by colleagues or even by their own family. This is consistent with the pan-European survey of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA, 2014), which notes that fear of dismissal and possible long-term unemployment, as well as lack of knowledge about their legal rights, are disincentives for victims to file complaints, with the result that only about 10–20% of victims report incidents.

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<sup>139</sup> Αφορά «στην παραγωγή των έμφυλων διαιρέσεων», συμπεριλαμβανομένης της έμφυλης σχηματοποίησης των θέσεων εργασίας, των μισθών και των ιεραρχιών, της δύναμης και της υποταγής» και τις πρακτικές γύρω από την αναπαραγωγή και την αντίσταση.

The research also shows that women victims themselves internalise gender roles, unconsciously reproducing them and aligning themselves with the systems of social control of a male-dominated society with power relations that include the element of gender discrimination.

It is also apparent that some trade union organizations seem unaware that formal equality – the adoption of legislation – is only one positive step, and that substantive equality is something different: it concerns the practical implementation of these laws and must be accompanied by monitoring and control.

The confused conflation of flirting with sexual harassment, without recognising that the critical difference lies in the “unwanted” character of an act, and the fact that many participants believe that this phenomenon cannot disappear because it is part of human nature, are also evident. Does this, ultimately, lead to organizations absolving themselves of their own responsibilities?

From the data of this research and from my own experience as a trade unionist for 26 years and as an activist, I have met women who believe that men are entitled to express their sexuality, whereas women are not. In this way, traditional gender roles idealise gender-based violence, such as sexual harassment, as acceptable, confirming MacKinnon (1992).

We have therefore seen that trade union organizations have failed to handle sexual harassment in the workplace effectively. The reasons seem to be their patriarchal, masculine and male-dominated culture, the practical marginalisation of gender equality issues and the organizational culture of their own structures.

The explanations given by trade union and employer organizations for women’s inferior position in their own decision-making bodies and more broadly in Cypriot society included motherhood, family responsibilities and women’s reluctance to put themselves forward. They invoked various actions and pieces of legislation to justify the exclusion of women and the long-standing nature of the problems they face.

What is striking is that even organizations which implemented extensive structural reforms to encourage gender equality – and which, for example, adopted quotas – did not, in practice, achieve gender proportionality in official positions or solve long-standing problems such as sexual harassment. We therefore see that the data from this research are in line with Ledwith (2012), who refers to women’s secondary position in trade union organizations and the fact that this continues despite years of expressed concern about the lack of gender equality, due to a masculine, patriarchal organizational culture.

It is disheartening that, although progress has been made and gender equality issues are at least theoretically among their priorities and in their rhetoric, the overall assessment to date can be considered a failure. All trade union organizations are represented by a very small number of women in their decision-making bodies at all levels – especially in senior and top-level positions – and they have failed to resolve long-standing gender issues (sexual harassment, the glass ceiling, unequal pay, work–family reconciliation, etc.).

Trade union and employer organizations in Cyprus have not managed to adopt or promote comprehensive, accessible and effective policies focusing on the prevention of sexual harassment, on best practices and corrective measures, and on the promotion of an accessible and effective complaint-handling procedure.

In this way, it is demonstrated that they are male-dominated and patriarchal organizations whose engagement with these problems is superficial, and therefore they have failed to resolve them. By contrast, when men in certain sectors faced problems, they proceeded with strikes and social dialogue to resolve them. No strike has ever been organised to support gender-specific issues.

This raises the question: whose labour rights are ultimately being promoted, and why are the problems faced almost exclusively by women not promoted in the same way? The answer appears to lie in the enduring power of a culture of hegemonic masculinity and the cultural barriers that lead to stagnation or steps backwards – or to “one step forward and two steps back”, or “two steps forward and one step back”, as Ledwith (2012) also notes.

### 6.2.2 Creation of symbols, images and forms of consciousness that explain and justify gender discrimination <sup>140</sup>

The construction of symbols and images that explain, express, reinforce or sometimes oppose equality – such as language, dress, interactions between women and men, but also between people of the same sex – encompasses sexism and sexual harassment and shapes women’s career paths as well as their experiences of exploitation in the workplace. As Acker (1992) notes, the gendered structures of the organisation and the demands for behaviours and attitudes deemed appropriate to one’s gender are concealed within organisational procedures and decisions which falsely appear to have nothing to do with gender.

The research shows that linguistic sexism in their written and spoken discourse is not accidental; nor are the “high” expectations regarding women’s dress – which they want in the workplace to be neither provocative nor too modest – or the exclusion or minimal presence of women in their decision-making bodies. All these are indicative of their patriarchal, masculine organisational culture.

In addition, specific practices of gendering trade union organisations include familiar and accepted forms of dress, behaviour, language, expressions, actions and interests which are culturally available, normatively or stereotypically linked to one gender or the other. For example, not only the small number of female trade-union officials who visit workplaces, but

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<sup>140</sup> Αυτά περιλαμβάνουν τη γλώσσα, την ιδεολογία, τη δημοφιλή και υψηλή κουλτούρα, την ενδυμασία, τον Τύπο και την τηλεόραση. Ακόμα και αν αυτή η δημιουργία δεν είναι προφανής, οι περισσότεροι οργανισμοί αναπαράγουν το φύλο, καθορίζοντας την επιτυχία με όρους ανδρικών αξιών.

also the gendered occupational segregation within their own structures – male trade unionists in construction and woodworking, heavy industry and military camps, and female trade unionists in services, care sectors, etc. In this way, certain practices are considered suitable only for men or only for women, thereby ensuring the continuation of gendered institutions.

Another striking fact which reveals the highly androcentric culture of trade union organisations is the complete dependence of all Women's Sections on their organisations' leaderships. These sections are "appointed" by, and accountable to, male-dominated leaderships which must approve every decision on their activities, and whose general line the actions and discourse of the Women's Sections must follow. Financially, these sections are entirely dependent on the trade union organisations, and only one organisation employs paid staff (one person) to operate such a section – and even in that case, the person is burdened with many additional duties.

The mere existence of Women's Committees and Women's Sections, without corresponding structures for men, inadvertently signals an admission that their engagement with gender-equality issues is insufficient, superficial and temporary. By contrast, when it comes to men's problems, they judge that they will act immediately and resolve them, making the creation of sections or committees for men unnecessary.

Furthermore, although gender equality issues and related legislation concern both men and women, the Women's Sections, in the vast majority of trade union organisations, are composed exclusively of women.

It should also be noted that all the Women's Sections which participated in this research receive an annual grant from the National Machinery for Women's Rights. Characteristic is the statement by one President of a Women's Section who said that "if it were possible, they would appoint a man to chair these sections" in order to keep women marginalised.

This full dependence extends to the point where the leadership approves the Sections' activities and even their speakers. To add a personal experience of my own, I clearly recall the General Secretary of the organisation where I was a senior official asking me to organise a fashion show to attract more women to an event. My answer was, of course, negative; I told him that such an activity demeans women and reproduces stereotypical gender roles which we supposedly try to overturn. I also argued that Women's Sections should involve men and be renamed Equality Sections.

Women's Sections in trade union organisations are therefore neither free nor independent to decide and act within the framework of their organisations' policies or to influence those policies. The male-centred trade union environment and the socially constructed image of gender roles do not allow for the promotion of women or for the resolution of gendered problems; these are displayed simply as "window dressing", while priority is given to problems affecting mainly male members. Achieving higher participation of women in the governing bodies of trade union organisations presupposes at least a fair sharing of responsibilities between men and women in public and private life, changes in gendered mentalities, behaviours

and everyday practices, measures to strengthen women's position in decision-making centres, and the development of training activities and coordinated policies on gender-specific problems, as discussed in the past by Pilavaki (2008) and Walby (1990).

### 6.2.3 Interactions between individuals that establish dominance and subordination

In Cyprus, as in other European countries, the ratio of men's to women's participation in bodies reverses in favour of men as we move up the hierarchy, where the "glass ceiling" phenomenon is observed. It should be noted that trade union organisations demand the removal of the glass ceiling and of gender-based occupational segregation (men as presidents and general secretaries and women as secretaries or ordinary members), while at the same time these phenomena exist within their own organisations. If they do not manage to combat the glass ceiling and gender-based occupational segregation in their own structures, it becomes even more difficult to combat them in other settings.

As regards sexual harassment, as we have already seen, it is a serious problem that mainly affects women in the workplace, and despite its long-standing nature it has not been effectively addressed or eliminated. Views that place part of the blame on women confirm the literature which states that male violence against women is part of a structural system of patriarchal values and of a broader patriarchal system in which men create and maintain strategies to control all spheres of society, leaving women in a vulnerable position. This finding is directly linked to the European Women's Lobby (2010) and Walby (1990).

It was also found that there are organisations which believe that sexual harassment does not exist and that, if it does, it is caused by "provocative" women. Although they admit that under no circumstances do men have the right to engage in sexual harassment, their patriarchal perceptions lead them to statements such as that male sexual harassment is simply human nature, mere physical attraction, etc. Particularly disturbing was the statement by one leader that it is a sin for a man to be sexually harassed and not succumb.

With regard to women's participation in the decision-making bodies of trade union organisations, the situation is inversely proportional to the number of female members. Even in unions where the majority of workers are women, women's participation is negligible to utterly disappointing. Men hold most of the most powerful positions and most women are subordinate to men in the formal power structure. By adopting distinct gendered social practices – with women mainly as ordinary members and, in some cases, in positions on lower-level decision-making bodies – they restrict women's advancement and thereby legitimise gendered patterns, norms and shared cultural rules.

Furthermore, they referred to problems allegedly caused by women to men and linked men's "nature" to the power they hold at work and to their sexuality. They also spoke of stereotypical perceptions and the identification of women with men's pathological sexuality, with references to "objects of desire" and "sick instincts".

The fact that, only after 16 years of legislative protection against sexual harassment, they finally thought to include prevention and response measures in collective agreements – and even then only allowing employers to *voluntarily* incorporate a Code (2003–2019) – demonstrates their speed and level of interest in solving problems that have plagued women workers for decades. In their own organisations, most of them, apart from one, have not adopted a code and have decided to introduce it in other workplaces, but without any provision for monitoring its impact; thus it will remain theoretical.

No organisation keeps a record of complaints or statistical data, and they do not provide support to victims, nor have they requested or demanded the creation of a structure for psychological or other support for victims of sexual harassment. There is no specialisation in dealing with such cases and they have not practically considered a complaint-handling procedure. They have no internal procedures within their organisations, which shows that they do not treat the issue with the necessary seriousness and practical concern. Keeping records would allow them to monitor the evolution of complaints, their outcomes and, in this way, coordinate themselves to respond more effectively to sexual harassment.

Even the laws which all research participants invoked to stress that progress has been made were adopted in the absence – or with the minimal presence – of women. Women’s skills and experiences are perceived through the male gaze and not the female one; therefore, they are neither understood nor addressed. It is not enough, therefore, that women are the subject or target of many laws; their own voices and experiences must also be heard on the issues that concern them.

The “neutral” word *discrimination* in legal language and in its gendered logic aligns with the linguistic constructs of men (Finley, 1989). The Council of Europe (2004) itself recognises that de jure equality does not automatically lead to de facto equality. It is no coincidence that the European Parliament, only in 2017, was forced to issue a new resolution – despite the existence of Directive 2006/54 – on combating sexual harassment in the European Union, after it became evident that the phenomenon existed even within the EU institutions themselves. In other words, male MEPs, representatives of the Member States who vote on directives, seem to have decided that these rules do not concern or bind them, but only others, thus discriminating against women and hindering their full advancement. The same appears to be happening in Cyprus.

#### 6.2.4 Internalisation of impacts by individuals<sup>141</sup>

The internalisation of the impacts of gendered organisations by individuals who can and should change their behaviour is evident. Even a person who, by virtue of their position, is supposed to

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<sup>141</sup> Εσωτερίκευση των επιπτώσεων των έμφυλων οργανισμών από το ίδιο το άτομο, το οποίο όμως μπορεί και να αλλάξει τη συμπεριφορά του

guide colleagues on how to act in the event of a complaint from a member stated that women do not need to report sexual harassment from the very first incident. At the same time, they placed responsibility on women, claiming that women “give men rope” when they support them in their personal problems. In other words, they attribute part of the blame to female victims, since even a human act of solidarity toward a colleague can be interpreted as provocation.

All organisations spoke about changing culture, without referring to their own organisational culture.

Failure to recognise the causes of problems – such as the language used, which makes the feminine gender, i.e. women, invisible – prevents their resolution. Given that, according to the literature, the gendered framework of organisational structures includes written discourse, speech and other symbolic phenomena, it becomes clear that this is how women and their problems are marginalised: behind a word another subject is hidden and the appearance of neutrality or impersonality conceals the gendered subject.

Even younger male officials, when they take the helm of power, adapt practices inherited from their predecessors only minimally and reproduce gender inequalities, as they do not dare to take a step forward and break with the status quo. For example, a large trade union organisation in the sample of this research managed at its last congress to elect many young people, including the new General Secretary, who had engaged with gender equality issues. Unfortunately, two years after assuming power, he has not made any radical changes; he simply follows what was already in place. The biggest problem, however, is that they legitimise this situation and continue to create and tolerate conditions in which men have privileges and advantages, while women are in an inferior and subordinate position, as Martin (2001, 2004) notes.

All organizations referred to the organisation of seminars on sexual harassment as an alibi to prove that they are taking action. For such a long-standing problem, however, the lack of effective response should have prompted them to reflect and intensify their efforts to ensure the application of the principle of dignity at work and the promotion of a zero-tolerance approach as the rule.

The policies, practices and structures of trade union and employer organisations play a very important role in shaping workers’ living conditions and, in this way, often institutionalise the maintenance and reproduction of gender inequalities. The more male-dominated these organisations are, the more society is marked by this male bias, which is reflected in its policies and structures and often unintentionally reproduces gender inequality (Scott, 1999).

There are no targeted policy interventions that confront entrenched practices and mentalities of gender discrimination and inequality. The views of the women victims who took part in this research show that they expect more from their trade union organisations on many issues that concern them, including sexual harassment. They expect support and guidance which they did not find in the male-dominated trade union environment.

Although organisational culture is the “personality” of an organisation and changes over time as people in the hierarchy and the members change, it is important to stress that culture is learned, not inherited; it does not derive from people’s genes. A critical feminist analysis of this organisational culture shows that organisations such as trade union and employer organisations were created by men and are based on male experiences and stereotypical male traits, and they continue to be male-dominated. This constitutes the greatest obstacle for women, since their patriarchal structures support and reinforce a male-dominated system that marginalises women and their problems. It is equally important, however, to note that these structures can change if the political will exists, since each organisation, by itself, creates power (Hofstede, 1980; Shakeshaft, 1989; Martin, 2004).

**Table 2** below summarises the factors that hinder the prevention and response to sexual harassment and, more broadly, the promotion of gender equality in Cyprus and confirms Acker’s (1992) theory of the four processes through which organisations become gendered.

**Table 2 – Factors that hinder the prevention and handling of sexual harassment and the promotion of gender equality in the workplace**

<b>Internal</b>	<b>External</b>	<b>Organisational</b>
<b>Patriarchal structures producing gendered divisions</b>	Patriarchal society, gendered and outdated social practices, gendered structuring of hierarchies, power and subordination, marginalisation of gender-equality issues, rhetorical declarations, outdated perceptions of gender roles, gendered horizontal and vertical occupational segregation, glass ceiling <sup>146</sup> , sticky floor <sup>147</sup> and glass cliff <sup>148</sup> , and gendered practices around reproduction.	Patriarchal organisation of structures through the governing style and the long-standing dominance of men in their leadership; dominance of gendered perceptions; full dependence of women’s sections; organisational procedures and modes of communication; and gendered, outdated practices.
<b>Creation of symbols</b>	Gendered values and symbols.	Traditional masculine cultures, elevation of “male values”, language, dress code.
<b>Interactions between individuals which establish domination and subordination and create alliances and exclusions</b>	Gendered perceptions, habits, traditions, practices, beliefs and patterns of behaviour.	Justification of gendered divisions; gendered perceptions, habits, traditions, practices, beliefs and patterns of behaviour; creation, maintenance and development of strategies which exclude/marginalise women.
<b>Internalisation of stereotypical perceptions by – their members</b>		The importance attached to dress and to “non-conforming” behaviour; linguistic sexism through the systematic use of the masculine gender in spoken and written language in a way that renders the feminine gender invisible.

Summarising, within the framework of a critical feminist approach and gendered organisational theory, the existence and handling of the phenomenon of sexual harassment in Cyprus appears to be explained by the outdated patriarchal structures and behaviours of Cypriot trade union and employers' organisations. These lead to a failure to understand the problem, which is perceived as "natural", and to a reluctance to engage in its practical eradication.

This seems to apply particularly clearly in the case of trade unions which, instead of supporting the problems faced by their women members and placing them among their priorities, marginalise those problems and, at the same time, marginalise women members themselves.

Moreover, it is evident from the presentation of the findings that the discourse and perceptions of employers' and trade union organisations hardly differ at all; they express almost identical views, opinions and positions.

## Chapter Seven Conclusions

By linking feminist theory with gendered organisational culture, the present research demonstrates that the culture of trade union and employers' organisations in Cyprus—as shaped and influenced by top management/leadership—does not include, among its priorities, either the prevention and combatting of sexual harassment or, consequently, the promotion of gender equality in the workplace. Cypriot patriarchal culture reinforces a male-dominated system in which, in practice, gender-equality issues are sidelined.

The combination of critical feminist analysis and the theory of gendered organisational culture in this study serves as an analytical lens to trace and highlight the practices and procedures actually followed by the participating organisations within their own structures. These practices and procedures appear to constitute an obstacle to any successful, targeted effort with tangible results in promoting gender equality in employment, including the fight against sexual harassment.

As already mentioned, this study constitutes the first in-depth feminist examination of the gendered organisational culture of Cypriot trade union and employers' organisations, analysing their structures as organisations, in relation to their policies and actions to promote gender equality in the workplace, with particular emphasis on the prevention and handling of sexual harassment at work. At the same time, it explores the gap between their declarations and their actual practices.

A critical feminist analysis is applied to the policies of trade union and employers' organisations as these emerge through the phenomenon of sexual harassment under investigation, in the hope that erroneous practices and procedures will be more deeply analysed and brought to light.

At the same time, the study records the lived experiences of women themselves, in relation both to organisational gaps in support and their marginalisation, and to the weaknesses of the trade unions representing them. Their experiences show that the voices of women who dare to lodge complaints are weakened by institutional gaps.

This study examined the problem of sexual harassment from the perspective of women victims of sexual harassment and from the perspective of trade union and employers' organisations as institutions/organisations that, among other things, are mandated to promote gender equality in employment, given that women make up 51% of the population of Cyprus and a significant proportion of their membership—in some cases, the overwhelming majority.

For the first time, the organisational culture of these organisations is examined as that of institutions, through a critical feminist lens, and the paradox is identified that they do not differ at all from other institutions which are not mandated to protect workers or promote equality, nor even from employers' organisations themselves. The paradoxical finding of this research is that Cypriot trade union and employers' organisations—although they work for different and often opposing groups (employers vs employees)—frequently share a common voice on gender issues, characterised by

formal and standardised proclamations of gender equality, without substantive structures that genuinely support women who are victimised and subjected to gender-based discrimination by these very organisations.

This is a natural consequence of their masculine and patriarchal culture. This seems to be particularly true of trade unions which, instead of practically supporting women and gender equality in the workplace, leave them on the margins.

With the completion of this study, it becomes clear that the culture of trade union and employers' organisations is shaped by internal, external and organisational factors, as illustrated in Table 2.

Analysed through a feminist lens, the internal factors concern their patriarchal structures and the creation of gendered divisions. As in any organisation/institution, there are interactions among those who hold power, who establish dominance and subordination, but also alliances and exclusions. In this case, the exclusions concern women. A significant factor is also the internalisation of stereotypical perceptions by members and by women themselves.

The creation of symbols—such as logos, stamps, images on office walls and statues in outdoor spaces—also subconsciously constructs a culture of superiority for men and subordination for women.

At the same time, the external factors relate to the patriarchal Cypriot society with its prevailing, outdated gendered social practices. In particular, there is a strong gendered structuring of hierarchies: women are under-represented at all decision-making centres, with extremely low percentages of women ministers, MPs, municipal and community councillors, as well as directors in the public and private sectors. The way in which women's sections are created and function is indicative of their masculine culture, reflecting these external factors without any differentiation—except that trade unions are explicitly mandated to promote gender equality.

The culture of marginalising gender-equality issues is generalised and concerns both the private and the public sector. It is so pervasive that it appears, in the eyes of citizens, as the dominant and “normal” culture.

Achieving increased participation of women in the governing bodies of trade union organisations presupposes at least a fair distribution of responsibilities between men and women in public and private life, changes in gendered attitudes, behaviours and everyday practices, measures to strengthen women's position in decision-making centres, and the development of training and educational activities on related issues.

Political declarations about gender equality are made—especially at commemorative events by politicians, trade unionists and others—while, at the same time, outdated perceptions of gender roles continue to dominate families, businesses and political parties.

Trade unions and employers' organisations turn a blind eye to severe phenomena of sexual harassment, gendered horizontal and vertical occupational segregation, the glass ceiling, the sticky floor and the glass cliff.

Yet, the statements of their representatives show that more could have been done. The promotion of a code of prevention and handling of sexual harassment in enterprises has never been set as a demand in collective bargaining. Even the trade unions themselves, in their capacity as employers, have neither adopted nor implemented in their own structures provisions of the legislation on preventive and remedial measures, including procedures for dealing with complaints.

Trade unions can, must and are obliged to play a key role in the prevention and elimination of sexual harassment in the workplace, through the development and implementation of policies and procedures, via their information and training services and through the process of collective bargaining. They can also support, inform, advise and represent their worker-members who have experienced sexual harassment or who are perpetrators, since they are in a privileged and crucial position to do so: they know both the victim and the perpetrator and can support the victim of discrimination as much as possible.

In addition, the Cypriot Parliament consistently presents the lowest percentages of women MPs and is composed mainly of men who discuss and decide on issues such as reproduction, abortion, surrogacy, sexual harassment, equal pay, protection of motherhood and many others—supposedly after first hearing the social partners, who also are male-dominated, via their Women’s Offices and women’s organisations that are steered by political parties and their trade unions.

This is the dominant culture that is transferred to—or adopted as “normal” within—the organisations under examination, which neither dare nor wish to become drivers of change and promoters of gender equality.

Finally, as regards organisational factors, analysed in conjunction with feminist theory, we observe a patriarchal organisation of their structures through managerial style and the long-standing dominance of men in leadership.

Gendered perceptions prevail, with strong gendered occupational segregation even within their own structures: women secretaries, telephone operators and professional staff working as trade unionists in sectors dominated by women, such as services, commerce, care and education. There is complete dependence of women’s sections, to the extent that they ultimately lose their *raison d’être*, since they must follow the instructions and policies of their organisations and have no freedom of action.

Overall, the organisational procedures of trade union and employers’ organisations and their modes of communication contain outdated gendered practices. Traditional masculine cultures and the elevation of “male values” dominate these organisations; and the minimal presence of women in their hierarchies is taken as sufficient proof that equality has been achieved.

The justification of gendered divisions and gendered perceptions, habits, traditions, practices, beliefs and behavioural norms is shifted onto women who “do not claim”, onto reconciliation problems that are presented as affecting only women, without reflection on their own longstanding responsibilities for resolving the very problems they claim women face.

It is evident that they create, maintain and develop strategies that exclude or marginalise women. As in political life, men are considered those who deserve and fit certain positions, while women are allocated other, lower-level positions which powerful men deem suitable for them.

When an organisation has not created the conditions for women's access to the leadership pyramid, it becomes much harder for an individual woman, on her own, to take the initiative to seek a leadership position and "enter the system". It is here that the superficial nature of the approach becomes visible.

The importance attached to women's dress and to "non-provocative" clothing is often used to justify incidents of sexual harassment, on the grounds that these women have deviated from the "proper" behaviour appropriate to their gender.

Linguistic sexism through the use of the masculine gender dominates both their spoken and written discourse, not only rendering women invisible but also based on the belief that this has no impact and does not affect the promotion of gender equality.

The devaluation of women's work, the objectification of the female body, the absence of women from decision-making bodies, the "silencing" or steering of women's voices and actions, and, above all, the patriarchal culture prevailing in institutions and organisations that are supposed to promote gender equality, do not help resolve the problems that place women in a disadvantaged position and prevent the elimination of sexual harassment.

There is a highly theoretical approach by trade unions to the problem of sexual harassment in particular. They recognise it as a problem that must be confronted and eradicated, yet they propose or promote no concrete measures.

A significant organisational gap is that all trade union organisations, apart from one, stated that they do not keep a record of complaints, even though trade unions and other specialised organisations are described in various EU documents as providers of legal advice and other support to victims.

External appearance is presented as an alibi for men, ignoring the fact that the causes and factors that encourage and sustain such behaviours must be sought elsewhere, specifically in the patriarchal organisational culture of their organisations.

In the history of trade unions over at least the last thirty years, no strike has ever been organised to support gender-related problems, although they themselves admit that there are serious problems with the practical implementation of key laws, such as those on maternity protection, equal pay for work of equal value, and sexual harassment. Their actions remain confined to words, thoughts and fine ideas.

The dominant organisational culture developed within trade union and employers' organisations is androcentric, as is, to a significant extent, the decision-making process and the setting of priorities regarding measures and policies designed internally and applied both inside the organisations and in society more broadly. Like other institutions (e.g. political parties), they have been structured and operate on the basis of male experience and a male allocation and management of time.

## 7.1 Policy Recommendations

The data from both the presentation and the discussion of the findings clearly show that much remains to be done to promote gender equality in employment in practical terms, and in particular to address and eradicate sexual harassment from workplaces. As we have seen, culture depends on each organisation's goals, the nature of competition and other environmental factors, and it is influenced by top management/leadership, which can have a strong impact on shaping the style of organisational culture it wishes to transmit to its employees.

Below are some proposed measures for changing the existing gendered organisational culture of the organisations that participated in the study sample:

### **I. Policy recommendations to trade union organisations**

1. Keeping a record of sexual-harassment complaints by all trade union organisations, with an obligation to submit an annual report to an official state body.
2. Provision of support to victims of sexual harassment (psychological and emotional support).
3. Introduction of procedures for handling sexual-harassment complaints within the internal structures of trade union organisations themselves.
4. Empowerment and increase in the number of women trade unionists and negotiators, so that gender issues are highlighted and integrated as substantive content in the demands of collective agreements.
5. Development of a comprehensive strategy of continuous (horizontal and vertical) training/awareness-raising for their officials on gender equality and equal opportunities, with the use of gender experts.
6. Strengthening the social-dialogue agenda by creating infrastructures that will help working parents (working mothers and working fathers) to balance their professional obligations with their family responsibilities.
7. Immediate autonomy of action for Women's Offices/Sections operating within their organisational structure (financial, statutory and electoral autonomy).

### **II. Policy recommendations to trade union and employers' organisations**

1. Inclusion of the problem of sexual harassment, through a specific clause, in collective agreements, in the same way that there is a specific clause on maternity.
2. Development of strategies and plans for balanced participation of women and men at all decision-making levels in all participating organisations.
  3. Adoption of quotas or identification of other methods to increase the number of women in decision-making bodies and positions, so as to improve women's numerical representation and, at the same time, to bring women's rights and problems to the forefront as substantive content of electoral processes and of the demands being promoted.

4. Recording not only the problems faced specifically by women, but also their underlying causes, and coordination for the promotion of their resolution.
5. Adoption of practical measures aimed at eliminating gender pay gaps and ensuring unobstructed career progression for women, who hold equal and often higher qualifications than their male colleagues.
6. Concrete promotion of the elimination of linguistic sexism (spoken and written), recognising that language is neither socially neutral nor innocent, but expresses ideas, influences and shapes them, and becomes a vehicle for practices of prejudice, misogyny and/or sexism.
7. Immediate collection and maintenance of sex-disaggregated statistics, providing gender-specific data useful for the design of various policies (recruitment, managerial positions, remuneration, taking of parental leave, part-time work, promotions/advancement, horizontal and vertical occupational segregation, etc.).
8. Carrying out research/studies to map the gender profile of their organisations, with the aim of formulating policy proposals for innovative gender-sensitive changes.
9. Introduction of a code of practice on sexual harassment with a binding legislative obligation on every employer.
10. Creation of a coordinating body with the aim of driving change in attitudes, behaviours and everyday gender practices in the workplace.
11. Creation of a new culture that takes both genders into account, including a review and revision of symbols such as logos, seals, pictures displayed on office and building walls, and statues, so that men and women are represented on an equal footing.

A basic precondition for implementing all of the above is, in my view, the mobilisation of the mechanisms of the participating organisations so that they integrate equality into all their policies and programmes (gender mainstreaming), a tool which, as emerged from this research, many organisations did not even know by name.

An “ideal” culture can indeed be created if there is political will, coordination among organisations, and monitoring of the implementation of the decisions taken, with a view to the adoption of corrective measures. It is neither difficult nor costly to promote gender equality; what is needed is practical commitment and the placing of gender equality high on the agenda of their discussions and of social dialogue in tangible ways.

## 7.2 Shortcomings and proposals for future research

In concluding this research, it would be an omission not to identify the limitations of the present study and to point to new areas that require investigation.

The limitations of this study include the very small number of women victims—members of trade unions—who took part, as well as the refusal of two major sectoral trade unions (banking and secondary education) to participate.

It would be particularly interesting to carry out quantitative research in both unionised and non-unionised workplaces, looking at the degree of satisfaction of workers with the protection offered by trade unions (men and women in unionised workplaces), as well as issues such as sexual harassment, equal pay, promotions, work–family reconciliation, occupational segregation and other aspects of gender equality in the workplace.

In this way, on the one hand, we would record the number of women and any men who are victims of gender-based discrimination in general, and of sexual harassment in particular; and, on the other hand, we would assess the effectiveness of trade union mechanisms in promoting gender equality.

At the same time, it would become clear whether there are areas that require greater attention if the situation proves to be worse than in other fields. Conversely, where the situation is found to be better, those areas could be used as **good practices** for other workplaces. The results of the proposed research would show whether gender equality is in a better state in unionised workplaces, or in the same or even worse state than in non-unionised ones.

Finally, it would be interesting in future to **compare conditions, procedures, reactions, experiences and behaviours** once the code of practice in the private sector for the prevention and handling of sexual harassment will be incorporated into collective agreements, so as to highlight the differences from the current situation.

## 8. Instead of an Epilogue

This research has sought to open up discussion on how cases of sexual harassment are handled by trade union and employers' organisations in Cyprus, and how this handling is directly linked to the organisational culture of these organisations and to the gender stereotypes maintained within them. The present study constitutes an important innovation: it offers a dialogical perspective on the phenomenon of sexual harassment and a basis for understanding the organisational culture of trade unions in terms of how they sustain patriarchal perceptions and stereotypes.

Personally, I must admit that, as a researcher, the findings did not surprise me, since I have experienced first-hand many of the results of this research. I am pleased that I have been able to make a small contribution towards bringing to light and documenting—on the basis of gendered organisational-culture theory and feminist theory—the gaps and weaknesses in the structures of the institutions/organisations under investigation. The culture of the organisations studied is inextricably linked to their goals and other factors, and thus strongly influences the formation of the organisational culture they wish to convey and promote to their members and employees.

As becomes clear from both the presentation and the discussion of the findings, many more actions, initiatives and efforts are needed, and several decades will likely pass before this culture changes. In my view, it is unlikely that trade unions in the near future will become pioneers and open up new paths in gender equality that other institutions will then emulate.

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Ψήφισμα του Ευρωπαϊκού Κοινοβουλίου της 26ης Οκτωβρίου 2017 σχετικά με την καταπολέμηση της σεξουαλικής παρενόχλησης και κακοποίησης στην ΕΕ για την Καταπολέμηση της σεξουαλικής παρενόχλησης και κακοποίησης στην ΕΕ, (2017/2897(RSP),

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/RC-8-2017-0576\\_EL.html?redirect](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/RC-8-2017-0576_EL.html?redirect)

# Appendices

## *Appendix I: Informed Consent Form*

### **University of Cyprus Doctoral Programme “Gender Studies”**

#### **Informed Consent Form for (name of organisation representative):**

I would greatly appreciate your participation in the qualitative research I am conducting, which examines how the trade union movement in Cyprus has promoted gender equality within its own structures and more broadly in the labour market, with particular emphasis on the issue of sexual harassment in the workplace.

My academic supervisor is Dr Alexia Panayiotou, Assistant Professor at the Department of Business and Public Administration, University of Cyprus (email: alexiap@ucy.ac.cy, tel.: +357 22893618), with whose approval I am carrying out this research.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. The interview will be audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed.

#### **Duration**

The interview is expected to last approximately one hour.

#### **Researcher**

Anna Pilavaki, PhD Candidate Email: pilavaki@mail.com – Tel.: +357 99 615600

#### **Confidentiality and Anonymity**

The information you provide will be treated as strictly confidential and no one other than myself and my academic supervisor will have access to it.

- I understand that excerpts from my interview may be used in future publications. All excerpts will be anonymised.
- I give my consent for the interview to be audio-recorded.
- Having been fully informed about the above, I voluntarily agree to participate in this research.

**Participant’s Name:** .....

**Participant’s Signature:** .....

**Date:** .....

## *Appendix II: Interview Guide – Women Victims (Trade Union Members)*

### **Purpose of the study:**

The purpose of this study is to provide a critical feminist analysis of the way in which the trade union movement in Cyprus has dealt with sexual harassment in the workplace, using organisational theory (power, structure, organisation) as the main analytical framework.

We will begin the interview with some personal background questions related to this issue.

### **A. Demographic Information**

A1. Sex/Gender:

A2. Age:

A3. Marital status:

A4. Number of children: Boys: ..... Girls: .....

A5. Educational qualifications:

A6. Position/Job title:

A7. Years of service in current workplace:

A8. Years as a member of the trade union:

A9. Position in the trade union hierarchy (if any):

### **B. Trade Union Leadership and Organisational Style**

B1. Does your trade union show concrete interest in the specific problems faced by women at work? Please explain.

B2. Do you think that women themselves bear part of the responsibility for the problems they continue to face at work?

B3. Do you believe that the system and the structures of your organisation might also be responsible? Please explain.

B4. What kinds of problems have you personally faced? How were they resolved?

B5. Do you believe that women have the qualifications and personality required to assume top-level positions? Please explain.

B6. Are there distinct roles for men and women in this environment? Please describe.

B7. In your view, what role does the trade union movement play in achieving gender equality? Please describe.

B8. Do you believe that men are more “privileged” than women because of their gender? Please describe.

### **C. Gendered Beliefs and Attitudes**

C1. Are there distinct roles for men and women in your workplace? Please describe.

C2. In your opinion, what would encourage women to seek and take on positions of responsibility?

C3. What obstacles do women face in their career advancement that men do not?

C4. What would help women to engage with trade unionism to the same extent as men? What actions have been taken towards this aim?

C5. How would you assess the way in which your fellow delegates treat women candidates?

C6. In Cypriot society, there is often a belief that active involvement in public affairs is primarily “a man’s business”. Do you agree with this statement? Why/why not?

### **D. Trade Union Culture**

D1. How are men and women treated in your trade union and in your workplace more generally? Please describe.

D2. Do you believe that a new, gender-sensitive culture needs to be promoted by the trade union movement? Please describe.

D3. How strongly is women’s voice heard within the trade union movement, and what opportunities are you given to be involved?

D4. In your view, are there institutional barriers/practices and procedures within trade unions that directly or indirectly exclude or discourage women from participating? Please describe.

D5. To what extent is women’s voice heard in shaping demands/priorities that specifically concern women because of their gender?

D6. Have you ever been encouraged to participate in decision-making bodies of the trade union?

### **E. Habits, Practices, Traditions, Behavioural Norms and Language**

E1. Are the times set by your trade union for meetings/sessions convenient for you to attend? If not, have you mentioned this and to what extent was it taken into consideration?

E2. How does your trade union address the issue of work–family reconciliation?

E3. Which behaviours are considered “unacceptable” or “provocative” in your workplace or in your organisation, including dress code, and why?

E4. What is your view on the fact that men are often socially rewarded when they show sexual activity, while women are instead rewarded when they are restrained and passive? Please explain.

E5. Do you believe there are cases in which the woman herself is considered to be at fault, either because of her clothing or her general behaviour? Please explain.

### **F. Trade Union Culture on Sexual Harassment**

F1. Do you think sexual harassment in the workplace is a real phenomenon? If yes, in what ways has your trade union dealt with it?

F2. What needs to change in trade unions, but also more broadly in workplaces and in society, for the prevention and response to sexual harassment? Please explain.

F3. It is often argued that sexual harassment represents an abuse of power and should be examined at the level of power relations between the genders. Do you agree? If yes, why?

F4. Do you agree with the statement that men dominate and exercise power, while women are dominated and subjected to power? Please explain.

F5. Do you believe that the culture of trade unions is friendly towards women?

F6. Do trade union practices and procedures discourage sexual harassment complaints? Please describe.

### **G. Personal Experiences of Submitting a Complaint**

G1. When you reported the sexual harassment to your trade union, how did it react and how did it handle the situation?

G2. What was the gender of the trade unionist who dealt with your case? Would you have preferred the person to be of the opposite gender? Why?

G3. Were you encouraged to file a formal complaint? How were you treated?

G4. Were you offered support afterwards? In what way? What kind of support did you feel you needed?

G5. Were you referred to another public body to file your complaint, or did the trade union take it up itself?

G6. How satisfied were you with the way you were treated, and what would you have expected from your trade union that you did not receive?

G7. After submitting a complaint to a public body, what support did you receive from the trade union or from that body?

G8. What problems did you face after filing the complaint? Did you feel that you were being doubted or questioned? Were you made to feel uncomfortable? Please describe.

In addition to the above questions, the researcher may add or remove questions, depending on the interviewee's answers, whenever this is considered important for the purposes of the study.

### *Appendix III: Interview Guide – Representatives of Organisations*

#### **Purpose of the study:**

The purpose of this study is to investigate the way in which the trade union movement in Cyprus has promoted gender equality within its own structures and more broadly in the labour market, with particular reference to sexual harassment in the workplace.

We will begin the interview with some personal background questions related to this issue.

#### **A. Demographic Information**

A1. Sex/Gender:

A2. Educational qualifications:

A3. Years of service in the organisation:

A4. Position in the organisational hierarchy:

A5. Years in a leadership position:

## **B. Leadership Style**

B1. What is the role of women in your organisation? Please explain.

B2. Do you believe that equal opportunities are provided to women and men for access to and advancement in leadership positions? Please explain.

B3. If there is no equal access for women and men to such positions, where do you think this inequality originates?

B4. What is your opinion on quotas? Please explain.

B5. How do you view the possibility of having a woman as president of your organisation today? Why?

B6. Would anything change if a woman assumed the presidency? If yes, what?

B7. Do you believe that Cypriot society would view such a change positively or negatively? Why?

B8. Would gender-balanced representation on your board (equal representation of women and men) have any positive or negative effects? Why?

## **C. Gendered Beliefs and Attitudes**

C1. Do you believe that men are more “privileged” than women because of their gender? Please describe.

C2. Do women and men show the same level of interest in participating in decision-making bodies? Please explain.

C3. In your view, what obstacles do women face in their career advancement that men do not face?

C4. What role do socially constructed gender roles play in maintaining these obstacles in women’s professional trajectories?

C5. Are you making any specific efforts to eliminate these obstacles? What actions have you undertaken for this purpose? Please describe.

#### **D. Organisational and Leadership Culture**

D1. Is gender taken into account in your policies? Please describe.

D2. Is women's voice heard in your decision-making bodies, and how many women are involved in these processes? Please describe.

D3. In your view, are there institutional barriers/practices and procedures within trade unions that directly or indirectly exclude or discourage women from participating? Please describe.

D4. In what ways is gender incorporated into collective bargaining processes?

D5. Do you collect gender-disaggregated data and statistics? How do gender differences affect your policies? Please describe.

D6. How do you investigate the needs of women workers? Please explain.

D7. Have you promoted joint actions with other organisations to advance gender equality? Please describe.

#### **E. Habits, Practices, Traditions, Behavioural Norms and Language**

E1. Do you believe that the culture of your organisation is equally friendly to men and women? What evidence or examples support your view?

E2. Do you have in mind a "typical" professional dress code for male employees? If yes, what is it?

E3. Is there an equivalent for female employees? If yes, what is it?

E4. What would you not like to see in the appearance or behaviour of a male employee?

E5. What would you not like to see in the appearance or behaviour of a female employee?

E6. Do you have informal meetings with colleagues outside the office?

E7. If yes, what are usually the main topics discussed in these meetings that are not strictly work-related (e.g. football, politics, etc.)?

E8. Who are your closest collaborators?

#### **F. Organisational Culture on Sexual Harassment**

F1. Do you believe that sexual harassment in the workplace is a real phenomenon? If yes, in what ways have you dealt with it?

F2. Do you believe there are cases where the woman herself is considered to be “at fault”, either because of her clothing or her general behaviour? Please explain.

F3. What internal procedures have you introduced for the prevention and handling of sexual harassment?

F4. Have you received complaints of sexual harassment? If yes, how did you handle them? Do you keep a complaints register? How do you use it? Please describe.

F5. What procedures have you introduced to support victims? Please describe.

F6. Why do you think sexual harassment occurs in the workplace? Please explain.

F7. Has your organisation adopted a code of practice for the prevention and handling of sexual harassment? May I have a copy? If not, why not?

F8. Have you personally had to deal with a specific incident of sexual harassment? If yes, how did you handle it?

### **Closing**

Thank you very much for taking part in this study and for the time you have devoted to this interview. The results of the research will be shared with you once the study is completed.

The above questions are indicative and not exhaustive. The researcher may add to or remove questions depending on the flow of the interview and the needs of the study.

*Appendix IV: Demographic Characteristics of Victims*

<b>No.</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Family Status</b>	<b>Education Level</b>	<b>Employment (private, semi-public, public sector)</b>	<b>Years of Service</b>	<b>Member of Employees' Organisation</b>	<b>Support Provided by Employees' Organisation Representative</b>	<b>Filed an Official Complaint</b>	<b>Retaliatory Actions</b>
1	Female	28	Single	Higher	Semi-public	7	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
2	Female	41	Married	Tertiary	Public	22	No	Yes	Yes	No
3	Female	37	Married	Tertiary	Semi-public	17	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
4	Female	54	Divorced	Tertiary	Private	7	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
5	Female	57	Married	Tertiary	Private	35	Yes	Yes	No	No

*Appendix VI – Demographics of Employer Organisations*

No.	Gender	Organisation Sector	Age	Education Level	Years of Service	Years in Leadership Position
EO1	Male	Private & Semi-public	55	Tertiary	26	1
EO2	Male	Private	57	Tertiary	31	15

## *Appendix VII – Data Coding*

### 1. Experiences of female victims

Theme / Code	Results
External appearance	There is an internalisation of the effects of gendered organisational structures by victims regarding appearance norms and motherhood roles.
Share of women's responsibilities	The role of trade unions in promoting gender equality is considered important, with expectations for more evidence-based and effective actions.
Trade union culture	—
Promotion of equality	—
Role of trade unions	Sexual harassment exists, but there are no support mechanisms for victims within trade unions or elsewhere. Victims remain alone and unprotected.
Sexual harassment	—
Personal experiences from trade unions	—
Trade union interest in victims	—

### 2. Organisational culture of trade unions

Theme / Code	Results
Practices / procedures	Strong patriarchal structures and almost exclusively male-dominated roles.

Patriarchal attitudes	Women remain in secondary positions.
Organisational statutes	There is gender-based occupational segregation with women in offices and men as union representatives.
Women in the hierarchy	Women are not promoted with the same frequency as male-typed issues.

### 3. In Cyprus

Theme / Code	Results
Distinct roles	They recognise obstacles for women but do not see how these can be eliminated.
Actions to promote equality	They have taken no practical action on sexual harassment; victims are left unsupported.
Actions for prevention and combatting sexual harassment	No collective action; gender equality remains rhetorical.
Barriers for women	Quotas and gender mainstreaming are neither promoted nor adopted.
Quotas	Despite recognising quotas as essential, they have not resolved the issue.
Gender mainstreaming	Strong linguistic sexism in spoken and written language.
Reconciliation	Excessive focus on women's appearance; used as justification in harassment cases.
Cooperation between organisations	'Unconventional' behaviour is seen as more problematic for women.
Linguistic sexism	Strong gendered stereotypes attributed to Cyprus' patriarchal system; responsibility shifted onto women.

Appearance	See above.
Gendered perceptions	Deep-rooted perceptions reinforcing traditional norms.
Women's responsibility	Responsibilities are disproportionately placed on women.

#### 4. Internal, external and organisational factors

Theme / Code	Results
Handling of female victims	Handling shows superficiality and ignorance of consequences.
Handling of complaints	Superficial engagement; victims left unsupported.
Adopted procedures & follow-up	No complaint tracking; lack of understanding of record-keeping.
Investigation procedures	Victims' support needs are ignored.
Ways of protecting victims	Sexual harassment not included in collective bargaining.
Record-keeping	Internal occupational segregation leading to downgraded roles and pay for women.
Support to victims	Gender equality issues are not prioritised.
Sectoral segregation	—
Promotion of gender equality	Not a priority.

#### 5. Interpretation of the existence and handling

Theme / Code	Results
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Feminist critique & gendered organisational analysis      Female victims' experiences are not positive; trade unions prioritise broader issues and marginalise women's issues.

#### 6. Sexual harassment in Cyprus: critical feminist & gendered organisational theory

Theme / Code	Results
Organisational theory	Trade union culture prevents engagement with victims' issues before or after complaints.
Patriarchal structures	Entrenched norms prevent understanding of sexual harassment; treated as 'natural'.
Lack of support	Women's issues not priorities; marginalised.
Discourse & perceptions	Employers' and trade unions' perceptions are similar and reinforce the status quo.
General statement	Many times gender inequality was used as an excuse, portrayed as a universal societal phenomenon to absolve themselves of responsibility.

