

MYTH BUSTING: COMMON MISPERCEPTIONS ABOUT SEXUAL HARASSMENT

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Common Myths & Misperceptions

1. Sexual harassment is primarily a problem of sex
2. Sexual harassment is no big deal
3. False accusations ARE a big deal
4. Harassment reporting is the silver bullet
5. Harassment training is the silver bullet

MYTH #1:

SEXUAL HARASSMENT
IS PRIMARILY A
PROBLEM OF SEX

Relevant Fallacies

- Sexual harassment is mostly about misplaced sexual desire, flirting, romance gone awry
- The “worst” sexual harassment is physically violent and coercive

Relevant Facts

- Sexual harassment comes in three forms: sexual coercion, unwanted sexual attention, and gender harassment (most common = gender harassment)
- Research refutes assumptions that physical forms of harassment are objectively worse for women's wellbeing than verbal or visual forms

Relevant Facts

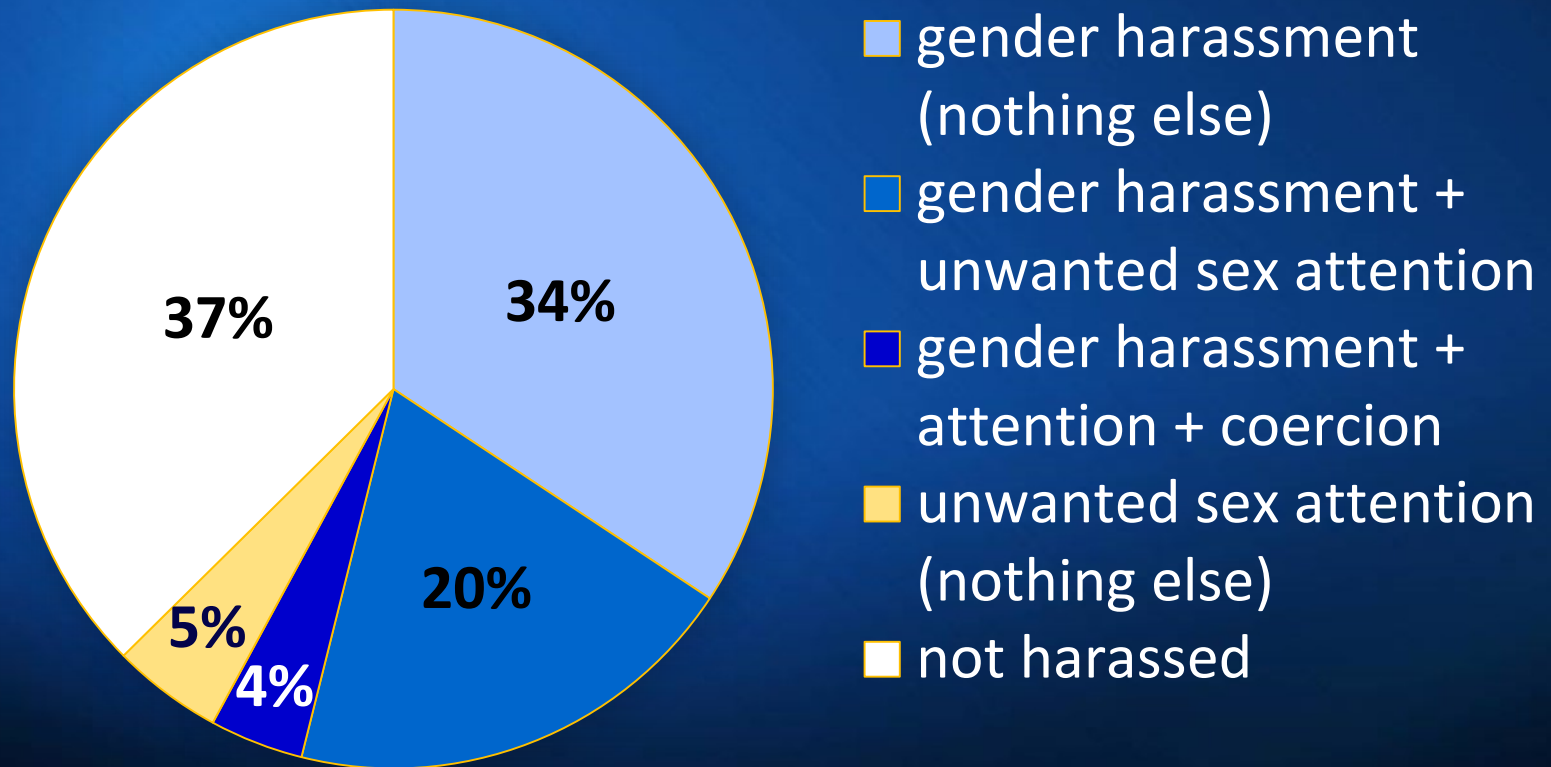
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Fitzgerald's Tripartite Model of Sexual Harassment



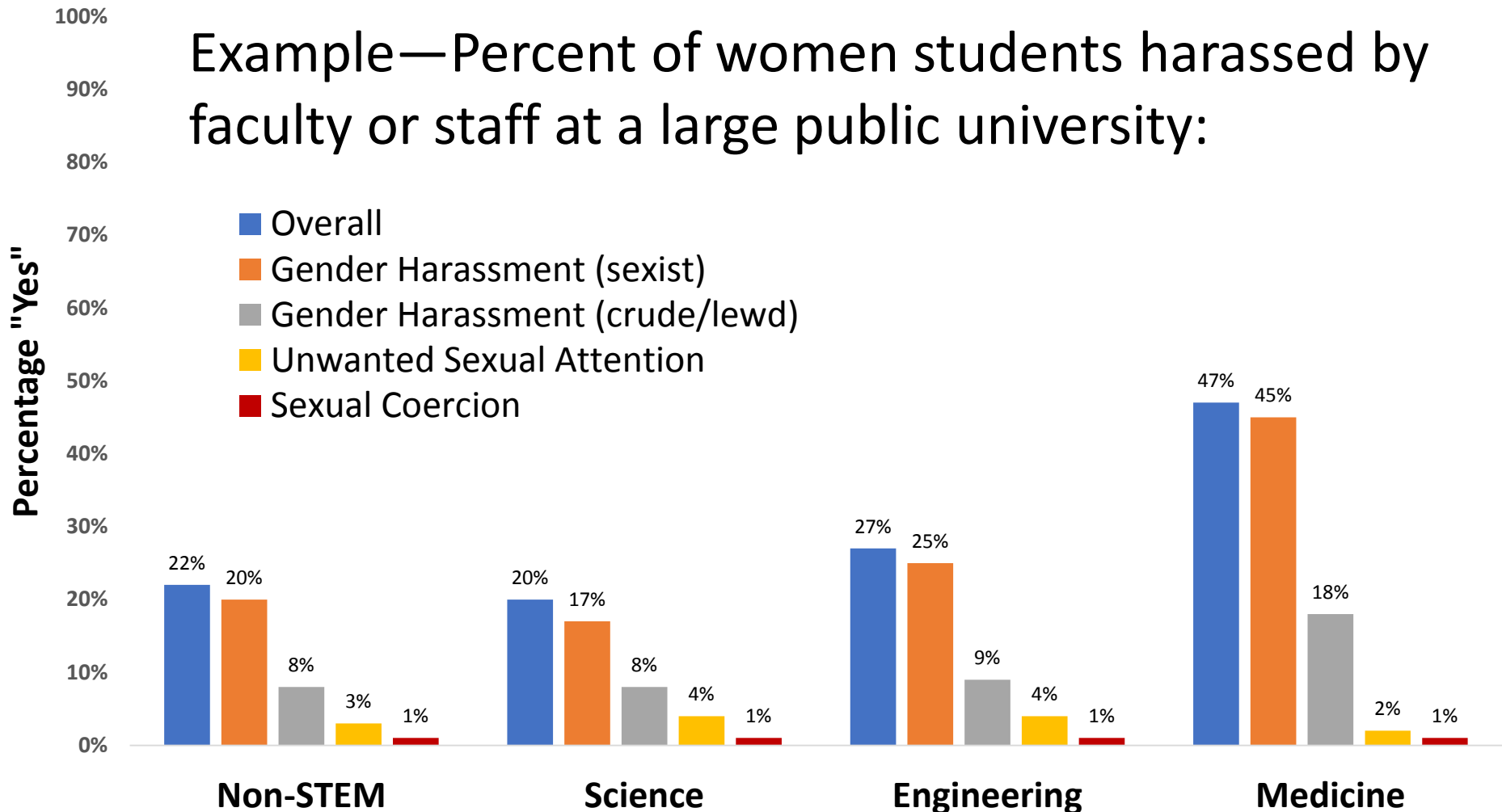
Of the Subtypes of Sexual Harassment: Gender Harassment = Most Common

Example – Percent of women faculty/staff harassed by coworkers or supervisors at a large public university:



Also for Women Students: Gender Harassment = Most Common

Example—Percent of women students harassed by faculty or staff at a large public university:



THE ICEBERG OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT

rape
sexual coercion
relentless pressure for dates

come-ons

unwanted sex talk

sexual images,
porn, cartoons

obscene gestures
(masturbation)

vulgar name-calling
("slut", "c*nt")

crude comments
about bodies

misogyny
("women don't
belong")

masculinity slurs
("pu**y," "fag")

infantilization
("baby", "dear")

denigration of
working mothers

professional
sabotage

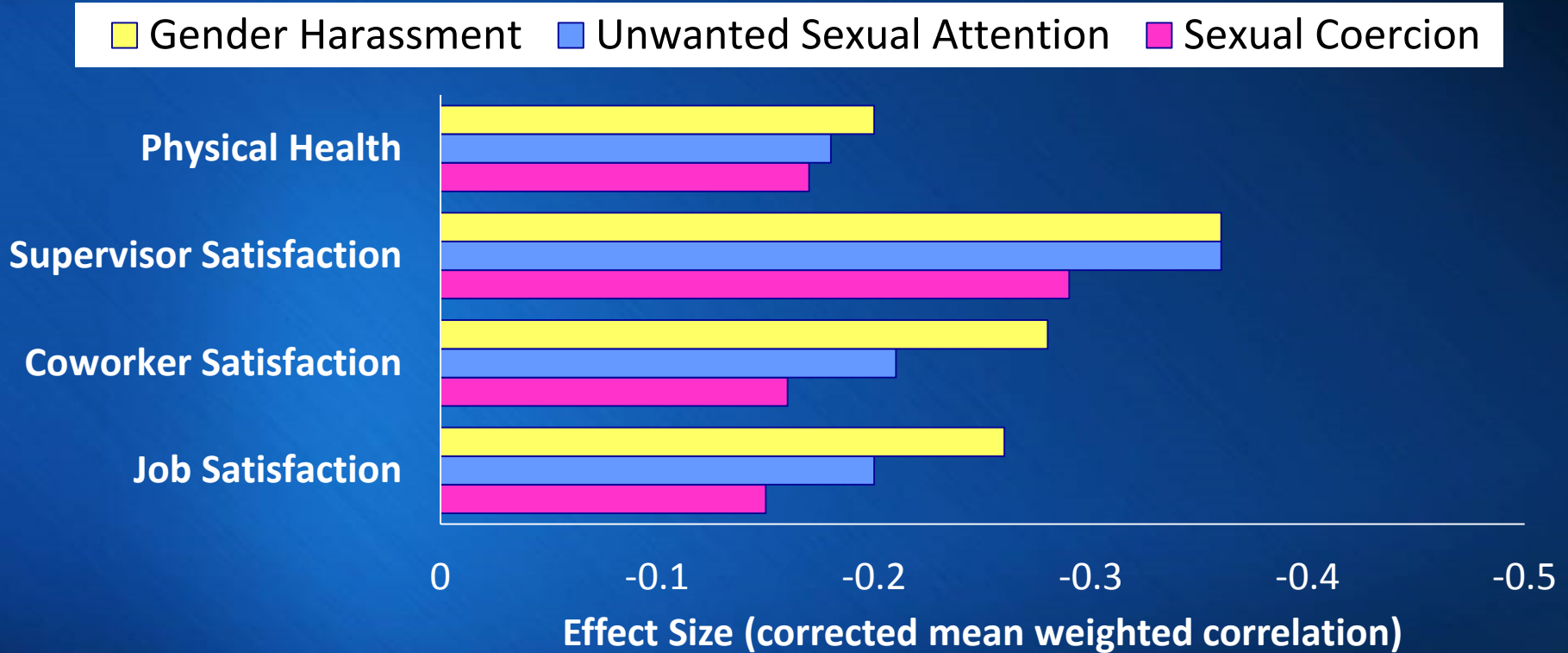
put-downs

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Sojo et al. (2016) Meta-Analysis

(integrating results across 88 studies, N = 73,877 women)



Key conclusion: Gender harassment has at least as great - if not greater - impact on professional & personal health, compared to unwanted sexual attention & sexual coercion.

Sojo et al. (2016) Interpretation

- *“Sexual coercion and unwanted sexual attention are traumatic for the people involved, and more likely to result in court cases and public reporting. However, in many work settings, these intense experiences are low-frequency events...The more frequent, less intense, and often unchallenged gender harassment, sexist discrimination, sexist organizational climate...appear at least as detrimental for women’s well-being. **They should not be considered lesser forms of sexism.**”*

**Policies
Procedures
Penalties**



**coerced sex
sexual assault
relentless pressure for dates**

come-ons

unwanted sex talk

**sexual images,
porn, cartoons**

**obscene gestures
(masturbation)**

**vulgar name-calling
("slut", "c*nt")**

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put-downs

What About Men -- Can't They be Harassed Too??? Yes.

More often than not...

- The perpetrator is also a man
- The behavior entails gender harassment (in the form of “not man enough” insults)
 - for doing childcare, housework, or other stereotypically female activities
 - for not participating in crude/lewd commentary about women
 - for being sensitive, soft-spoken, petite, gay (e.g., “sissy”, “girl”, “pu**y”, “fag”)