BE A TEACHER AND SHUT UP: WHEN THE VIOLATION OF THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT STANDS AS A PERFECT MEDIATOR IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND CONTINUOUS COMMITMENT

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The purpose of this article is to shed light on the issue of sexual harassment towards women who hold lower positions in the hierarchy of higher education institutions. These women often feel powerless to refuse indecent advances from their hierarchical superiors, which violates the psychological contract between them and their subordinates. This highlights the close connection between sexuality and power relations in the workplace.

Design/Methodology/ Approach: The study employed a quantitative methods which applied the survey questionnaire to get response from Tunisian higher education sector, including PhD students, permanent teaching assistants, and temporary teachers. We utilized 370 valid cases to infer the results.

Findings: The results showed that sexual harassment has a significant and positive impact on both continuous commitment and violation of psychological contract, which has a significant and positive impact on continuous commitment. We also found that the violation of the psychological contract acts as a mediator in the relationship between sexual harassment and continuous commitment.

Research, practical and social implications: The study would be valuable to contrôle the issue of sexual harassment of females who are affiliated and not affiliated with the university. The study would help prepare the policies regarding controlling potential harassers.

Originality/ value: The study shed light on the important issue of sexual harassment towards women who hold lower positions in the hierarchy of higher education institutions in Tunisia.

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SER PROFESSOR E CALAR A BOCA: QUANDO A VIOLAÇÃO DO CONTRATO PSICOLÓGICO PERMANECE COMO UM MEDIADOR PERFEITO NA RELAÇÃO ENTRE ASSÉDIO SEXUAL E COMPROMISSO CONTÍNUO

RESUMO

Objetivo: O objetivo deste artigo é esclarecer a questão do assédio sexual contra mulheres que ocupam cargos inferiores na hierarquia de instituições de ensino superior. Estas mulheres sentem-se muitas vezes impotentes para recusar avanços indecentes dos seus superiores hierárquicos, o que viola o contrato psicológico entre elas e os seus subordinados. Isso destaca a estreita conexão entre sexualidade e relações de poder no local de trabalho.

Design/Metodologia/Abordagem: O estudo empregou métodos quantitativos que aplicaram o questionário da pesquisa para obter resposta do setor de ensino superior da Tunísia, incluindo estudantes de doutorado, assistentes de ensino permanente e professores temporários. Utilizamos 370 casos válidos para inferir os resultados.

Constatações: Os resultados mostraram que o assédio sexual tem um impacto significativo e positivo tanto no comprometimento contínuo quanto na violação do contrato psicológico, o que tem um impacto significativo e positivo no comprometimento contínuo. Também constatamos que a violação do contrato psicológico atua como mediador na relação entre assédio sexual e compromisso contínuo.

Pesquisa, implicações práticas e sociais: O estudo seria valioso para controlar a questão do assédio sexual de mulheres que são afiliadas e não afiliadas à universidade. O estudo ajudaria a preparar as políticas de controle de potenciais assediadores.

Originalidade/valor: O estudo evidenciou a importante questão do assédio sexual contra mulheres que ocupam posições inferiores na hierarquia das instituições de ensino superior na Tunísia.

Palavras-chave: assédio sexual, violação de contrato psicológico, compromisso contínuo, professoras, candidatas, mediação perfeita.

1 INTRODUCTION

"Keep Quiet! That is all she can do now." Mrs. Y is a married woman in her thirties with two children. She is a passionate doctoral student and a permanent teaching assistant. She has been working on her thesis for many years, considering higher education her ultimate goal. Unfortunately, her thesis supervisor, Mr. X, who was initially her mentor, has become a source of distress and anxiety.
She was once passionate about her thesis but now feels perplexed and powerless due to setbacks caused by her supervisor. Mrs Y referred to Mr X as a "sexual obsessive" and "the despot" due to his behavior. Initially, Mrs. Y felt confident and reassured while sitting on the faculty benches. However, the situation changed when Mr. X asked her to do a thesis under his supervision. From then on, he started making "dirty and risqué jokes" and showing an inappropriate interest in her personal life, including her dress, relationships, and intimacy.

As a result, Mrs. Y felt uncomfortable and put her thesis on hold. (Gharbi, 2012) Despite being assumed as safe spaces free from violence, universities are not immune to the influence of the social world and are often marked by unequal power dynamics. According to Doubogan and Hofmann (2016: 230), some female candidates pursuing higher education encounter persistent and intimidating behaviors from certain thesis directors, examiners, and heads of higher education establishments. In response, one of the female candidates refused to comply, stating, "I will not trade my body for a thesis." These women are often subjected to sexual harassment and face difficulties in speaking up against their perpetrators. This is due to cultural and societal stigmas, fear of retaliation, slow legal proceedings, and the possibility of dismissal. Unfortunately, many of these women have to learn to live with such workplace violence despite their unwillingness to acquiesce to it (Hershcovis et al., 2021). Victims of sexual harassment often face the dilemma of having to bear the perceived costs if they decide to change their career paths. This is similar to Meyer and Allen's (1991) model of organizational commitment, where the concept of continuous commitment is a component. A dilemma arises when both parties are unclear about the game's rules and do not share the same value system. Derbel and Mamlouk (2003) suggest that in such cases, organizational vagueness is used to simulate commitment or conceded trust to implement individual strategies. This article suspects that women who have experienced sexual harassment and have been left with no alternatives tend to endorse Machiavellian commitment. This enables them to achieve their goals while avoiding irreparable damage. The research aims to explore the type of mediation that can be undertaken when the psychological contract between women teachers and their harassers is violated.

Although women teachers may have various coping mechanisms, they can still experience burnout, leading to attrition. It is unclear whether managers are responsible for maintaining the glass ceiling metaphor (Laufer, 2004) or lead sky (Marry, 2004). It is also unclear whether they are aware of their deviant behavior (Bennett & Robinson, 2000)
or are driven by a desire to offend and undermine their female colleagues on the pretext of occupying hierarchical positions within higher education. The research highlights acts of resistance and revolt that might otherwise go unnoticed by underscoring personal experiences and testimonials, challenging the established order.

2 THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES BUILDING

2.1 SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND CONTINUOUS COMMITMENT

Several studies have shown that sexual harassment is a common form of workplace violence (Hirigoyen, 2001; Soares, 2002; Hershcovis et al., 2021; Goh et al., 2021). Sexual harassment is considered abject behavior that undermines the ethics of the teaching profession (Fitzgerald & Cortina, 2018). It is defined as inappropriate behavior voluntarily carried out in the workplace by a man, known as the "harasser," towards a non-consenting woman, known as the "harassed," who usually occupies a hierarchically inferior position (Berrey et al., 2017; Pathé & Mullen, 2018; Gharbi & Sobaih, 2023). This power dynamic often leads to the harasser making incomplete sexual advances (Pathé & Mullen, 2018). Harassment refers to the repetitive and vexatious actions perceived as offensive, undermining the victim's dignity, personality, and physical and mental integrity (Kaukiainen et al., 2001). Universities that ignore this unethical behavior can face serious consequences, such as job dissatisfaction, absenteeism, low commitment, lower productivity, and unplanned departures. Women teachers who experience sexual harassment often become less dedicated to their work due to fear of reprisals from their harassers (Akueson, 2020, p. 73) and the law of silence. (Choi, 2020)

It has been proven that sexual harassment negatively impacts the psychological and physical health of employees, as well as their commitment to the organization (Smidt, 2020). A previous survey confirmed that trust significantly and negatively affects the continuance level of commitment (Gurviez, 2007). According to Meyer et al. (1990), employees who feel a high level of continuous commitment to their organization tend to stay, not because they choose to but because they lack other opportunities. However, if they find a better opportunity elsewhere, they will leave. Employees' decision to stay with the organization depends on their perception of the costs and sacrifices involved in leaving and various factors such as family and societal constraints (Meyer & Allen, 1990; Gharbi et al., 2022). Based on the above, we can formulate our first hypothesis:

\[ H_1: \text{Sexual harassment has a positive influence on the continuance commitment} \]
of female teachers

2.2 SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT VIOLATION

Sexual harassment in the workplace refers to abusive behavior (Hirigoyen, 2001) and conduct with a sexual connotation (Gharbi & Sobaih, 2023). It is perceived as social violence (Frey, 2023). It is felt as an offensive or insulting aggression that can be detrimental to the injured party's dignity, personality, and physical and psychological integrity. Harassment can lead to social alienation (Dejours, 2006), which can have more damaging after-effects than other stressors in the workplace (Wilson, 1991). Sexual harassment can damage and weaken any organizational relationship and legal contract, whether psychological or otherwise. Rousseau and Schalk (2000) state that the obligations of any psychological contract arise from mutual promises and agreements that develop via an ongoing interactional process between hierarchical superiors and their subordinates. When a subordinate feels that the organization or superior has failed to respect one or more terms of the psychological contract, it can lead to distrust and vigilance (Morrison & Robinson, 1997). Sexual harassment, as part of anti-social behavior (Griffin et al., 1998), can create a sense of procedural injustice (Thibaut & Walker, 1975; Brockner & Wiesenfeld, 1996), which can generate a climate of mistrust (Saussois, 2000; Brehm & Gates, 2002; Tremblay & Simard, 2005). This loss of trust weakens the bonds between the employee and their superior, amplifying the state of stress and facilitating the violation of the psychological contract (Shore & Tetrick, 1994; Guerrero, 2003; de Bry, 2004). When a person feels that they have fulfilled their ethical and conscientious obligations, but the other party in the relationship fails, this can lead to frustration and exasperation. This encourages women to question the psychological contract that binds them to their organizations (Ministry and higher education establishments) and their trust in their hierarchical superiors (thesis supervisors).

According to a survey of 107 women employed in the service sector by Morganson (2022), sexual harassment significantly and positively influences psychological contract violation ($\beta = 0.19$, $p < 0.05$). Therefore, our second hypothesis takes the following form:

$H_2$: Sexual harassment has a positive influence on the violation of psychological contract.
2.3 VIOLATION OF THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT AS A MEDIATING VARIABLE AND CONTINUOUS COMMITMENT

Over the last 40 years, many studies have focused on the relationship between the psychological contract and organizational commitment. Researchers such as Rousseau and Parks (1993), Meyer and Allen (1997), Meyer and Parfyonova (2010), Coyle-Shapiro et al. (2019), and Herrera and Heras-Rosas (2021) have all contributed to this area of study. A violation of the psychological contract can have negative effects on organizational commitment, as pointed out by Shapiro and Kessler (2002), Topa and Morales (2005), and Coyle-Shapiro et al. (2019). In a study conducted by Cassar and Briner (2011) on 103 salespeople (85 of whom were women) at a large retail store, it was found that a violation of the psychological contract had a significant and positive impact on continuous commitment. A similar study conducted by Bal et al. (2013) on 334 participants (117 at a large telecommunications company in Belgium and 217 bus and cab drivers employed by a Dutch transport company) showed that age is a significant factor that influences continuous commitment. Respondents are more likely to move towards continuance commitment as they get older.

Furthermore, in our study, we suspect that female teachers in the sample, who may have exhausted their options and had their psychological contract violated by their harassers, will likely endorse the sub-dimension of continuance commitment. This would allow them to achieve their goals while avoiding any irreparable harm. Our study aims to determine the extent to which a violation of the psychological contract can mediate the relationship between sexual harassment of female teachers and their continuous commitments. Therefore, our third and fourth hypotheses are as follows:

H 3: The Violation of the psychological contract positively influences continuous commitment.

H 4: The violation of the psychological contract mediates between sexual harassment and continuous commitment.

3 A PROPOSAL FOR A CONCEPTUAL MODEL

Based on the literature review and the hypotheses we put forward earlier, we submit the following conceptual model:
4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 RESEARCH POPULATION, SAMPLE AND MEASUREMENT

After conducting a thorough literature review, we have selected various measurement scales for our research questionnaire. In particular, we have chosen the Gharbi and Sobaih (2023) scale to measure sexual harassment, the Rousseau and Parks scale (1993) to measure violation of psychological contract, and the Meyer and Allen scale (1991) to measure ongoing commitment. To begin with, we distributed the questionnaire to 450 women in the Tunisian higher education sector, including PhD students, permanent teaching assistants, and temporary teachers. The survey was conducted over two years and six months at numerous universities, schools, and institutes under the Tunisian Ministry of Higher Education. We received 370 usable questionnaires, representing a return of 82.22%. We have utilized measurement scales from our literature review, adapting them to suit our theoretical and practical needs. All variables were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1, "completely disagree," to 5, "completely agree." The questionnaire items had minimum and maximum values that ranged from 1 to 5. The means for all responses ranged between 2.73 and 4.04, with standard deviation values that ranged from 0.803 to 1.196 (see Table 1). This indicates that our data is more scattered and less condensed around the mean value (Bryman & Cramer, 2012).

4.2 PRINCIPAL COMPONENT ANALYSIS AND PURIFICATION OF MEASUREMENT SCALES

We conducted a principal component analysis (PCA) using SPSS (v.25) with varimax rotation to evaluate the quality of the representation. Our results showed that the KMO index values for all measured variables ranged from 0.711 to 0.792, indicating that
these variables were well-suited for factorization. We applied Cronbach's Alpha to assess reliability and found that the Alpha values were good (Nunnally, 1978), ranging from 0.680 to 0.792. Additionally, the p-value for our three variables was zero, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis.

5 RESULTS
5.1 CONFIRMATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS

The first-order confirmatory factor analysis results indicate that the dependent and independent variables are consistent with the data, as shown in Table 1. The Chi-square to its degree of freedom ratio ($\chi^2$/ddl) is 3.931, which is acceptable as it is less than 5. The RMSEA index is 0.067, close to zero, indicating that the fit is acceptable. The indices NFI = 0.931, TLI = 0.890, IFI = 0.921, and CFI = 0.910 also confirm that the results offer a very good fit, in line with literature values. These first-order results meet the required standards (Roussel et al., 2002). Regarding the Skewness and Kurtosis coefficients, they do not violate the normality assumption (Kline, 2015) and reveal acceptable values. Therefore, we can conclude that all distributions are reasonably distributed, and all variables follow the normal distribution, as shown in Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbr</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Skewness</th>
<th>Kurtosis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SH1</td>
<td>I did not want to change my Research Director because I would have much to lose</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>.916</td>
<td>-1.081</td>
<td>1.498</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SH2</td>
<td>I did not want to change my RD because my career would be over</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>.976</td>
<td>-.541</td>
<td>-.256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SH3</td>
<td>I have to carry on with my RD because I think that no one else would accept me</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>.882</td>
<td>-.588</td>
<td>.224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SH4</td>
<td>My RD sees me more as a woman than a colleague or future colleague</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>.948</td>
<td>-.698</td>
<td>.321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SH5</td>
<td>My RD understands my friendly behavior as a sign of sexual availability</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>.950</td>
<td>-.770</td>
<td>.015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SH6</td>
<td>My RD tells me daring jokes with sexual overtones</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>1.140</td>
<td>-.036</td>
<td>-.809</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SH7</td>
<td>My RD is showing more and more interest in matters concerning my way of dressing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>.923</td>
<td>-.939</td>
<td>.773</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SH8</td>
<td>My RD abuses me through phone calls</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>1.196</td>
<td>.183</td>
<td>-.961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SH9</td>
<td>My RD chooses a spatial proximity, during my supervision, deemed unnecessary</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>1.016</td>
<td>-.614</td>
<td>-.096</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SH10</td>
<td>If I speak, I will fear for my reputation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>1.166</td>
<td>-.074</td>
<td>-1.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SH11</td>
<td>If I speak, I have fear of being pointed at</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>1.091</td>
<td>-.179</td>
<td>-.848</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SH12</td>
<td>If I speak, I will feel ashamed in front of my colleagues</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>1.115</td>
<td>-.250</td>
<td>-.639</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
We used convergent validity to determine whether three variables - psychological contract violation, sexual harassment, and continuous commitment - which are supposed to measure the same phenomenon, are correlated. This involves checking the CR, which must be strictly greater than 0.7, and the AVE, which must be strictly greater than 0.5. As shown in Table 2, our results indicate that all variables demonstrated convergent validity (Joreskog, 1988).

We tested their discriminant validity to ensure the two variables were genuinely distinct. This was achieved by checking whether the square root of the AVE of each variable is strictly greater than the correlations it shares with other variables. As shown in Table 2, our results indicate that all three variables demonstrated discriminant validity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SH13</th>
<th>If I speak, I will not have the support of my superiors</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>2.83</th>
<th>1.149</th>
<th>.202</th>
<th>-.943</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Continuous Commitment</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>CC14</td>
<td>It would be very difficult for me to leave at this time, even if I wanted to</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>.857</td>
<td>-.709</td>
<td>.670</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC15</td>
<td>A lot of things in my life would be disrupted if I decided to leave now</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>.856</td>
<td>-.614</td>
<td>.131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC16</td>
<td>At the moment, staying with my RD is a problem that is as much a necessity as a desire</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>1.047</td>
<td>-.147</td>
<td>-.681</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC17</td>
<td>I think I have too few options to consider leaving my RD</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>1.032</td>
<td>-.013</td>
<td>-.737</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC18</td>
<td>Among a negative consequence of my leaving would be the lack of possible alternatives</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>.886</td>
<td>-.526</td>
<td>.150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC19</td>
<td>If I hadn’t given so much of myself, I might have considered working elsewhere</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>.889</td>
<td>-.857</td>
<td>1.023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Psychological Contract Violation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC20</td>
<td>The relationship is purely transactional, once the thesis is finished, he will sign it for me</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>.937</td>
<td>-1.165</td>
<td>1.517</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC21</td>
<td>I feel I have a short-term relationship with my RD</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.01</td>
<td>.803</td>
<td>-.904</td>
<td>1.302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC22</td>
<td>Our respective expectations are limited to what is defined in the contract between us</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>.864</td>
<td>-1.087</td>
<td>1.723</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC23</td>
<td>Our respective expectations haven't changed since I arrived</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>1.032</td>
<td>-.156</td>
<td>-.531</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC24</td>
<td>There's a boundary between my work and my personal life. Outside working hours, I put aside the concerns of the thesis</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>1.007</td>
<td>-.473</td>
<td>-.219</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Model fit: $(\chi^2 (220, N = 370) = 864.9, p < 0.001, \text{normed } \chi^2 = 3.931, \text{RMSEA} = 0.067, \text{SRMR} = 0.0822, \text{CFI} = 0.910, \text{TLI} = 0.890, \text{NFI} = 0.931, \text{PCFI} = 0.633 \text{ and PNFI} = 0.612)$. (developed by authors based on previous literature)
Table 2. Convergent and discriminant validity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors and items</th>
<th>SL</th>
<th>CR</th>
<th>AVE</th>
<th>MSV</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1-Sexual Harrassment, (Gharbi &amp; Sobaih, 2022) (α = .757)</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I did not want to change my Research Director because I would have much to lose</td>
<td>.955</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I did not want to change my RD because my career would be over</td>
<td>.978</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have to carry on with my RD because I think that no one else would accept me</td>
<td>.936</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>My RD sees me more as a woman than a colleague or future colleague</td>
<td>.821</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>My RD understands my friendly behavior as a sign of sexual availability</td>
<td>.866</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My RD tells me daring jokes with sexual overtones</td>
<td>.860</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My RD is showing more and more interest in matters concerning my way of dressing</td>
<td>.901</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My RD abuses me through phone calls</td>
<td>.906</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My RD chooses a spatial proximity, during my supervision, deemed unnecessary</td>
<td>.830</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I speak, I will fear for my reputation</td>
<td>.855</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I speak, I have fear of being pointed at</td>
<td>.803</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I speak, I will feel ashamed in front of my colleagues</td>
<td>.978</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I speak, I will not have the support of my superiors</td>
<td>.807</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2- Continuous commitment (Meyer and Allen, 1991) (α = .701)</strong></td>
<td>.962</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.308**</td>
<td>.899</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It would be very difficult for me to leave at this time, even if I wanted to</td>
<td>.806</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A lot of things in my life would be disrupted if I decided to leave now</td>
<td>.966</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At the moment, staying with my RD is a problem that is as much a necessity as a desire</td>
<td>.952</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think I have too few options to consider leaving my RD</td>
<td>.913</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Among a negative consequence of my leaving would be the lack of possible alternatives</td>
<td>.942</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I hadn’t given so much of myself, I might have considered working elsewhere</td>
<td>.802</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3-Psychological contract violation (Rousseau et McLean Parks, 1993) (α = .683)</strong></td>
<td>.961</td>
<td>.833</td>
<td>.194</td>
<td>.441**</td>
<td>.294**</td>
<td>.912</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The relationship is purely transactional, once the thesis is finished, he will sign it for me</td>
<td>.906</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel I have a short-term relationship with my RD</td>
<td>.943</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our respective expectations are limited to what is defined in the contract between us</td>
<td>.799</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our respective expectations haven't changed since I arrived</td>
<td>.923</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7 SL= Standard loading from the first-order model
8 CR= Composite Reliability
9 AVE=Average Variance Extracted
10 MSV= Maximum Shared Value
In order to test the discriminant validity, we require the correlation matrix, square root values of AVEs, and Cronbach α specific to each variable (refer to Table 2). Square roots of AVEs are greater than the off-diagonal values, representing the correlations between constructs. This confirms the discriminant validity of factors as per the Fornell and Larcker (1981) criteria. Furthermore, AVE scores for Sexual Harassment (.782), Continuous Commitment (.809), and Psychological Contract Violation (.833) are significantly higher than the maximum shared variances (MSV) that respectively represent the following values (.194, .086, .194). Therefore, as Hair et al. (2014) suggested, discriminant validity is guaranteed. Additionally, the inter-correlation scores for each variable should not exceed the square roots of the AVEs specific to each factor (Table 2).

5.2 STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODELING RESULTS

After ensuring the validity and reliability of the measures, we proceeded with a structural equation modeling to investigate the impact of sexual harassment (SEXHAR) on continuous commitment (CONCOMM) through psychological contract violation (PSYCONVIOL). The study results were consistent with the data presented in Table 4. The X² reported its degree of freedom X²/dfl was 3.681, indicating a satisfactory ratio of less than 5. The RMSEA index was also 0.058, approaching zero, indicating a satisfactory adjustment. The NFI = 0.970, TLI = 0.901, and CFI = 0.940 indices also confirm the values that the literature accepts to offer a very good adjustment. The standardized RMR, SRMR = 0.043, is excellent since the values are very close to zero. All the hypotheses were verified, displaying significant relationships with p < 0.001 and p < 0.05 (Table 4, Figure 2). In particular, SEXHAR has a significant and positive effect on CONCOMM (β= +0.266, p <0.05) and a significant and positive effect on PSYCONVIOL (β= +0.831, p <0.001), which, in turn, has a significant and positive effect on CONCOMM (β= 0.192, p <0.05).

Regarding the robustness of the structural model, we can see that it is justified by the significant coefficient of the value of R²=0.126 through PSYCONVIOL (table 4). In our case, PSYCONVIOL represents the proportion of CONCOMM explained by
SEXHAR and PSYCONVIOL in the regression model. Using SEXHAR and PSYCONVIOL, we can explain about 12.6% of the variance of CONCOMM, which gives us confidence in our model's effectiveness. To ensure methodological rigor, we have adopted the approach of Baron and Kenny (1986) to verify and approve the mediating role of PSYCONVIOL in the relationship between SEXHAR and CONCOMM. This approach involves four consecutive tests that we will conduct on our model. First, we must demonstrate that the link between SEXHAR and CONCOMM is significant to ensure that a potential impact can be mediated. The model shows that SEXHAR significantly and positively affects CONCOMM ($\beta= 0.266$, $p <0.05$).

Secondly, we need to demonstrate that SEXHAR significantly impacts the mediator variable. The model shows that SEXHAR significantly and positively affects PSYCONVIOL ($\beta= +0.831$, $p <0.001$). Third, we must show that the link between the mediator variable and CONCOMM is significant. The evidence shows that PSYCONVIOL has a significant and positive effect on CONCOMM ($\beta= 0.193$, $p <0.05$). Furthermore, CONCOMM is regressed on both PSYCONVIOL and SEXHAR. The linear regression table (table 3) discloses the following results:

![Figure 2: The Unstandardized Structural Model](image)
On the one hand, the study found that sexual harassment and violation of the psychological contract have a significant and positive effect on continuous commitment. At the 1% threshold, sexual harassment increases continuous commitment by 0.248, meaning that when sexual harassment increases by one point, continuous commitment increases by 2.347 (0.248 plus the constant of 2.099 found in the regression table). Similarly, violation of the psychological contract also increases continuous commitment by 0.188 at the 1% threshold, indicating that when the violation of the psychological contract increases by one point, continuous commitment increases by 2.287 (0.188 plus 2.099).

### Table 3. Linear regression

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>2.099</td>
<td>.217</td>
<td>9.693</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEXHAR</td>
<td>.248</td>
<td>.061</td>
<td>.221</td>
<td>4.069</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSYCONVIOL</td>
<td>.188</td>
<td>.052</td>
<td>.197</td>
<td>3.622</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Dependent Variable: CONCOMM

### Table 4. Result of the structural model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Result of the Structural Model</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>C-R</th>
<th>T-value</th>
<th>Sig</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>Hyp. Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H1: SEXHAR ↔ CONCOMM</td>
<td>2.199</td>
<td>0.038</td>
<td>0.126</td>
<td>Supported</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2: SEXHAR ↔ PSYCONVIOL</td>
<td>4.501</td>
<td>***</td>
<td></td>
<td>Supported</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3: PSYCONVIOL ↔ CONCOMM</td>
<td>2.078</td>
<td>0.028</td>
<td></td>
<td>Supported</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEXHAR ↔ CONCOMM Through PSYCONVIOL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.126</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Model fit: (χ² (249, N = 370) = 917.181 p < 0.001, normed χ² = 3.681, RMSEA = 0.058, SRMR = 0.043, CFI = 0.940, TLI = 0.901, NFI = 0.970, IFI=0.945, PCFI = 0.778 and PNFI = 0.767). *** p < 0.001.

(developed by authors)

### Table 5. Type of PSYCONVIOL mediation (developed by authors)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>User-defined estimands:</th>
<th>East</th>
<th>Lower Bounds (BC)</th>
<th>Upper Bounds (BC)</th>
<th>Towl Tailed significance (BC)</th>
<th>Mediation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H4- SEXHAR ↔ PSYCONVIOL</td>
<td>0.160</td>
<td>-0.025</td>
<td>0.561</td>
<td>0.154 &gt;0.05 PERFECT Mediation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finally, to verify the extent of PSYCONVIOL, we can examine the significance of direct links between SEXHAR and CONCOMM. This can be done using the bootstrapping technique provided by Amos software (version 25) and applying "The user-defined estimands" to the data. The results are presented in Tables 4 and 5. According to Table 5, the link between SEXHAR and CONCOMM became insignificant after
introducing PSYSAFE as a mediating variable (β= 0.160, p = 0.154 > 0.05). This indicates that PSYCONVIOL is a perfect mediator between SEXHAR and CONCOMM. Furthermore, the Sobel test on the t-values (ta=9.426, tb= 5.916) after linear regression gives us a Z-value equal to ≈5.0108 > 1.96 with a P-value less than 0.01.

**6 DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS**

The survey found that female university teachers' continuous commitment is influenced by sexual harassment and violation of psychological contract. We conducted semi-structured interviews with six female teachers to understand better what the statistics failed to capture. We stopped at six interviews not because we had reached saturation point but because the participants could not share more information. The interviews revealed several situations describing the teachers' daily life, experience, and working atmosphere and the different representations they build up through their relationships with their hierarchical superiors (thesis supervisors, dissertation committee members, school directors, etc.). We identified a narrative content grid based on the redundancy of certain words or groups of words used by the interviewees. The thematic analysis of the interviewees' verbatim revealed three lexical fields, which we will discuss below. These qualitative results will help us better understand the statistical findings mentioned above.

6.1 CONTINUOUS COMMITMENT, THE COROLLARY OF NORMATIVE INFLUENCE

"If I speak, it could jeopardize my career," says Ms.Y. Recklessness? Not at all. Caught between a rock and a hard place, it is possible. "There is still a long way to go," she adds (thesis defense, competitions, etc.). For this reason, she declares that she will remain silent by making a different kind of commitment (continuous commitment). Undoubtedly, she knows that Mr. X is in a position to make her suffer and "treat her reputation in the mud." This is how she sees herself if she ever decides to speak out. This brings to mind the concept of normative influence presented by Deutsch and Gérard (1955), where people who deviate from the group expect to be evaluated negatively and rejected. In this respect, Kelley (1952) points out that when the group is in a position to punish a member who does not adhere to the prevailing norms, the latter would feel the pressure to comply with these norms in order to avoid punishment (accept harassment in
order not to be punished). In addition to organizational punishment, Ms. Y. fears and distrusts social punishment. Especially in an Arab-Muslim society that jealously guards a particular unshakeable and indelible code of ethics and morality, where confessing inappropriate behavior is out of the question, even if the woman has been wronged "for fear of being singled out." As a result, women tend to keep it bottled up inside them rather than bringing it out in the open. The following reflection quoted by one of the interviewees seems to sum up perfectly the weight of normative influence as an omnipresent organizational and social reality and, above all, its impact on keeping silent about the animosities of hierarchical superiors. "My reputation is all I have left to save. My career? - a wry smile marking a pause - after all, I am a woman, and I have to face the fact that ending up as a permanent assistant is an honorable enough rank". Paradoxical as it may seem, this situation condemns her to a particular course of action accepted by the rest of society, thus preventing her from taking full advantage of her rights (Cottingham et al., 2001, p.49) even if this has to be to the detriment of her upward mobility and professional ambitions." (Cottingham et al., 2001, p.49).

6.2 THE EMOTIONAL DISTRESS STRATEGY TO COUNTERACT HARASSMENT

As part of the cognitive theory paradigm, studies on coping originate in the work of Folkman and Lazarus (1984). Lazarus (1991) defines coping as the deployment of cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage external and internal demands deemed disturbing and harassing, thereby exceeding the individual's resources (1991, p.112). The transactional approach of Folkman and Lazarus (1984) appears as a multidimensional construct that can embrace two configurations.

The first is the problem-focused strategy, which involves deploying efforts to transform the stressful situation. This involves the person/environment pairing, where the person focuses on the problem and uses the environment to find appropriate solutions to manage or resolve it. The second strategy focuses on emotion, intending to control or even regulate the emotional distress experienced. In a stressful situation, the individual, characterized by homeostasis, calls on a range of cognitive and behavioral mechanisms to restore the initial equilibrium. Unconsciously, the individual uses his or her appraisal process. Appraisal takes place in two stages. The first involves cognitions about the stressor and its impact on the individual's value system, feelings, effects, and internal motivations. The second stage illustrates the means and skills available to the individual
to reduce or even eliminate the stressor in question. In this respect, it is essential to note that there is a bidirectional relationship (Folkman & Lazarus, 1985) between coping strategies and emotions. In other words, during the transaction, each reciprocally influences the other. Folkman and Lazarus (1988) show that everything hinges on how the emotion of a situation is received. Will the individual perceive it as a challenge or a threat? In the case of a situation perceived as a challenge, the individual will use problem-focused strategies likely to confer positive emotions.

Conversely, when faced with a situation that is perceived as threatening, an individual tends to focus on strategies that help regulate emotional distress, often by manifesting negative emotions. In the case of Mrs. Y, after refusing to cooperate, she was confronted with incessant offensiveness that made her feel threatened - like she was being intimidated, blackmailed, or offended. Faced with the statement "I will make sure your career goes up in smoke," Mrs. Y perceived this stressful event as a threat, which added to her feelings of distress, intimidation, and offense. This stress made her feel powerless and unable to overcome her affliction. However, by remaining silent and not taking any action, she was able to push away the source of her stress. When asked why she did not react, Mrs. Y said, "I was so scared I could not react." This shows that Mrs. Y did not choose problem-focused, action-oriented coping strategies, which made her feel trapped and powerless in the situation. She did not know how to adapt to the situation in the best possible way, and instead used ineffective coping strategies, especially those focused on emotional distress.

6.3 VIOLATION OF THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT AND FAILURE OF ADJUSTMENT STRATEGIES

For a long time, women academics of all ranks have been voicing their concerns about certain thesis supervisors, institutional directors, and dissertation committee members. These people often cause frustration, emotional fatigue, and vague unhappiness among female academics (El Akremi & Sassi, 2005). Women who lack coping skills may become bitter, disengaged, or feel like victims. They may also feel alone and hopeless, with no point in continuing to talk about their issues. Some may even regret choosing their career path. Under the domination of burnout (Schaufeli et al., 1993), these women become emotionally fatigued and desperate for mental well-being. They are often perplexed and skeptical about finding a solution to their problems. The original intention
may be a profitable alternative to peace. In this regard, according to Grebot (2010), emotional exhaustion arises when an individual reaches the threshold of emotional saturation and can no longer accept new emotions (2010, p.687).

Under the "be a teacher and shut up" protocol, many feel powerless and stripped of their dignity. They express feelings of over-giving to the university, lack of recognition, sexual and moral harassment, excessive workloads, and unrelenting time constraints. These issues are recurrent themes in their comments. We will not delve into the various sensations that some teachers experience, such as the fear of not being professionally liked, the fear of receiving negative reports on their thesis, the fear of losing momentum while juggling professional and private life, and the fear of having to cheat to prove their worth to the dissertation committee (Vardi & Wiener, 1996). These fears lead to isolation and loss of control over their thoughts, body, and behavior.

7 IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY
7.1 MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The investigation into the violation of the psychological contract that mediates the relationship between sexual harassment and commitment in Tunisia has practical implications for universities operating in developing countries. Sexual harassment can take various forms that female university teachers find hard to identify and prove. These forms include touching, indecent proposals, blackmail, coarse speech, wandering hands, and more. Sexual harassment is rarely reported by female teachers in Tunisia, mainly because it is not overt. Many female teachers prefer to endure rather than fight back. They fear losing their professional careers and being stigmatized for life. The Ministry of Higher Education must develop pedagogical tools to mobilize against the harassment of female employees. The ministry should also initiate dialogues with female teachers and candidates for competitive examinations in suspected harassment cases. Another possible action is offering training courses to destigmatize the phenomenon and raise awareness of its harmful repercussions on psychological and physical health. Universities should take preventive measures to encourage social interaction and group work, improve the university climate, and combat harassment. The issue of sexual harassment of female teachers can be tackled by outsourcing the monitoring system to an impartial team of experts who are not affiliated with the university. The team should mainly comprise psychologists and psycho-sociologists who will be responsible for detecting any instances
of sexual harassment and assessing its negative impact on female teachers. Should any incidents be identified, legal action would be taken against the potential harassers by the experts.

7.2 THEORITICAL IMPLICATIONS

Accessing higher education is crucial for future teachers, but it can be stressful and lead to burnout or psychological harm. Conflicts such as role conflicts, loss of meaning, and malaise can also arise, especially for women, who often struggle to balance work and life. Stress can become overwhelming and lead to disengagement from work, mainly when one's commitment to the work is not deliberate (Lachance & Brassard, 2003). To rehabilitate women teachers, we must move past the discrimination logic and adopt a philosophy of individualized HRM based on identity rather than equality. This will help to address the challenges of work-life balance (Badji, 2023) and conflicts that can arise (Tremblay & Mathieu, 2023), particularly for women (Stoeva et al., 2002; Higgins et al., 2000). The relationship between individuals and their organizations is crucial, and a continuous commitment may weaken the employee's affection for the organization (De Witte, 1999). Therefore, it is essential to develop a relationship based on a deliberate commitment to enhance employee well-being and organizational performance (Murray-Harve et al., 2000; Montgomery & Rupp, 2005; Schabracq & Cooper, 2000).

8 CONCLUSIN, LIMITAIONS AND AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Female doctoral students, permanent teaching assistants, and temporary teachers often experience stress and psychological tension due to sexual harassment at the beginning of their teaching careers. This can lead them to make continuous commitments despite their unwillingness. We distributed questionnaires to women in these positions via the Ministry of Higher Education to study this phenomenon.

The study results indicate that sexual harassment has a significant and positive impact on both continuous commitment ($\beta = 0.266, p = 0.038 <0.05$) and violation of psychological contract ($\beta = 0.831, p = *** <0.01$), which in turn has a significant and positive impact on continuous commitment ($\beta = 0.192, p = 0.028 <0.05$). The research also found that violation of the psychological contract plays a crucial role in mediating the relationship between sexual harassment and continuous commitment. In fact, after
introducing the violation of the psychological contract, the previously significant indirect effect linking sexual harassment to continuous commitment became insignificant ($\beta=0.160$, $p = 0.154 > 0.05$), indicating that the psychological contract violation acts as a perfect mediating variable (ref). The study suggests that the root cause of anti-social behavior, such as sexual harassment, is the culture of vagueness prevalent in Tunisian universities (Zghal, 1994). The absence of precise rules governing the management of those who operate in the university environment leads to ambiguous procedures, which encourage multiple interpretations. Some harassers take advantage of this ambiguity to manipulate and blackmail doctoral students and/or candidates working under their supervision. Sometimes, these harassers resort to revengeful behavior towards those who resist their advances. Such actions may satisfy the harassers' conscience, but they raise questions about their peace of mind. It is important to note that this study has limitations like any research.

In future research, it would be beneficial to conduct similar studies in other areas of public administration to determine if the findings can be generalized beyond the specific population studied.

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