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The Role of Support Following Workplace Harassment Experiences

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Education degree in Psychology

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The Role of Support Following Workplace Harassment Experiences

Abstract

Experiences of harassment and violence within the workplace in Canada are an increasingly serious concern. Three-quarters (71.4%) of Canadian workers in a recent survey experienced harassment and/or violence at work in the past year (Berlingieri et al., 2022). Following harassment and violence at work, individuals experience a wide range of negative consequences including mental health issues, physical health issues, and depleted social support networks. Through semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis, this study explored the role that support (including social, familial, and organizational) played following experiences of harassment and violence at work. Work environments are continuously perpetuating unhealthy and harassing behaviours, through a lack of support for victim-survivors. These individuals received support from those both within and outside of the workplace, which aided in feelings of validation and understanding. These supports, however, were not enough to change the toxic workplace cultures that perpetuate feelings of secrecy and continue to allow these harassing and violent behaviours to continue to occur. These participants advocated for a change in policy, reporting procedures, and workplace cultures, to ensure that victim-survivors do not have to continue to live and work with the fallout of the harassment and/or violence that they endured.

Keywords: harassment, violence, social support, familial support, organizational support

Lay Audience Summary

Three-quarters of Canadian workers experienced workplace harassment within the past year. When they turned to their workplace for support, however, they felt as though nothing good came out of it, leaving them feeling unsupported (Berlingieri et al., 2022). Workplace harassment can have lifelong impacts on individuals who experience it (Couto & Lawoko, 2011; Hsieh, 2018; Panos, 2004), including breakdowns in their personal relationships leaving these individuals to feel like they have no one to turn to for support (Berlingieri et al., 2022). Research that has looked at the role of support from others after experiences of workplace harassment, has found that social support has dramatic, positive impacts on the ways that people are able to deal with the consequences of workplace harassment.

The goal of this research project was to determine how this knowledge can be used to help those experiencing workplace harassment get more support from their workplace and from others, to ultimately stop workplace harassment from occurring in the first place. This project demonstrated that not only does support from friends, family, and co-workers help a person feel understood and validated in their feelings, but also that not having support from one's workplace can cause further problems for these individuals. Overall, these participants felt that they had to keep their experiences and its impacts on them a secret from others because of the way that their workplaces went about handling reports of workplace harassment. This created more negative consequences for the participants and could only be changed by altering the cultures that workplaces create.

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Thank you to those who participated in these interviews and who shared their stories with us. It is not easy to share such traumatic and personal experiences, not only to a stranger but also for the world to hear. Your stories and experiences have touched my heart and have truly helped me in understanding the large impacts that harassment and violence can have on one's life. Thank you for allowing me to share your stories and allow for your voices to be heard, I commend you for your braveness and strength.

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The Role of Support Following Experiences of Harassment and Violence at the Workplace

Harassment and violence at work are widely experienced phenomena among Canadian workers. In a recent Canadian survey, Berlingieri et al. (2022), found that almost three-quarters (71.4%) of the workers had experienced some type of harassment or violence at work in the past two years. Within this survey, when the individuals reported these experiences, most felt as though reporting “made no difference or made the situation worse” (p. 20), often leaving them feeling unsatisfied with the way that things were handled. Harassment and violence at work can have lasting impacts on an individual’s life both at work and in their personal lives, including physical, financial, organizational, and mental health problems (Dillon, 2012). Having support from other individuals during this time has been found to be of need when experiencing harassment or violence at work (MacQuarrie et al., 2004).

This paper is specifically looking at how the various forms of support (i.e., familial, social, and organizational), for survivor-victims of workplace harassment and/or violence, differentially impact workers’ experiences. The findings of this study could inform employers and policymakers to implement more realistic and readily available resources and support systems within their employees’ lives, ultimately helping prevent the negative impacts that harassment and violence at work cause.

Literature Review

What Are Harassment and Violence?

Definitions of harassment and violence vary between studies, depending on the conceptualization of the researcher. Additionally, the intersectional experiences of unique individuals can influence their perceptions of what harassment and violence entail. There is a need to apply an intersectional lens to appreciate that different people experience violence and

harassment at different rates, can experience different forms of violence and harassment, are responded to differently when disclosing violence, and have different barriers to accessing help. The International Labor Organization (ILO) in 2019, define workplace violence and harassment as “a range of unacceptable behaviors and practices, or threats thereof, whether a single occurrence or repeated, that aim at, result in, or are likely to result in physical, psychological, sexual, or economic harm” (p. 1). Included within the broader category is the “use of physical bodily force or weapons to either threaten or cause harm, harassment, interferences, name-calling, false allegations, and bullying” (Shier, 2018, p. 4); as well as psychological violence such as the “threat of physical force against another person/group that can result in harm to physical, mental, spiritual, moral, or social development” (Zhao et al., 2016, p. 2). The World Health Organization (WHO) similarly defines workplace violence broadly as including “any situation in which staff members are attacked, threatened, or harmed by any unreasonable treatment or behavior that threatens their safety, well-being, or health at the workplace and relating circumstances” (Yeh et al., 2020, p. 2).

Sexual harassment may be defined as instances of unwanted sexual behaviour upon a worker, typically by a person of superior authority, which affects the worker’s “ability to work or creates an intimidating or offensive atmosphere” Kleiner and Tsai (1999, p. 1), and is a type of harassment that can also occur in the workplace. Statistics Canada (2021, p. 1), found that “one in four women (25%) and one in six men (17%), reported having personally experienced inappropriate sexualized behaviours in their workplace”. Workplace violence of all forms may be perpetrated by employers or supervisors on their employees and can occur between work colleagues or from external sources at work such as clients or customers (Baron & Neuman, 1996).

Workplace aggression is another form of violence/harassment that can occur at work and can be defined as “any behaviour initiated by employees that are intended to harm another individual in their organization or the organization itself” (Dillon, 2012, p. 15). Aggression at the workplace has been seen to occur more frequently in verbal, indirect, and passive forms (Baron & Neuman, 1996). The authors propose the “effect/danger ratio” theory in which it is theorized that aggression at work is typically performed by individuals in ways that effectively harm the victim while ensuring that they do not get ‘caught’. Thus, according to this theory, verbal, indirect, and passive forms of aggression occur more frequently because they are easier to hide and involve less obvious forms of aggression (Baron & Neuman, 1996). Bowen et al. (2011), also explain aggression in terms of instrumental and reactive aggression, in which instrumental aggression is more goal-oriented and planned while reactive aggression occurs as a reaction to another behaviour. Aggression at work can also include psychological and non-physical forms of aggression and can have lasting impacts on mental well-being (Dillon, 2012).

Experiences of harassment and violence at work can also be seen in the form of bullying, in which an individual can experience “long-term, recurrent, and serious harassment” by someone at their workplace (Strandmark & Hallberg, 2007, p. 1). Bullying has been seen to occur due to a wide variety of reasons, including perpetrators wanting to prove their power over the victim to “devalue” them, “betray” them, and get them fired (p. 5). Bullying can also be seen as a form of organizational violence, in which the organization knowingly allows the bullying and violence to occur and creates an unsafe environment for their employees (Bowen et al., 2011).

Workplace violence also occurs from external sources at work such as clients or customers (Baron & Neuman, 1996). Often, individuals tend to view workplace violence as a

normal part of the job, which hinders the reporting and studying of this phenomenon in certain professions, especially among healthcare providers and nurses (Dadashzadeh, 2019).

In this research project, the term harassment was used to encompass all forms of workplace harassment and violence, including workplace aggression, sexual harassment, and bullying perpetuated both by individuals within a workplace as well as by clients or customers. Individuals who participated in interviews for this research project were given the opportunity to explain and describe harassment in their own words, from their perspective which was determined based on their knowledge and experiences. Interviewers were given explicit instructions pertaining to the way in which they listened for and understood the experiences of harassment explained by the participants. The first note in the interview guide (See Appendix A) states: “Ask participant to describe their experience of harassment. Pay particular attention to the context within the workplace of the experience– e.g., how participants describe their experiences, whether they use specific words/terms repeatedly, how they label their experience(s), where the harassment took place (at office, at a workplace event, online), duration of harassment, who was involved (position within the workplace of the harasser, were coworkers present, etc.). Be attentive to not label a participant’s experience for them.” This guide, points to the interchangeable use of definitions under the umbrella of workplace harassment, to ensure that all individual experiences of harassment were included.

Impacts of Harassment on Workers and Workplaces

Experiencing harassment in the workplace has negative impacts on both individuals and organizations. For individuals, experiencing workplace violence can have long-lasting impacts on mental health including depression, burnout, and post-traumatic stress disorder (Couto & Lawoko, 2011; Hsieh, 2018; Panos, 2004). Additional personal consequences of harassment and

violence at work include negative “long-term financial, mental, and physical health” outcomes (Berlingieri et al., 2022, pg. 15). In a recent Canadian survey, Berlingieri et al. (2022), found that one in three workers who had experienced harassment and violence at work reported experiencing at least one of a range of negative outcomes because of the harassment. These problems included difficulties sleeping, impacts on personal relationships, loss of loved careers, loss of communities, and substance abuse (Berlingieri et al., 2022). Additionally, 35% of those who experienced harassment saw a “negative impact on personal/social life”, 30% had difficulties sleeping afterwards, and 19% saw a “negative emotional impact” from the harassment (Berlingieri et al., 2022).

The results of a study performed by Gale et al. (2019), found that experiences of and exposure to workplace harassment including verbal and sexual harassment, were positively correlated with negative outcomes such as depression, problems with sleep, and even bone fractures/injuries. These experiences seemed to be heightened for those who experienced more harassment within a one-year period. Henning et al. (2017) also found that experiences of workplace harassment led to comorbid outcomes, meaning that oftentimes there are multiple different consequences from experiences of harassment that the survivor-victims must endure. Some of these comorbid consequences can also include alcohol use/abuse, psychopathy, anxiety, aggression, and more (Henning et al., 2017). These studies and results point to the underlying issues that experiences of workplace harassment either exacerbate or create, leaving the survivor-victims to tend to these issues on their own, even after the harassment has stopped.

For organizations, Dillon (2012) found that workplace violence can lead to organizational impacts such as more absences, theft, medical bills, and more. Workers have also reported being late to work more often/leaving work early/missed work time (63%), less trust in their employers

and co-workers (35%), and less productive work (43%), (Berlingieri et al., 2022), all following the instances of harassment and violence at work. It has been found that these consequences are even more severe for those who have experienced sexual forms of harassment within the workplace. For those who experienced workplace sexual harassment, 70% of them showed increased signs of working less by missing workdays, leaving work early, or being late. 55% showed a decrease in their productivity at work following experiences of sexual harassment. 46% felt a loss of trust in co-workers and 41% felt a decreased sense of trust in their superiors, following sexual harassment (Berlingieri et al., 2022).

Intersectional Understanding

Not one experience of harassment and violence is the same and individuals can define violence differently based on their unique experiences and perceptions. Intersectionality theory acknowledges that reality is constructed through our “multiple positionings” within society and that these different identities that each of us hold, come together to create our experiences (Phoenix & Pattynama, 2006). In relation to harassment and violence at work, the way that one experiences these situations are impacted by these identities, as one individual from one background, can experience a different form of harassment than someone else of a similar background (for example, two female-identifying individuals who are both of Indigenous backgrounds, who experience two different forms of harassment at work). These intersecting factors including gender, race, ethnicity, and social class, work together to create one’s experiences (Collins, 1989).

Many individuals may also experience harassment to a greater extent, due to the nature of their job and their social identity. Individuals who experience greater extents of harassment can include marginalized workers/individuals, who may perform what is called “precarious work”.

As Vosko (2006, p. 3) states, “precarious employment encompasses forms of work involving limited social benefits and statutory entitlements, job insecurity, low wages, and high risks of ill-health”. The workers who perform such jobs are sometimes referred to as marginalized workers/populations. Precarious employment, explained by Vosko (2006, p. 3-4), is “shaped by employment status, form of employment, and dimensions of labour market insecurity, as well as social context and social location”. Reuter et al. (2020), found evidence suggesting that those working within precarious employment situations such as those who do not have predictable schedules, work multiple jobs, and who have little knowledge of health and safety procedures at work, are more likely to experience different forms of workplace harassment and violence, specifically unwanted sexual attention, and sexual harassment.

Marginalized populations can also include individuals who are part of the 2LGBTQIA+ community and “racial/ethnic minority individuals” (DiLillo & Littleton, 2021). It has been found that those who are part of a marginalized population, experience higher rates of sexual harassment at the workplace and within other settings (DiLillo & Littleton 2021; Hawkey, 2021). Thus, individuals who face structural violence from society are more likely to face harassment at work, employees in precarious positions are also more likely to experience harassment, and individuals who face structural violence are more likely to be precariously employed creating a dual disadvantage/risk.

Not only can marginalized populations experience harassment at higher rates, but they may also face many barriers to reporting, which can intensify the impact of the harassment. According to Vosko (2006), there may be many reasons why an individual does not report harassment at work, including fear of losing their job, fear that their organization/perpetrator will fight back, “lack of information about resources”, rigid/unclear definitions of harassment, and

more. For workers who are precariously employed, these fears may be intensified. On top of the already mentioned job insecurity factors, other socially constructed factors can contribute to the barriers that individuals face when deciding whether to report the experience or not. For example, a Latinx person experiencing harassment may be less likely to report due to concerns that their employer would not recognize the racist nature of the harassment they were experiencing or respond by judging them with racist stereotypes as being prone to “being dramatic” or “over-reacting”. The perceptions that one has about whether an organization would support an individual if they were to report harassment, is an important barrier to reporting. It has also been found that workplaces with poor responses to harassment are likely to have workers who experience harassment, who are also less likely to report it. (Jo et al., 2019).

The Role of Support

For this paper, the focus is the role of support following experiences of harassment and violence at work. The role that support plays after experiences of harassment and violence, has been studied in various settings. Support can be divided into three groups in terms of where the support is coming from, including social, familial, and organizational support. MacQuarrie et al. (2004), conducted a study in which they examined the instances of sexual harassment at work among women. The researchers found that the most common theme that women discussed is the need for support. Specifically, these women mentioned that support would aid in coping with the experience of sexual harassment and suggested that support is something that those who experience sexual harassment need (MacQuarrie et al., 2004). These women sought support from co-workers, social workers, counsellors, sexual assault centers, family doctors, and support workers. The main theme surrounding support found was that these women wanted someone to

support them and who understood their experiences, whether that be due to their own personal experiences of harassment or due to the nature of their job (MacQuarrie et al., 2004).

For this research study, the role of social and familial support was investigated to determine how influential these types of support are in the experiences of survivor victims' lives, using organizational support to further highlight the role of support in these experiences. Based on the literature, support can come from many different avenues and can be experienced in various ways based in an individual's life, further supporting the need for an intersectional view of these experiences.

Social support can include “emotional, information, appraisal, and material assistance [and], is the positive spillover from significant others to targets” (Pellegrini et al., 2021). Social support “aids coping, lowers strain, provides hope, and confidence, and contributes to resilience” (p. 426). Social support can also “be instrumental (e.g., financial assistance or the provision of resources to change the environment), informational (e.g., advice), or emotional (e.g., appreciation or appraisal)” (Couto & Lawoko, 2011, pg. 2). Social support theory has created a definition and explanation of what social support includes and how it relates to violence. According to social support theory, social support is “availability through social relationships connected to external resources” (Zhao et al., 2016, p. 2). Social support theory looks at these types of support among marginalized and vulnerable workers/populations. When using this theory in their study, it was found that the most used types of support by nurses were their own abilities, talking with co-workers, familial support, and reporting to a supervisor (Zhao et al., 2016).

Theoretical Orientation

Different theories have been proposed to explain the occurrence of violence and harassment at work and how it pertains to support within one's life. The conservation of resources theory explained by Yeh et al. (2020), use this theory to determine when one decides to leave their job following workplace violence. According to this theory, when one experiences stressors at work such as violence, this causes them to "consume" their inner resources ultimately leading to increased levels of stress, job dissatisfaction, reduced feelings of safety at work, and intentions to quit (turnover). Having control over one's tasks at work is described as job control and can act as a buffer against the effects of workplace violence, as it can help people feel more in control of their work environment. Social support can help a person to regain their resources and feel replenished at work. Having more experience within the workplace can also aid in the process of supporting oneself against the negative outcomes of harassment. Specific types of support that the authors found to help with work stressors (such as being overloaded by their work, verbal abuse by clients, time restraints, and high psychological demands) include encouragement and support from family and co-workers (Yeh et al. 2020).

Another theory that has been used to explain the relationship between workplace violence and support is the deterioration model of social support. Yang et al. (2021), explain this model by stating that "workplace violence acts as a potential stressor that erodes available social support networks, due to increased danger of workplace behaviours" (p. 2). When workplace violence occurs, an individual's network of support becomes depleted due to an increased sense of danger at the workplace. With this increased sense of danger, individuals become warier and more likely to avoid or draw themselves away from other people within the workplace, as they feel a decreased sense of trust with these co-workers. The authors found that when violence occurs in the workplace, victims can experience symptoms of stress, burnout, anxiety,

depression, and turnover. Through this model, these effects occur due to the lowered amount of support coming from within the workplace and the strain in the relationships that occurred when the trust was diminished, putting more pressure on the individual experiencing the violence. Perceived support from supervisors, however, was seen as influential in reducing these symptoms (Yang et al., 2021).

The minority stress model is a third model that is useful to explore the effect of social support following workplace harassment. The minority stress model proposes that when individuals of minority status/groups are incongruent with dominant societal expectations and discourses, these minority individuals experience heightened discrimination and stress from society (Meyer, 1995). The minority stress model posits that when an individual of an already stigmatized group faces further social isolation and stigmatization from others, this is when they are most at risk for negative psychological outcomes (Meyer, 2003). These stressors are proposed to occur from three different avenues including external stressors such as prejudicial events occurring in one's life, "vigilance" from always expecting these events to occur, and internalized stigma (Hendricks & Testa, 2012). Together, these stressors work in combination with each other within an individual's life to create psychological problems to a greater extent for minority-status individuals.

The minority stress model can aid individuals in understanding the role of social support by highlighting the negative outcomes that individuals experience when this support is not received. If one is already being stigmatized and further experiences no social support from others, the negative effects of the harassment/violence may be exacerbated due to not having anyone to confide in. These factors, on top of the already existing systemic issues that minority-status individuals face, can then create an intolerable work environment. In relation to the

workplace, individuals of minority status often have the difficult decision of whether to disclose their minority identity if it is not visible. Not disclosing can result in lower job satisfaction however, disclosing minority status within the workplace can lead to higher rates of discrimination and possible harassment/violence (Velez et al., 2013).

Using these perspectives, the current research can be informed by these theories, as they acknowledge how important support is in experiences of harassment and violence at work and what consequences not having support can have within an individual's life. Support can be received through many different avenues within one's life including from friends, colleagues, family, the organization itself, and managers/superiors. Having no support following experiences of workplace violence and harassment, individuals would have to deal with the negative outcomes on their own, with no one to turn to for advice or guidance. Support from others has been discussed as being "central to their [victim-survivors'] ability to get through the experience" (MacQuarrie et al., 2004, pg. 75); highlighting the importance of having this support to deal with the aftermath of workplace harassment and violence.

Support from Friends and Family

Support from a social network can be viewed from multiple perspectives and can include friends and family. Having a strong social support network has been found to aid in coping with harassment and the mental health outcomes of the experience (Kapetanovic & Skoog, 2020; Mitchell, 2014; Vandemark, 2008). Strong social support can also act as a "buffer" against the negative effects of harassment and violence (Van Emmerik et al., 2007). Social support can also be negatively impacted by the experiences of harassment. It has been found that those who have experienced harassment have seen a negative impact on their relationships with family and

friends, sometimes even being treated differently after the fact (Hustache et al., 2009; Stark, Landis, Thomson, & Potts, 2016).

Hsieh (2016) explains that having a strong “social network integration” aids with maintaining a healthy physical and mental well-being, especially during times of heightened stress. These social networks as described by Hsieh (2016), involve having a wide variety of strong relationships with others including friends and family. This is especially important in increasing resilience following experiences of violence and aids in building post-traumatic growth (Hsieh, 2016). Additionally, in cross-cultural studies pertaining to support following workplace violence, it has been found that support from friends is one of the biggest contributors to building resilience among victim-survivors (Hsieh, 2017). Support from friends in these cases aided individuals in looking for more support and in experiencing more positive outcomes following the violence (Hsieh, 2017). It has been noted that a strong predictor in positive outcomes in terms of support is whether individuals receive support from friends and those outside of the workplace, including family members (Zhang, 2020).

Similarly to support from friends, the support of family members can significantly impact one’s experiences in all walks of life. It has been found that workplace violence can cause more conflict within families as individuals who cannot do anything about the violence at work tend to take out their frustrations on family members when they get home (Lim & Lee, 2011). Lastly, romantic, and parent-child relationships can be negatively affected by experiences of workplace violence or harassment, as these individuals tend to then have difficulties communicating with their families and children in the same ways as they did before the incidents (Pellegrini et al., 2021).

It has also been found that within racialized populations, participants believed that reporting harassment would have a negative effect on their families and on how their community viewed them (Fielden et al., 2010). It has also been found that individuals who experience harassment and who confide in their families with this information, sometimes feel as though their relationship with that family member has been negatively impacted, going as far as feeling blamed for the assault by that family member (MacQuarrie et al., 2004). Thus, different cultural values of an individual's family may impact their experiences of perceived support.

On one hand, familial support can be an important form of support when dealing with violence at work, as it has been seen to aid in the experiences of resilience during these times (Hsieh, 2017). Familial support has been seen to be a protective factor against the negative effects of violence experienced by nurses at work (Hsieh, 2017), as it aids in coping with these situations (Zhang, 2020). On the other hand, however, familial support can also have negative impacts on one's experiences when confiding in family members about harassment and violence at work. It has been found that when women experienced sexual harassment and confided in family members about it, they then viewed "the harasser as more powerful and socially distant" (Cortina, 2004, p. 577); this could point to the fact that confiding in others may alter the way an individual views their experiences of harassment/violence which ultimately impacts their experiences of familial support during these times.

Co-Worker Support

Co-worker dynamics play into the experiences of harassment at work as well, as this can determine whether someone confides in another colleague about the incidents. As Herscovis (2021) explains, the reporting process is dependent on an entire network of people. The author explains that when one is silent about harassment at work, it is usually influenced by

the social network that exists within the workplace. Similarly, Clarke (2014), found that whether a person believes that their co-workers will support them in their claims, influences if one reports. Cortina and Magley (2003), also found that workers look to their co-workers to help them cope with their experiences of harassment, however, they also found that if the individual fears that they will be poorly viewed after helping the victim, they are less likely to help.

Support from co-workers has been cited in various studies pertaining to workplace harassment and violence. It has been found that having support from co-workers is a strong predictor of positive outcomes including resilience, job satisfaction, workplace cohesion, and the ability to look for further support following experiences of workplace violence and harassment (Brough, 2005; Courcy, 2019; Hsieh, 2016; Van Emmerik et al., 2007). In fact, being able to talk about and vent to co-workers about certain experiences within the workplace has been seen to contribute to one's ability to process the events (Van Emmerik et al., 2007). Additionally, support from colleagues has been seen to be one of the most sought out and used forms of social support, since one can receive support from co-workers immediately after the harassment and/or violence occurs (Zhang, 2020). This is an important factor to keep in mind when thinking about the support that a workplace can offer because of the evidence pointing toward the strong influence of co-worker support in the outcomes experienced by victim-survivors.

Organizational/Workplace Support

Organizational/workplace support can include supports and resources that an organization has in place in terms of harassment/violence and reporting, policies surrounding harassment/violence in the workplace, employee assistance programs (EAP), and support from managers/supervisors. Perceptions of organizational support have been found to contribute to the likelihood of one reporting instances of harassment. Specifically, when employees believe that

their organization tolerates harassment and do not believe that their employer would be supportive of this claim, they are less likely to report the instances of harassment to these employers (Clarke, 2014; Jo et al., 2019).

In terms of deciding whether to report their experiences to managers/supervisors, victim-survivors feel more confident in doing so when managers are known to have reacted positively to similar reports in the past. In fact, Cortina and Wasti (2005) explain that support from managers is a key factor for women who experience harassment/violence in male-dominated environments in coming forward about their experiences. They state that “consistent, proactive leadership behaviour of this kind may even be more important than anti-harassment policies in the reporting and management of harassing behaviour” (p. 183). They continue to explain that women within male-dominated workplaces who experience harassment/violence seek more support from managers and supervisors when managers have proved that they do not tolerate harassment and take reports of it seriously (Cortina and Wasti, 2005). When individuals decide not to report due to a fear of the outcome and reactions that will be received, they can experience further negative consequences such as strained relationships, mental health issues, physical health issues, and a decreased desire to continue working (Bunn Hiller et al., 1997).

The Current Study

This paper is interested in examining the role that support plays within an individual’s life following experiences of harassment and violence at work. The central aim of this research is to determine where an individual is receiving support from (friends, family, co-workers, intimate partners) and how (if at all) these interactions impact the relationships that the individual has with the people that they are turning to for support. It is a goal of this research to determine if there are any avenues of support that could be playing a larger role in these individuals’ lives, to

aid in the development of proper support networks both at the workplace and in personal lives, and to ultimately aid in coping with experiences of harassment and violence at work.

Researcher Positionality

As previously mentioned, an intersectional approach to this research process was taken into consideration when creating and developing emerging themes through the stories of the participants. It was the aim of me as the researcher to take these intersecting identities into account when explaining their experiences. It is important to note that although an intersectional approach was kept in mind, it was not possible to ensure that the participants came from intersecting identities, and this may be reflected in the findings of the present study. As a researcher, it is crucial to take these intersecting identities at face value and incorporate them into the meanings that the individuals take from their experiences. I brought this openness and understanding of intersectionality into the research process, as someone who has not personally experienced similar events to some of the participants. I understand how important it is for their voices to be listened to and heard and this is what I aimed to do in my research.

I believe that when performing research with individuals who have experienced potentially traumatic events such as harassment and violence, it is important to keep in mind that if I have not experienced what they have, it is easy to try to impose my beliefs on the participants. With this research specifically, my goal was to create an overall paper that truly encapsulates the participants' experiences and needs, from their point of view. This can be especially difficult when I do not have immense knowledge on this topic and do not know what these individuals have experienced personally. Thus, a more in-depth literature review and examination of the previous research was conducted before these interviews took place.

Woodwiss (2017) provides a great explanation of the cautions that researchers need to keep in mind when performing narrative research with women from a feminist perspective. Woodwiss (2017, p. 33) states, “women may find themselves trapped by the stories they come to tell or that others tell about them”. I kept this in mind when conducting this research project, as I did not want to force a story onto these individuals. For this research process, to prevent this from occurring, interviews were carefully transcribed, and I did not make any assumptions about the participants from the data that was collected.

Lastly, I acknowledge that I came into the interviews in a position of power and wonder why these individuals would want to talk to me about their lives. As the researcher, I am a young student who has not had as many life experiences as the participants and who has not experienced workplace harassment and violence personally. This creates a power differential between the interviewees and myself, as this may become apparent in the little knowledge that I have about this topic compared to the participants. This knowledge gap was addressed while ensuring the participants that as a researcher, I was merely there to help and to listen to their stories openly. Karnieli-Miller (2009) describes the power imbalance that often occurs between researcher and participant and suggests a co-construction of the research process in which researcher and participant work together to create the research project, both providing valuable skills during the process; this was my aim for the current project.

Methods

As Creswell & Poth (2018) describe qualitative research, it involves the studying of natural phenomena and meaning making through individuals’ experiences of these phenomena. Qualitative research interprets the meaning prescribed to these experiences by those who live them and creates data and interviews from them. From there, qualitative researchers bring the

meaning of these experiences to life through their research. Creswell (2013) provides an excellent description of qualitative research stating that it “begins with assumptions and the use of interpretive/theoretical frameworks that inform the study of research problems addressing the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (p. 44). Qualitative research is used to allow individuals to share their stories and to then create new theories that represent the lived experiences of those who endure specific problems within the world (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

This research study used qualitative methods to create themes and patterns that were commonly experienced by the participants to deepen our understanding of the meanings that these individuals place onto their lives. A phenomenological, thematic analysis approach was taken during this research process because phenomenology uses past literature and experiences to advance the researcher’s knowledge of the topic, while simultaneously coming into the process with an open mind to the new stories that will be heard (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A phenomenological thematic analysis of qualitative data involves researchers creating transcripts of the interviews conducted, keeping in every word that each participant states. Then, these transcripts are thoroughly read multiple times by each researcher, in search of recurring themes and patterns. From this, bucket categories or codes, are created to encapsulate the larger, broader topics found in these transcripts. Once these categories are created, the researchers then prescribe meaning to these categories, that relate to the lived experiences of the participants and explain how these meanings relate to past literature (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Thematic analysis was used due to its flexibility, as it allows the researcher to dive beyond a singular theoretical framework. Being able to move past the limits of a single theory, thematic analysis can be guided by multiple theories and past literature, in a way that truly

represents the topic being explored in relation to the participants' experiences. This then allows meaning to be created through the findings of the current study, which represent the unique lives and characteristics of the individuals involved in the study (Campbell et al., 2021).

Participants

The sample consisted of 17 individuals who were taken from a list of participants from a previous project titled *Marginalized Workers* which was conducted by Western University's Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children (CREVAWC). These individuals had completed an original survey pertaining to experiences of workplace harassment and violence and had responded "yes" to completing an interview to further describe their experiences. Due to limited funding, only a handful of individuals were randomly chosen to participate in these interviews.

To be eligible to participate, these individuals had to be at least 18 years of age or older and have experienced some form of workplace harassment and/or violence at some point in their lives. Approximately 180 individuals were randomly chosen for interviews and were initially contacted in June of 2022 (following the approval from Western's Research Ethics Board (WREB)), to inquire about their continuing interest in participating in an interview (See Appendix B). If the participants responded in a timely manner and agreed to the interview, an interview day and time was provided to the individual between July and August of 2022, via email (See Appendix C). To aid in their decision to continue further, participants were then provided with a Letter of Information and Consent Form describing the study's purpose along with risks and benefits to participating (See Appendix D) and with a list of resources throughout Canada for those experiencing workplace harassment and violence (See Appendix E).

Participants were not required to disclose their age, race, or gender identity as part of the study. The workplace harassment and violence experienced by these participants were either ongoing, occurring throughout their careers, or past experiences that occurred only a few times. All the participants were female-identifying individuals, who worked for several federally regulated organizations from across Canada. Almost half of the participants experienced some form of sexual harassment/violence and all the participants experienced non-sexual harassment and/or violence.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured open-ended questions were formulated to ask the participants about their experiences of harassment and violence at the workplace. For this project specifically, the focus was directed toward how the participants talked about support and the role that it played or plays in their experiences of harassment and/or violence. The interviews were set up with the participants via Zoom and were audio recorded for further transcription after the interview. Interviews were semi-structured and approximately 60 minutes in length.

In relation to support, participants were asked if their experiences of harassment and/or violence impacted their relationships with those around them and how they would describe these changes if any occurred. In terms of workplace/organizational support, participants were asked what measures helped them get through their situation and what supports their workplace had available for those who experience harassment at work. They were also asked if their workplace had policies surrounding workplace harassment in place. Participants were also asked if they shared their experiences with anyone and how they would describe the response and support they received from those individuals. Additionally, participants were asked whom they go to for support, specifically asking about family members, spouses, and friends. Lastly, participants

were asked whether they believed that the support provided by their organization was effective in aiding with their experiences. Following the completion of interviews, audio recordings were de-identified and uploaded to a secure drive via transcription software called Sonix, with access to these recordings restricted to those conducting the interviews. The recordings were then transcribed using Sonix and double-checked by interviewers to ensure transcriptions were accurately portraying participants' answers.

Data Analysis

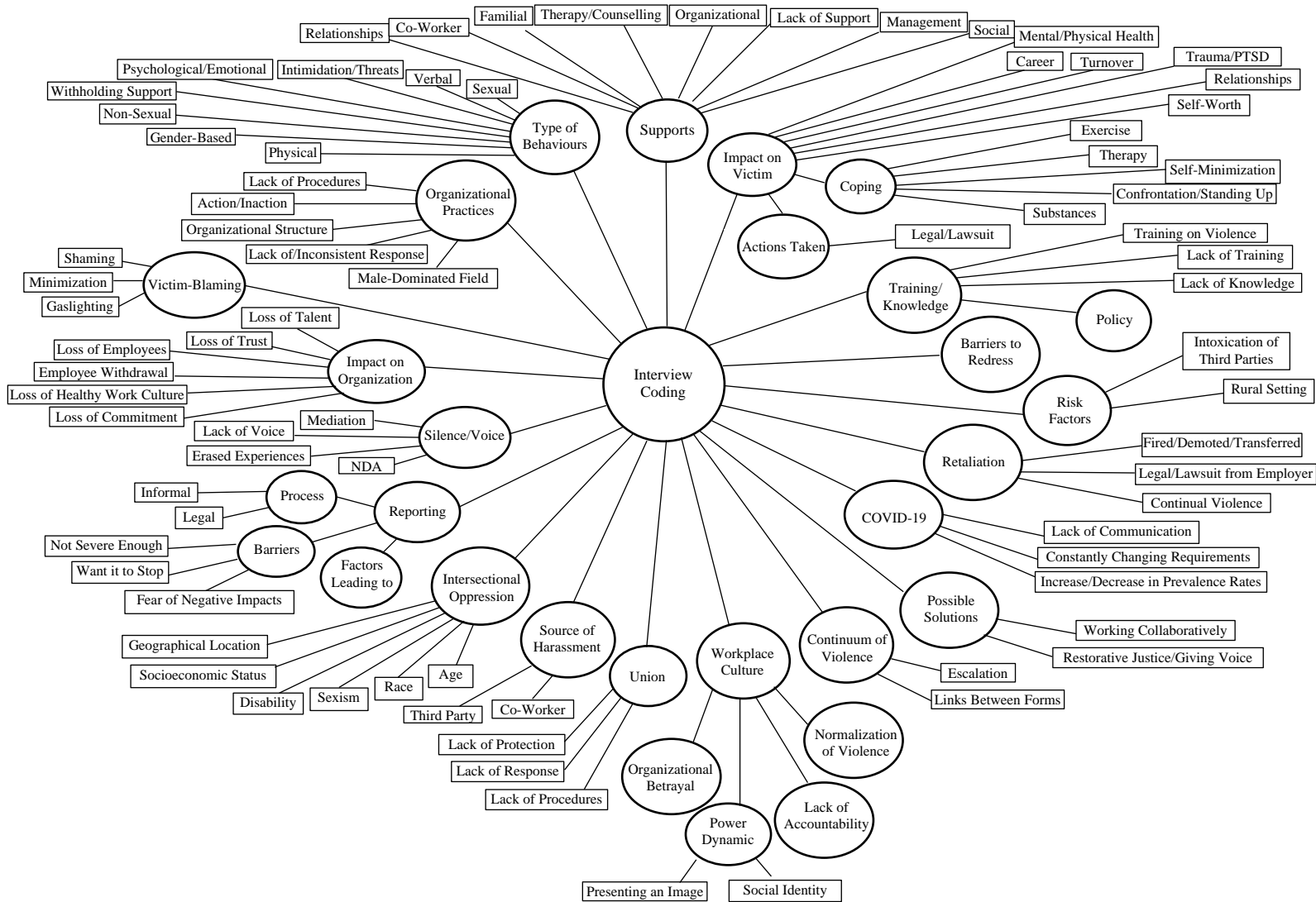
A thematic analysis approach to the data analysis stage was used. Thematic analysis is an exploratory approach to analyzing data, as it involves reading the data to find key themes and ideas that appear often (Guest et al., 2011). Themes are created from the data that represent specific ideas and key interpretations of the data, which are then named "codes" that group the data together based on similarity (Guest et al., 2011). Level one coding was first completed to determine the larger, broader codes that are seen in the bubbles in Figure 1. Transcripts of the interviews were then read again to determine level two codes, which are seen in the boxes in Figure 1. These level-two codes (also called sub-codes in this thesis) represent more specific experiences of the participants within the level-one codes.

Coding

For this research project, a group analysis approach was used. Each researcher independently read the same three transcriptions and identified emerging themes (codes). Next, the researchers met to share and discuss identified themes and agree on a code structure. After this, each researcher then individually analyzed a set of assigned interview transcripts using MaxQDA qualitative analysis software. Weekly group meetings were conducted to continue discussing the findings and any new emerging themes. A total of 28 codes were created from the interviews and

their main themes. 111 additional sub-codes then emerged from the data analysis process, revealing a wide range of experiences, and resulting outcomes of workplace harassment and violence (see Figure 1). For this research paper, the focus is on the role of support following experiences of harassment and violence at work and thus the theme that will be highlighted includes the theme of support, with the sub-themes of relationships, lack of supports, friends and familial, social, co-worker, and workplace/organizational (including EAP, therapy/counselling, and management/supervisor) support.

Fig. 1. Codes and subcodes used to guide data analysis and examine participants' experiences of harassment and violence.



To guide the determination of what codes to focus on when it comes to support, Table 1 presents the most important level one code and level two sub-codes for this research project along with the number of times that they were mentioned by the participants. The frequency of each code being mentioned highlights their significance when it comes to the participant's experiences. The level one code and level two sub-codes of support are explored to a deeper

extent due to the nature and topic of this specific project which is interested in the role of support following these experiences. It is important to note that some themes and sub-themes may have matched with and fit into multiple different codes, thus some quotes may apply to more than one level two sub-codes.

The level one code of support was divided into nine second-level sub-codes during data analysis, including relationships, co-workers, family, workplace/organizational, social, lack of support, management/supervisor, therapy/counselling and EAP (including insufficient resources/supports). For the results section, these sub-codes were then further divided into alike categories to aid in the understanding of each avenue of support that was explored at the beginning of this paper. These categories include social support, support from friends and family, co-worker support, relationships, workplace/organizational support, and lack of support.

The social support category explores the experiences of social support as a whole, while the other categories dive deeper into specific avenues of this support. Support from friends and family are explored together due to the literature that was found supporting the similarities in the ways in which victim-survivors receive support from friends and family. Relationships and co-worker support are both explored on their own, due to the uniqueness that each category brings to the topic of support and the ways that the participants spoke about them. The workplace/organizational support category will also explore that from management/supervisors, and EAP (including therapy/counselling) because these sub-codes all encompass the different ways in which an organization/workplace can support its employees. Additionally, the EAP section includes therapy/counselling because every participant explained that their EAP involved them going to therapy. Lastly, lack of supports is on its own, due to the large amount of information that was gathered in that category. From the information gathered within these

categories, several meaning themes were created to discuss the meaning derived from the participants' experiences in relation to support.

Table 1. A table of codes, subcodes, and their frequencies/the number of times they were mentioned/coded.

Code	Subcode	Frequency
Supports	Relationships	267
	Co-worker	21
	Familial	24
	Workplace/Organizational	11
	Social	9
	Lack of Supports	20
	Management/Supervisor	84
	Therapy/Counselling	13
	EAP	3
	10	

Additionally, to aid in the understanding of each sub-code, Table 2 describes the operational definition of each sub-code in relation to experiences of workplace harassment and violence and notes its corresponding frequency of codes. This table breaks down each sub-code to allow readers to understand where each avenue of support that is spoken about in the results section, comes from (See Table 2).

Table 2. Operational definitions of each sub-code and their corresponding frequency of codes.

Subcode	Definition	Frequency of Codes
Lack of Supports	When individuals do not receive sufficient resources and supports from those within their lives. This can include receiving negative responses from others when sharing their experiences with them, not being helped by a manager when going to them for advice and experiencing negative backlash from others following the harassment.	84
Social Support	Social support can include “emotional, information, appraisal, and material assistance [and], is the positive spillover from significant others to targets” (Pellegrini et al., 2021). Social support can also “be instrumental (e.g., financial assistance or the provision of resources to change the environment), informational (e.g., advice), or emotional (e.g., appreciation or appraisal)” (Couto & Lawoko, 2011, pg. 2). For this study, social support encompasses all forms of support that individuals receive including that from family, friends, co-workers, and organizations.	20
Familial Support	Support from a family member includes that of spouses, parents, and children. This can include a family member listening to one’s experiences, respecting their decisions surrounding the harassment, and aiding in their ability to cope with the harassment and violence.	11
Co-Worker Support	When an individual receives support from a co-worker, which can be seen in the form of a co-worker being a witness to the harassment, a co-worker allowing for an individual to vent about workplace experiences, and the ways in which co-workers interact with each other (whether that be in a negative or positive fashion).	24
Relationships	Having a mutual understanding and connection with another person. They can be negatively and/or positively affected by life circumstances such as experiences of harassment and violence.	21
Workplace/Organizational Support	This can include supports such as workplace policies and procedures surrounding harassment and violence. This can also include workplace culture and environments that condone/support or shut down harassment and violence.	9
Therapy/Counselling (Combined with EAP)	Employment assistant programs that are offered by workplaces to employees. These often include a predetermined and paid for number of therapy sessions along with anonymous helplines for employees to use if they experience harassment/violence.	3/10

Management/Supervisor Support	When managers and/or supervisors are supportive of their employees' claims of harassment and violence. This can also be seen in the form of managers aiding individuals in their decisions to report any experiences of harassment and violence and not perpetuating cultures of secrecy.	13
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Results

Characteristics of the Sample

Of the participants, the most common type of harassing/violent behaviours that they experienced included verbal harassment, intimidation/threats, withholding support/ostracizing/social isolation, non-sexual harassment/violence, and sexual harassment. Examples of verbal harassment experienced by the participants include inappropriate comments made towards/about the participants, inappropriate jokes made about the participants, and rude comments made toward the participants, all within the work setting. The sexual harassment experienced by the participants ranged from inappropriate touching to sexual assault, all occurring within the workplace context. Regarding the source of the harassment and violence, many of the harassers were co-workers and individuals in higher positions of power within the workplace such as managers, supervisors, or co-workers of higher standing. The harassment and violence sometimes occurred via third parties such as volunteers, donors, officers, and customers. A select few of the participants took legal action against their harassers while others went through informal reporting processes within their workplace that did not go anywhere in terms of outcomes.

In terms of personal consequences and effects of the harassment and violence, all the participants experienced these through multiple paths in their lives. Common outcomes included the participants being forced to go on extended stress leaves from work, often unpaid. A few participants were terminated from their positions shortly after reporting/mentioning their

experiences to others within the workplace. Retaliation was another common experience, as participants experienced strong, negative work-related consequences such as being moved to unsafe buildings following reporting the harassment/violence. Negative mental health outcomes were the most common consequences of the experiences of harassment/violence and from the reporting process. Examples of these include panic attacks, having to seek therapy, hypervigilance, needing medication for mental illnesses, weight gain, self-esteem issues, lack of sleep, paranoia, and more.

A further look at what the participants reported for each sub-theme of support will be conducted in the following section, to allow for an exploration into how these different avenues played a role in their experiences following the harassment and violence.

Lack of Supports

A noticeable theme that seemed worth discussing is the theme around participants not having enough or sufficient support during their experiences. A large majority of participants determined that the support provided by their organization was not effective. This was the largest and most reported sub-theme of all the support sub-themes. In a lot of the cases, the participants felt that when they told managers and superiors what was going on, it either made things worse or nothing came out of it. Although most of the participants' workplaces had support programs in place such as EAP, they still found that it was not enough as the effects of the harassment and violence were too severe to be "solved" by a few therapy sessions that the programs covered.

Another common experience among the participants was that the superior that they reported the harassment and violence to, began acting differently towards them after confiding in them about their situations. For one participant, the reaction they received from their manager

was one that was hostile and aggressive. In one case, participant eight explained that their manager began performing harassing behaviours toward them after reporting.

She [the manager] just didn't care. And she basically became very antagonistic toward me. And it's progressed to the point where she [the manager] was the one that was, that was participating in the harassment as well.

Participants also often felt gaslit after reporting, with comments being made to them such as “It was probably an accident” (Participant eight). Participant 25 stated that “there were more negatives from the reporting to my direct organization, then there was positives for me”. This supports the idea that 1) these workplaces do not have enough supports in place for victim-survivors to adequately process and deal with harassment and violence, 2) when individuals do come forward about these experiences to managers they often are made out to be the problem, 3) if things do get reported, they often end prematurely without the perpetrator experiencing any consequences from their actions, and 4) even if managers do want to support the victim-survivor, oftentimes there is nothing that they can personally do to help them.

Social Support

In terms of social support, it seems as though each participants' experience was different. Some participants received social support from co-workers, family members, friends, and managers; social support was seen in many forms. Although the social support received by participants was not an outpouring of support in some areas, it was in others. From their experiences, these participants learned whom they could go to for support. After reaching out to multiple avenues, most participants only received the responses that they needed to cope with their experiences, from a select few people in their lives. The support that they received from these individuals then impacted these relationships moving forward. Participant three provided

an enlightening explanation of these experiences of social support, suggesting that it is like a deck of cards. Some of the cards (or in this case supports) will be good and helpful, while others will not be.

Probably if I wrote down just before we met, I wrote down the key supporters that I had and I had about 12 supporters. Of those, about two-thirds were in the faculty and a third were my personal supports and a couple of others. So just to give you a sense, when I said know, if it had been a card game, I had all aces. Like I had really powerful, highly esteemed people. Who in the end went and were witnesses for me. So, I was very fortunate in that sense.

Support from Friends and Family

Friends

Friends of the victim-survivors were often mentioned to be a positive resource. In a few cases, friends of the victims were the ones who suggested they report the harassment/violence, with participant 16 stating that their professor started the reporting process for them to aid with the outcomes of their experiences. For some participants, it seemed as though having an outsider's perspective helped them in seeing that there was something wrong occurring, a sort of validation that they were not just making things up in their heads or going crazy. It appears for these participants it was these outside perspectives that got the ball rolling and sparked something within the victim-survivor to recognize their experiences were not something that should be tolerated. Participant 16 had this exact experience with a friend of theirs.

I felt really weird, like something I was like, I don't feel right. Like I feel like something's wrong and she's the one who helped me discover. The more I told her, and I showed her

the cards and I showed her what was happening and the emails and explaining that she's like, that's like, no, it's not you.

Participant three explained that they have a few people that they could trust.

So, in terms of my personal life, because I have a couple of really solid people who matter a lot to me, they help keep me in a good place.

Participant nine also explained the impact that their friends' support had on them.

And I talked to my friend. I talked to a couple of friends about it, and one of them who's in social work suggested that I document it and I was like, "No, it's not a big enough deal to report it." But she suggested I record it anyways, and so I did.

Family

Participants also frequently described turning to family members such as parents and spouses. Support from family members also had a positive nature in most of the cases reported by the participants. The family members and spouses of the participants were explained to be supportive of their decisions of whether to report or not to report and in most cases family members encouraged the victims to come forward. Participant two explained that at first, their husband was in disbelief regarding what they were experiencing at work, however as time went on their husband began to see the impacts that the harassment was having on them and became very supportive. There was also a common theme of participants having family members and spouses who worked at the same organization or within the same industry, which proved to be helpful when it came to their support and understanding of what was going on within the workplace. Participant four described their fortunate circumstances with familial support.

I'm pretty lucky that I have my husband and my stepson that both work there. So, they get it. They get where I'm coming from.

Participant three also spoke about their support base from their family.

It was certainly something that was continuously with me, both at work and at home, because I had that strong support base both at home and work. I was fortunate.

It appears understanding workplace harassment and violence was a key determinant in whether a family member was able to sufficiently support the victim-survivor when they confided in them about what was going on. It is as if knowing what the workplace culture was truly like and seeing it first-hand aided in others' ability to be supportive of those family members who were experiencing the harassment/violence. As participant nine explained, when they vented to their father who was not in the industry that they were in, their father found it "funny" hearing their stories because he did not understand how difficult these experiences were for the victim-survivor. Whereas for participant four, they stated how lucky they felt to have family members at the same workplace because of how much they can relate to and understand their experiences.

Yeah. I'm pretty lucky that I have my husband and my stepson that both work there. So, they get it. They get where I'm coming from. These two these other two women, their families don't get it. They don't understand it. So, they're not able to give them the support that they need. Right. Because I know when my husband moved to my depot, things changed. [Okay]. Because now I had him there. Right. [Yeah]. Whereas before that, I didn't I didn't have that support.

Participant 15 also explained the understanding that their husband had for their experiences.

Then my husband as well also works for the same company. He works in the mining industry. So yeah, there's a lot of venting I do to him he gets it because he works in the industry. And then, yeah, like I said, I am a multi generation mining employee, so I have

a lot of family members who are in the industry as well and I'm able to talk to them about it.

In contrast, it is important to also explore experiences where participants' family members did not understand what they were going through. Although most of the participants had positive experiences in terms of family members' reactions, some had quite different experiences. These experiences may not have been negative reactions from family members; however, they were different in terms of how they left the victim-survivors feeling, as opposed to those of the participants mentioned above who received positive support from family. In these cases, the participants would either decide to share their experiences with family members and would receive unexpected responses from them much like participant 20, who stated:

I was living with my dad. It's very expensive to live in [West coast] and I would sort of offload on him. He thought it was funny because well, and often shocking, but he wasn't experiencing it.

Or they would decide to keep these experiences from their family members because they knew the impact that it may have on these relationships if they did. Participant 23 did just that, as they were worried about what their parents may think if they knew all the horrible things that they had been through.

And when you first get into a job where you're experiencing things where you're like, oh my God, if my parents knew I was going through that, they would. I mean, they hold me hostage themselves to never go back to that. Now my parents to this day still don't have any idea that any of these things occurred. And I got really good at keeping secrets because of it. And I've never been a secretive person in terms of my family and my friends, my loved ones.

Co-worker Support

In terms of the support received by co-workers, a common theme found among these participants was that they often confided in co-workers about their experiences. For some, the reactions and support received by participants from co-workers were very positive in nature. One participant even described a peer support group that they and other colleagues created as a chance to hear their stories and get advice from others who also experience harassment within the workplace. From what was found, it seems most of the participants had a select few co-workers with whom they could go for support and felt safe sharing their experiences with. Participant nine described their experiences with having co-workers supporting them,

Having some really good friends at work helped a lot and they were by far the non-managers. They were the ones that really helped me navigate the workplace.

Participant three also explained their positive experience with co-workers supporting them.

Like I had really powerful, highly esteemed people. Who in the end went and were witnesses for me. So, I was very fortunate in that sense. [...] The people who did offer me such strong support and ongoing support, they saw the real story of what was going on. Some of them had experienced it. Some of them had witnessed it with others.

What seemed to provide the most support was when co-workers experienced or witnessed similar types of harassment and/or violence at work. When individuals confided in co-workers who too had experienced what they had, it made it easier for those individuals to support each other. Having that mutual understanding of what it was like and its impacts, provided grounds for support from these co-workers, that others who have never experienced workplace harassment and/or violence would not be able to understand.

For others, however, a negative response from co-workers was also common. Oftentimes co-workers wanted to stay out of the situation due to a fear of negative workplace consequences for them. This was exacerbated when the harasser was of higher power or seniority, as bystanders sometimes feared that they would be next or that their career would suffer if they supported the victim-survivor over the individual who was of higher standing within the workplace. These individuals stated that this was disappointing due to the nature of these individuals' roles within the organization, as they are supposed to be there for employees in situations such as these. However, when this expected support was not received by the victim-survivors from their managers, it often left them feeling worse about their situation as if there was no hope of resolving it. These experiences point to the role that power plays in receiving support from co-workers. Depending on the power that the harasser has within the organization, co-workers will then decide if it is "worth it" to aid the victim-survivor. This was the case for participant nine who explained that witnesses to the harassment were even afraid to come forward and were forced to keep things a secret due to their fear of repercussions.

But for example, I asked that guy [observer/co-worker] to be a witness and he immediately panicked, and he was like, "I want to support you, but I don't want to be involved because [harasser] could turn it around to make it about me." **He's very paranoid about getting into trouble himself. So that was a very hard day because I was asking witnesses for support.**

Participant 26 describes the barriers to reporting that they experienced within their organization.

There's barriers around peers and who you can go to for support. Because so many people become a product of the environment, they might start out and they might deep down be

really good people and they might truly believe in equality. However, if the leadership isn't there if the culture of inclusion, isn't there, then, you know, most people, even they're not bad people, like they care about their jobs. So, like supporting someone who's being harassed, like if you look at the bystanders, they can be really effective. However, they have to be empowered. So, if they if they simply become a product of the environment, even if they didn't start out that way, then that's just going to be worse and worse for the victim.

Relationships

All participants reflected on the ways in which their experiences of workplace harassment impacted their relationships with themselves and others. In some cases, the relationships within the individual's life were strongly impacted by the harassment/violence and its impacts on the victim-survivor. On the other hand, some participants reported no changes in their personal relationships due to the harassment/violence, turning to the fact that each individual experience and consequences of harassment and violence are different. Participant nine explained how the harassment impacted their relationship with themselves, where their experiences of harassment and/or violence impacted their trust in themselves.

That whole process was trusting myself that this and validating that this really was harassment.

They then continued to explain how their relationship and trust in themselves was altered by their experiences.

Yeah, it's just put me more, I would say like on guard in terms of my relationship with myself. I had to do a lot of and continue to have to do a lot of work to like trust myself, I guess because that whole process was trusting myself that this and validating that this

really was harassment. And that was like a very difficult journey of you're always doing the comparative trauma thing where it's like, this isn't as bad as other forms of harassment, so maybe you're just being overly sensitive, right?

Some participants believed that they had to keep their experiences a secret from their loved ones, which had serious negative impacts on their intimate relationships outside of work. In some cases, participants' marriages experienced serious turmoil due to their feelings about needing to keep the harassment a secret. These relationships were also impacted by the effects the harassment was having on the victim-survivors, which often left them feeling a decreased desire to interact with their spouses after coming home from the harassing environment. Participant 25 explained their experiences with feeling like they had to keep the harassment a secret.

And I got really good at keeping secrets because of it. And I've never been a secretive person in terms of my family and my friends, my loved ones. A lot of my female friends don't know that this happened, even though I know they're in the field, too.

Additionally, participant nine explained what it was like for them to have to keep their experiences a secret from those at work.

But like they saw me having those friends at work, saw me literally falling apart every day so that it's kind of hard to hide that.

Not only did some participants experience this negative shift in their intimate/spousal relationships, but they also felt them in other relationships. Participant three explained how their workplace relationships were altered because co-workers were jealous of the "special treatment" they were getting following their reporting of the harassment. They explained how others within the workplace formed a new hatred towards them because they did not get the same "deal" that

the participant got after reporting. This turns to the institutional response received by some participants, as it was not what they expected in terms of reactions and following behaviours. If one were to report harassment and violence in the workplace, one would think that others would be supportive and that the desired outcomes would follow for all that come forward. However, this did not seem to be the case for participant three, as it seems they were the only one who received an appropriate response on part of the organization. This then led others who experienced and reported similar situations, to feel as though their case was not held to the same standards, which ultimately negatively impacted the participant in the long run. Participant three explained the fallout that they experienced within their relationships following their reporting.

And they didn't turn out to get some of them. They got some, some people got some things. The level of hate of me by one or two of them is so severe that my fear, now, this is an important thing, I think, for your study. The fear not just that you're going to be chased by people bullying you because they missed out on the deal. [...] So those relationships, those particular ones where people have joined in are forever damaged.

Some participants felt such a change in their relationships at work, due to the violence, that others were torn on what to do and how to act. These relationships were so negatively impacted that others even decided to leave the workplace because of the awkward position the situation put them in. This specifically would occur when the person at work that they were confiding in about the harassment and/or violence was of higher standing within the workplace and who was at odds with how to help or what to do next. In fact, participant 23 explained what happened with their supervisor after they disclosed to them.

The person who was a manager on more than one well on one occasion was a colleague who had been promoted, and my relationship with her substantially changed. And now I

couldn't, we could hardly talk to each other anymore because she was receiving directions from the director about how to respond to me and how to manage me. And it was, it was really challenging for both of us. And she ended up leaving because she just thought, I don't I can't deal with this. And she ended up leaving the organization.

The same participant explained that there were no big changes in their personal relationships due to the harassment/violence. This again points to the diverse reactions and forms of support that individuals receive from different avenues within their life. While some relationships such as those at work, can be seriously impacted in a negative way by the events that take place, other relationships such as familial ones, can see no changes following the events. Participant 23 again reported on their relationships with their children.

No. I mean, I have two adult kids at this point and, you know. I did. No, I don't think so. I wasn't happy, but I was stressed all the time. But at the same time, I didn't I can't say that I lost any personal relationships because of it. No.

The findings support the idea that all relationships are impacted in different ways during and following harassment and/or violence at work. It seems that a common experience among the participants was that the relationships within their lives were negatively impacted by the consequences of the harassment and violence that they experienced. Although these relationships were impacted differently and due to different reasons, it appears that feeling as though they could not turn to certain people in certain situations created even bigger issues within these relationships.

Organizational/Workplace Support

EAP (Therapy/Counseling)

When it came to the supports in place within the workplace, several participants described support plans that their organization had in place if something such as harassment and violence were to happen. Support plans such as EAP are a form of instrumental support that one can receive through their workplace, which would be provided to victim-survivors by superiors such as human resources (HR) or managers. Whether or not HR and managers are to provide this resource and aid the victim-survivor in receiving this support, is oftentimes left up to the discretion of the superior. Many of these individuals stated that when provided these support plans by HR, they were not efficient enough to aid someone experiencing harassment/violence and the long-term outcomes of these experiences. Participant nine explained the EAP at their workplace,

We did have an employee assistance program, but I wasn't even given the information about that immediately following my report. So, I went and found my own counsellor, but I was never given any supports straight out of reporting. [...] Because I'm not sure that the formal processes of investigation, followed by investigations alone, are so adversary in nature that they're just like in the legal system, really hard on victim-survivors. [...] And then over the course of six months, the organization's support was very hot and cold. Sometimes they were very supportive and apathetic, and other times they kind of treated me like I was a pain in the ass. And never they never really helped me in a tangible way.

Participant 23 also explained their perceptions of the assistance program that their organization offers employees.

It's cover your ass. So, when they go through that little tick box after an incident, did you do A, B and C offering EAP offering, CISM offering. That's all on their little tick box.

And they say the words to make sure they can tick the box.

When asked if these procedures were effective in aiding the individuals in their experiences and in terms of the outcomes, many of the participants described the support given by their work as not being effective. This was often due to a few reasons; they had to find these resources themselves, did not have help in accessing these resources, the resources themselves were not enough, and after accessing these resources, they were either forced to stop due to financial burden or time restraints. Participant 25 explained what it was like for them when they attempted to use the resources provided by their organization. They provide a good example of what their EAP was like, which seemed to be similar to other participants' experiences with EAP as well.

I've accessed EAP twice since I've been in [town] and both experiences were not positive to the point that I've actually just like this is pointless, I'm just going to go find my own counsellor and do the research. And, you know, the thing that sucks is that anyone who's not EAP, we have to pay out of pocket for. And at \$200 and \$300 an hour, that's pretty pricey, especially when you could be waiting a week or two weeks to either get your paycheck or get the refund from Sunlife for our benefits. I think our cap is \$2000 for psychological services. That goes pretty quickly at \$250 an hour. You know, so our benefits need to be better.

Lastly, participant 20 stated,

Yeah. Even I mean, we do have an employee family assistance program, but it's kind of crap. Like we get three counseling sessions. But that's nothing. [...] You need more support than three counseling sessions a year.

When it came to therapy and counselling specifically, the participants who did speak on the subject mentioned how helpful the time that they spent in therapy was. Participant 23 explained how therapy helped them see all the toles that their experiences were taking on them both mentally and physically. They continue to explain that these outside supports were effective in terms of helping them get through the negative consequences of the harassment and violence. Additionally, participant 26 explained that their therapist was one of the few people in their life that they could tell the whole truth about the harassment to and that this aided in their ability to decide on a course of action in terms of reporting. Oftentimes, however, this therapy was either only a few sessions or paid /sought out by the victim-survivors themselves because they did not feel as though they got the help that they needed with a therapist that EAP allowed.

Managers/Supervisors

What was crucial to the idea of support was how a victim-survivor's manager or superiors reacted to and supported their experiences and feelings towards them. Some of these reactions were more positive in nature and were explained by the participants as being supportive, much like participant 16 who stated "My old DC manager was really good. I go in his office crying and he was supportive". While others described a negative reaction provided by their superiors, again a mixed set of responses due to unique, individual experiences. Oftentimes, when individuals confided in their managers or supervisors, they did so with the hopes that these individuals would be able to help them get through their situation. This was often not the case with these participants because their managers and superiors had to follow the protocol of the

organization, which had been proven to be insufficient in almost all these cases. Participant 25 explained that they felt as though their manager was just doing things to be able to check off that they helped the individual but that was not enough in terms of support.

Well, a large percentage of the managers that I've experienced do not care beyond that ticky box.

Participant nine experienced a similar situation where their manager's responses would vary.

I would say I think I talked quite a bit last time about how my boss's responses would be different depending on the day, and sometimes she was very empathetic and understanding and was quite upset about the situation and wanted to do everything she could. And in those moments of high support, I would say that there was blame coming from her towards [harasser], the person who had harassed me. But then on days where she was kind of just frustrated and exhausted with the situation, I think especially because her hands were kind of tied by HR or what HR was telling her she was able to do. I think she would kind of lash out in frustration at me and kind of be like, well, if it's an awkward silence between you, then you could just talk to him yourself kind of thing.

It is important to highlight these reactions and experiences, as it was found that for the most part, managers and superiors were not supportive in the participants' pursuits to find support from them.

Meaning Themes

Validation: "You Support Each Other Because There Isn't Support from Anywhere Else"

In terms of the staff there, it really strengthened our relationship and strengthened us as a team because we had to work together. And even though I'm not working there anymore, I'm still like. We're still in contact. And yeah, when you go through an experience like

that, it's not to say it's bonding, but it's kind of is, like **you support each other because there isn't support from anywhere else.**

As participant 20 stated above, their relationship with co-workers was strengthened when they validated each other's experiences. It appears having that validation that you are not crazy, that you are not overreacting, and that what you are feeling because of the harassment is okay to feel can aid victim-survivors in not only dealing with the personal outcomes of the harassment but also with gaining the courage to come forward and really do something about it. Is not knowing if your experience is "bad enough", discouraging individuals from coming forward and fighting for their rights? As participant 20 explained above, this validation from others going through similar situations bonded them and strengthened their relationships. They also explained how they need this support from each other because they were not receiving support from anywhere else within the organization. Participant nine also explained the difficulty they had with coming to terms with a label for their experiences, a difficulty that was aided by the input of others after disclosing the harassment.

And I was only documenting things because my friend told me to. And that was kind of the fact that he like physically touched me, but also like it was what he said with the hug that made it cross the line. He touched me on the arm as he was talking to me. And I was like, this is it like created a revulsion response in my body where my body was like recognizing a threat. And so that's why like a week later, I decided to report it because it was just an accumulation of small things. And then a bigger thing that I realized my body recognized him as a threat. And so that's where I kind of like had to believe that it was harassment, I guess. **And to this day I still have a hard time calling it sexual**

harassment because it's not, like, bad enough, but that's like my internalized patriarchy.

As participant nine explains, they had to go out on their own to look at ways to bring about change because they thought that there was no way to get help. After they investigated and found different programs that were in support of victim-survivors, they were then able to feel validated and hopeful that there are people out there who can help. It appears learning that their experiences of harassment were “bad enough”, was fostered by the validation that they received from others through these programs that they sought out on their own. For these participants, learning what harassment is and what it can entail, from the perspective of others who also experienced harassment, aided in their journey to validating their feelings surrounding their experiences.

I think with what I was asking for, as if I was asking for too much, which is why when I discovered restorative justice, I was **I felt very validated by the fact that what I was asking for all along actually is a process that exists. And that often is what victims are looking for.**

In one case, participant 15 and their colleagues created their own support group to aid each other in their coping and decisions to report.

Like there's a group of women professionals and we meet every month, and we talk all the time. And so, you know, the group of us kind of are there to vent to each other and support each other. So that was super helpful. You'd have a situation like that where you'd have a foreman talk to you completely inappropriately and you could go vent to somebody. And, you know, everyone had experienced it. So. So that's really important. I think

This participant explained that it helped in feeling understood when speaking with colleagues about their experiences of harassment and violence because often their co-workers experienced similar situations and were able to provide a perspective that friends or family members could not. In this case, it seemed as though this co-worker's support, aided the individuals in their ability to speak up and know how/when to properly report their experiences. This points to the difficulty that these individuals have speaking up about the harassment within the working environment, as they do not feel safe enough to talk about it when it happens.

The importance of validation also came in descriptions of support from family members and spouses, who worked at the same organization and who were able to validate their experiences at home because they too experience it. Participant four explained that she, her husband, her stepson, and her future daughter-in-law all worked at the same company. This seemed to be extremely helpful in terms of support and validation of their experiences that occurred beyond the workplace, as a lot of individuals did not have that validation from those in their personal lives. Participant 15 had a similar experience, where they explained that their husband and a lot of family members work in the same industry as them, which has aided in their ability to talk openly about their experiences with them. Participant four states that the other women who did not have family members in the same organization could not receive the same support and validation that she received, simply because their family members did not truly understand what their experiences were like.

I'm pretty lucky that I have my husband and my stepson that both work there. So, they get it. They get where I'm coming from. These two these other two women, their families don't get it. They don't understand it. So, they're not able to give them the support that they need. Right. Because I know when my husband moved to my depot,

things changed. [Okay]. Because now I had him there. Right. [Yeah]. Whereas before that, I didn't have that support. And when he came over to our depot, he even said, I can't wait to retire. It's so toxic here. [Wow]. Yeah. It's just toxic.

Sometimes it takes another person looking in to help someone realize that their situation is “bad enough” because there are no guidelines within organizations to tell workers what is and is not okay to tolerate. When people think of harassment and violence at work, they think of the worst possible thing, which often invalidates their experiences if they do not fit within that bubble of what harassment and violence “should be”. Not one experience is the same as another and there is no perfect box that the experience must fit within. Harassment and violence can be understood through one’s own experiences and can be aided through the validation that is received.

Secrecy: Interfering with Support?

The challenge in terms of receiving support and validation (which seems to be very helpful), stems from the idea that victim-survivors feel as though they must hide their experiences from others. Whether it be because they are afraid of how the person may react and that it may then alter their relationship with said person or that they feel that telling someone will just makes things worse, secrecy interferes with one’s chances of receiving support from others. The issue is however that this belief that one must keep things to themselves does not stem from their own beliefs but rather is heightened by the toxic workplace cultures that create the understanding that it is okay for people to perform harassing behaviours and that it is not okay to speak up about these behaviours. This feeling that secrecy is the only way to go about things, is also exacerbated when one witnesses the fallout of another victim-survivor reporting their harassment.

Participant 25 explained in detail what having to keep the harassment a secret did to their relationship with their spouse and how it seriously impacted their ability to be intimate with their spouse. They also explained that this was the case for most of the women at their work who were also experiencing harassment. These women were afraid of what their husbands might do or what they might think of them if they told them that they were getting sexually harassed at work. This then led to them keeping it to themselves and shutting down when they got home. The consequences then overflowed into their marriages as their husbands grew suspicious of their sudden changes in mood and libido. This additionally affected their mental health as they were not able to receive that support from their spouses.

And again, **you get very good at keeping secrets, which isn't good for a partnership or a family of any sort.** And I got very good at making excuses for being previously, you know, or at certain points in my life, a very sexual, very intimate, very physical partner. And then if something would happen at work, I would be very withdrawn. And I mean, it was so bad that even at times my partner was concerned that I was seeing someone else. And there were a lot of women, too, that felt that if their male partner found out about what they were being exposed to at work, there would be, you know, potentially violent encounters and consequences for their husband or their partner. And they didn't want to have that happen. So, they protected their family by leaving or not talking about it. Definitely isolation for some women. [...] **And I know personally for myself those impacts did affect my health after one particularly rough incident, I went into a very, very deep depression.**

The negative mental health impacts that participant 25 experienced due to keeping the harassment a secret, was a common experience among these participants. Not only did they have

to deal with the negative consequences that came with the harassment, but they also now had to deal with the consequences that the secrecy created in terms of straining their personal relationships at home. Not having that support after leaving the harassing environment, creates a continuous negative experience even after leaving work. As participant 16 stated, “I would just hold it in and then I guess I would just have breakdowns, burnout”. Participant nine explained that it began to be difficult to hide the impacts that the harassment and the secrecy were having on them.

And so, it was kind of an informal encouraging me to keep quiet and like only talk to friends outside of work kind of thing. But like they saw me having those friends at work, **saw me literally falling apart every day so that it's kind of hard to hide that.**

Many of the participants also felt as though it was easier to keep things a secret, due to the foreseen consequences that talking about their experiences would have within their lives. Oftentimes, the participants explained that the culture and nature of their job/workplace were what kept them from talking about their experiences. The participants believed that they had to keep their heads down and “take it”, otherwise their co-workers would judge or ridicule them. This was especially true for the participants in this study because they were all female-identifying individuals working within male-dominated fields. This led to the participants to feel as though they could not speak about their experiences with their male colleagues because they did not want to be seen as weak. Participant 25 explained that the mindset that they were put in was that they were expected to experience harassment from others and deal with it because that is what they signed up for. This not only minimizes their experiences but also does not allow them to speak about it with others and receive the support that they deserve.

Some women, I think, were like me and just said, this is a field you want to be in. **You've got to roll with the boys. You know, you've got to take it.** This is how you get forward that you got to know that the boys, you know, that you can take it from them and that it was that mindset that I was in.

Participant three continued to speak on the topic of secrecy and the culture that it promotes. "People will avoid trouble. And if they see really bad behaviors, they may become part of the silent group but not be able to give their best in having to be silent." A workplace that encourages victim-survivors to stay quiet, makes it easier for others to be unsupportive toward those who do not stay quiet. This then creates the norm within the workplace that you do not speak about harassment and if you do, you will not be supported by your co-workers or by your superiors. Overall, the secrecy that the participants felt they must partake in, created a wedge between them and others which prevented them from receiving the support that they needed to get through their experiences. This then created additional challenges for them and added to the already detrimental mental and physical health problems that the harassment and violence created. Participant three continued to explain what perceptions from others this secrecy creates, as it paints an unrealistic picture of the true nature of what had occurred.

I had to sign a non-disclosure agreement, which I just refused to do, point blank. Like I know what's gone on. I'm not going to be [silenced] by a nondisclosure agreement. I understand the Dean signed it and took her copy with her. Okay, good. But that's a problem, too, right? That's the start of keeping the secrets, secret. So, it's not in my interest. It has not been in my interest for this to be a secret. If it had been public. And if it had come out that the dean was removed following a case which involved my

harassment, I think the perception from some people might have been a little bit more clarified.

The culture of these workplaces reinforces the idea that if you harass someone, it is okay because nothing bad will come out of it for you as the perpetrator. In some cases, they also inaccurately portray experiences of harassment and violence that can occur to the point where they leave employees mocking them. It is as if these policies are in place because they are legally required to have them, but what is done with these policies is up to the organizations themselves. The organizations then perform their required one-two day training on workplace harassment and then leave it at that. If these policies do not change and continue to reinforce these harassing behaviours, will workplace harassment and violence ever stop? As participants three and 25 explain, these organizations need to have healthy examples of what workplace behaviours should look like so that others who are within that environment can understand what is and is not okay for themselves and for others to do. This could also be achievable through realistic workshops and research-based, educational training. Participant nine explained their personal experiences with workplace cultures that create this environment of secrecy.

And then actually, speaking of blame, HR came and talked to me and told me that I had to keep this confidential and not talk to people about it because they wanted to keep it like completely internal between me and [perpetrator] and them. [...] Oh, NDAs, I was never asked to sign an NDA, but I think the NDA should be not ever used in the cases of sexual harassment because silencing people is just harming them further. And I don't think there should ever be a use of an NDA, whether there's a formal resolution or not. I just think that they're really harmful and perpetuate a culture of silence.

From these participants' experiences, it appears that secrecy about the harassment and violence was almost like an organizational requirement, for some this involved non-disclosure agreements (NDAs). Part of the problem behind keeping things a secret, is that this is just what everyone does because if they do not, they will be outcasts. It is as though it was part of their job to keep things a secret due to the way that the organization is run and the way in which similar situations have been dealt with in the past. Based on the way that participant 15 spoke about their organization and the harassment that they experienced, it is almost as if they knew that it was just a part of the job to not speak about it.

Like I personally am a fourth-generation mining employee, so I have a lot of family members who worked in the mining industry. **So, I came into it kind of knowing what I was getting into and expecting some of that behaviour.**

This knowing what to expect in terms of other people's behaviours, lead participant 15 to not report any of the harassment they experienced because they knew that this was going to be part of their job before they even started. Participant three speaks on these organizational requirements to keep things secret, which they refused to do because they knew the great effect that it would have on their life in terms of support from others and how others would move forward with their experiences. They explain that part of the problem of individuals feeling as though they need to keep quiet is that organizations reinforce the idea that keeping things a secret is the best option for them, otherwise they will not receive support.

The secrecy. It's bad. [...] But in terms of protecting the predator or in this case the offender, no, that's wrong. But it's complicity. That is part of that and that's part of the problem

Barriers to Support: The Frames Are What Make a House

From the participants' experiences, it is clear to see that they want to be validated in their feelings towards the harassment and violence, while also needing that support from the ones that they care about. What got in the way of them receiving that support was not only the secrecy that they felt was necessary to maintain but also the environments within workplaces that create the idea that things should stay as they are. As participant one suggests, the older generation of workers are set in their ways and want others to follow in their footsteps, but what kind of footprints are they leaving behind? Is it possible to change these toxic work environments that have been around for centuries? Is it possible to create workplace environments where everyone feels supported in their experiences and emotions? From the experiences of the participants, the answer begins with support from those within your life and continues with support from organizations that truly empower people to stand up for what is right, without having a fear that they will get prosecuted for it. Participant 25 reported what needs to be done.

We need wisdom, we need experience. We need people who have been around for a long time to guide certain things within corrections. [...] But we do need people who are forward thinkers, who are not afraid to buck the old school traditions, and that will lead with commitments to diversity, inclusion, with harassment, prevention.

Participant one also explained why it is difficult to see these changes occur.

I think the only thing that would have helped is like just ongoing education because like, not that you can't teach old dog's new tricks, but I think that that older generation really struggles with those boundaries.

To look at the workplace culture that reinforces harassing behaviours in terms of a house, we can come to understand the participants' experiences. You can get all the support possible from others and can help yourself try to overcome the consequences of others' actions towards

you, but this will not matter if the environment that you must enclose yourself in every day is not supportive of the decisions you make in terms of speaking about your experiences. When change occurs from within and harassment and violence at work are taken more seriously, this is when everyone will feel safe. The frame of the house can then be seen as the foundations that build these organizations. If a house does not have these foundations and supporting beams, then everything will crumble. You can decorate a house as nicely as you want, but you will continuously have to do repairs and fix things if the foundations of the house are not properly set up. This can be said for workplace environments; if the frames do not allow for social support to occur, then the outer parts of the “house” (i.e., workers, managers, etc.), will not be able to provide that support. Participant 25 used a powerful explanation of the perpetuation of unhealthy workplace behaviours, to explain why support is not received by victim-survivors within the workplace.

And our management needs to do a better job. Okay, we're going to support you [...] both the person who reports and the person who is essentially accused are both supported through this process. Because even in my situation, I look at. I try to be compassionate to her side of things that maybe she thought she didn't do anything wrong. And, you know, again, **she's clearly been taught that this behavior is okay because she's done it so many times and nobody has told her not to.**

If we build a house from the ground up, starting with strong, supportive frames and beams from within, then we will not have to fix the house again. There may be small cracks or fixes that need to be made along the way, but this is normal after time. If newer generations of workers can bring these open-minded attitudes and ways of viewing the workplace to the environment and educate those who are lacking in this area, then workplaces can begin to thrive.

There will always be room for growth and improvement because that is natural for humans, but that does not mean that we should be forced to tolerate these environments that were created decades ago that perpetuate harassment and violence and that keep the cycle going; we must start rebuilding from the ground. Without support from others both outside of and within the workplace, some individuals will not see these issues on their own. Participant nine explained the fear that other co-workers (and bystanders) had in coming forward as witnesses due to the internal issues created by the manager's apathetic responses.

The organization's support was very hot and cold. Sometimes they were very supportive and apathetic, and other times they kind of treated me like I was a pain in the ass. And never they never really helped me in a tangible way.

Participant 26 also spoke about the environment at their workplace and the barriers that exist surrounding whom you can go to for support. This participant's experience is a great representation of how a non-supportive frame within an organization can create an environment that perpetuates not supporting and listening to victim-survivors of harassment and violence. If it is known within a workplace that no one can talk to this person about their negative experiences because they know that they will not receive the support that they need from that person, this then creates barriers around looking for support from others.

There's barriers around peers and who you can go to for support. Because so many people become a product of the environment, they might start out and they might deep down be really good people and they might truly believe in equality. However, if the leadership isn't there if the culture of inclusion, isn't there, then, you know, most people, even they're not bad people, like they care about their jobs. So, like supporting someone who's being harassed, like if you look at the bystanders, they can be really effective.

However, they have to be empowered. So, if they if they simply become a product of the environment, even if they didn't start out that way, then that's just going to be worse and worse for the victim.

Discussion

The purpose of this research study was to examine the role that social support plays in individuals' lives who have experienced workplace harassment and/or violence. Social support was divided into four categories in terms of where it is coming from, including friends, family, co-workers, and workplace/organizational support. The participants in this study mentioned support many times during the interview process, as it was found that support was a crucial factor in their experiences of harassment and violence, whether that support was positive or negative in nature. It was ultimately found that the support that these individuals received, aided in the validation of their experiences and feelings toward them. The issue was however that this support and validation was clouded by the feelings of secrecy that organizations force upon victim-survivors, which are created through toxic workplace cultures and expectations that employers create. Thus, the support that the participants needed to cope with their experiences, was not received to its fullest potential due to these unsupportive workplace environments.

Having support in your life following experiences of workplace harassment and violence can aid in coping with the outcomes of the experiences (MacQuarrie et al., 2004; Pellegrini et al., 2021). Social support has been seen to aid individuals experiencing workplace harassment and violence in regaining their personal resources and refilling their emotional bucket (Yeh et al., 2020). This aligns with the conservation of resources theory, which states that such experiences as workplace harassment and violence can deplete one's inner resources and ability to cope and that social support during these times can help one protect themselves against these negative

consequences (Yeh et al., 2020). In this sample, it was found that individuals experiencing workplace harassment and violence had a select few people in their life that they knew they could turn to for support and vent to about their situations.

With these participants, it was important to feel validated and to have someone who understood what they had gone through. Validation seemed to be a key characteristic of social support, which then helped the participants in their abilities to cope with the consequences of harassment and violence. These participants needed to have others around them who not only listened to and supported their experiences but also helped them see that they were not alone in what they were going through and feeling because of it. For these participants, co-workers were able to aid in this validation, as they were often the ones who witnessed and/or experienced the harassment and violence at the workplace.

This validation was also commonly reported by the participants as something they experienced from family members who worked within the same industry. When an individual experiencing harassment and/or violence at work had a family member within the industry, this aided in their family member's ability to understand and empathize with the victim-survivor. The participants often stated that this made it easy for them to vent to their family members about their situation without the fear of judgment. The participants felt as though other family members would not provide the same support that family members working at the same organization would, as they would not understand what the victim-survivor would need. Validation then may be a critical component in the conservation of resources theory, as the validation that these participants received, aided in the conserving of their resources to be able to go through with reporting. This then led to a decreased sense of powerlessness and an increased sense of control over their work, which added to their strength in coming forward and moving on, as the theory

proposes (Yeh et al., 2020). This is something that the current study adds to the literature, as validation was not often cited by previous studies.

Although most individuals felt this support and validation, there were certain situations that undermined them, specifically, feelings of secrecy. According to the deteriorating model of social support, experiences of harassment and violence can become a stressor within one's life that breaks down one's social support networks (Yang et al., 2021). These participants experienced breakdowns in their relationships due to the feeling of needing to keep things a secret from co-workers and others in their personal lives. This was due to the fear of negative reactions that were placed onto them through workplace cultures that typically condone harassing behaviours and leave the victim-survivors to fend for themselves. The participants felt as though they did not have enough power to come forward, to talk about their experiences, and ultimately report them, which negatively impacted their experiences of support.

The minority stress model explains that when an individual of an already stigmatized group faces further social isolation and stigmatization from others, this is when they are most at risk for negative psychological outcomes due to workplace harassment (Meyer, 2003). These participants, who are all female-identifying individuals within male-dominated fields, felt as though they could not turn to co-workers because they knew the further hardship that they would endure if they did and in turn, they did not receive the support that they needed. This also added to the already serious, negative consequences that the participants were experiencing. These findings align with those of Cortina and Wasti (2005) who explain that when women within male-dominated workplaces feel as though they will not receive support from managers if they were to report their experiences of harassment and violence, they are less likely to turn to managers for this support. The experiences of these participants also fall in line with previous

literature which states that not reporting these experiences and keeping them to oneself, creates further mental and physical health consequences, much like what these participants endured (Bunn Hiller et al., 1997).

The feelings of needing to keep things a secret and not being able to report their experiences were created through previous experiences where the organization did not provide support or made things worse after reporting the harassment/violence. This was influenced by the reporting processes within the organizations that almost always ended in an unsatisfactory way for the victim-survivor. Oftentimes, if employees believe that their organization would not be supportive of their claims, victim-survivors would not report harassment (Clarke, 2014; Jo et al., 2019). When the participants would see others come forward with similar experiences, they would see retaliation from co-workers, blame from management, increased harassing behaviours, and victim-survivors quitting their jobs. For these participants, this would lure them away from speaking about their experiences with superiors, because they knew nothing good would come from it.

It is safe to say that social support plays a large role in experiences of workplace harassment and violence. In this study, victim-survivors needed to speak with others about their experiences, to be able to cope with the negative consequences of them. This study adds to the existing literature because it highlights the importance of validation within social support, as this aided individuals in coming to an understanding that what occurred is not okay and that it is okay for them to feel bad about it. When this support and validation were blocked by feelings of needing to keep things secret, they then needed to question what was perpetuating these feelings of secrecy. Workplace environments that condone harassment and violence and that are known to be unsupportive of victim-survivors coming forward, exacerbated these feelings of secrecy

which only further created problems for the victim-survivors. For these individuals to have received the proper support that they needed to process their experiences, superiors within their workplaces needed to show support through their actions and reactions to the harassment and violence and change the ways in which they deal with and speak about workplace harassment and violence.

Implications

Workplace harassment and violence are continuously being experienced by employees throughout Canada. From this study, it is apparent that having support and validation from friends, family, and co-workers can positively impact one's experiences and on their experienced outcomes. Organizational/workplace support also has a large impact on whether one reports and the repercussions of the reporting process. It appears organizations do have support packages in place for employees experiencing workplace harassment and violence, but to what extent are these packages being used and are they truly helpful in coping with experiences of harassment and violence which can have life-long impacts?

When asked what they hoped would come of this research, the participants shared hopeful answers. Individuals wanted their stories to be heard so that they could advocate for others who are experiencing similar situations and to provide support for the need for more organizational practices to be put into place for victim-survivors of harassment and violence. The participants wanted to advocate for more training and support from within workplaces and for policies to be set in place that are not walked around or misused. Fielden et al. (2010), encourage using an intervention model which aims at preventing harassment before it occurs by using training that highlights specific incidents and role plays of workplace harassment. Their model also involves acknowledging that having informal processes of reporting workplace harassment,

allows claims to be lost throughout the process, and call for the use of formal, strict reporting processes that see through on all their claims.

In terms of personal implications, this work has affected myself as a counsellor and how I will now look at traumatic events such as workplace harassment and violence. Throughout this research process, I have learned just how much of an impact events like these can have on an individual and how these impacts can seep through into their personal lives. I have also learned how important it is to have a strong social support network to be able to have the strength to get through traumatic events. I will take this knowledge and this sense of advocacy into my work as a counsellor, to be able to provide support and resources to my future clients who are experiencing similar situations as to what these individuals experienced. I believe that knowledge is power and through the knowledge that I gained in this research process, I can use it to further help others in my work, as I now have a deeper understanding of the impacts of harassment.

Future Research

Future research can focus on how to dramatically change organizational support and the environment and dynamics within Canadian workplaces, which seem to continuously promote harassing and violent behaviours among employees. Future research should pay particular attention to the minority stress model, as it emphasizes the need to aid minority individuals in their experiences of workplace harassment and violence because of their already disadvantaged positions within organizations. If it is known that support and validation can aid in these experiences and promote a sense of unity within the workplace, then future research can use this to build that atmosphere throughout organizations including within managerial and high-power positions. Workplaces must first be rid of creating the idea that an individual is better off by

keeping their experiences a secret, and this will then allow for victim-survivors to feel that they will be supported if they come forward.

A continuation of this study could be performed by focusing on the implications of secrecy and how that plays a larger role in terms of barriers towards support. The implications surrounding the use of NDAs in experiences of workplace and sexual harassment, has been explored in past literature which has described the use of NDAs as creating “toxic secrecy” that not only forces victim-survivors to remain quiet, but also allows perpetrators to continue harassing behaviours without taking public responsibility for their actions (Baum, 2019; Otte, 2020). This cycle has been described as creating the understanding that “the worse you behave, the more you seem, to be rewarded” (Hutchinson et al., 2009, p.213) and has additional consequences on victim-survivors’ physical and mental health (Baum, 2019).

Thus, a future research project could explore these impacts further, by exploring 1) the relationship between secrecy and its further negative consequences, 2) the reasoning behind keeping experiences a secret (especially when there is no NDA involved), and 3) how to break this cycle within workplaces. What the current study can add to this future research, is the secrecy from those who were not legally required to keep things a secrecy but still did. A qualitative, exploratory research project could then focus on these experiences to dive deeper into the factors contributing to these feelings of secrecy and how to overcome them through protective factors such as social support. This could involve additional open-ended interviews with these participants who previously spoke on the topic of secrecy, asking questions tailored to these experiences, allowing for further elaboration on what contributed to these feelings for them personally.

Limitations

The research process for this project was limited to the work of three researchers, who could only perform so many interviews. There were hundreds of individuals who previously expressed interest in participating in interviews however, time and resources were limited to 15-20 potential interviews. The stories of many individuals were not able to be heard and this population is just a small sample of all the experiences of harassment and violence within workplaces across Canada. Additionally, due to this small sample, multiple cultural perspectives were not able to be taken; there were no ways to ensure that marginalized individuals would be included in this project and their experiences were not guaranteed to be examined. The perspectives and experiences of other intersectional individuals were consequently not able to be heard. Generalizability, however, was not an aim for this qualitative research and the research findings of this study represent the lived experiences of the 17 participants involved.

Additionally, triangulation was not used as there was only one data collection method used, which were interviews. As Nobel and Heale (2019) explain, triangulation allows for the combination of different methods to “help ensure that fundamental biases arising from the use of a single method” are overcome (p. 67). The findings from the interview then, were not compared with multiple different data sets. Another limitation of this study was the trustworthiness of the codes created, as validation and reliability were not checked after the codes were created. Lastly, this specific research project was a continuation of a previously created and conducted research project which contained a pre-determined method to participant and data collection. Thus, the selection of how participants were contacted and how interviews were conducted, was not determined by the current researcher.

Conclusion

Workplace harassment and violence are continuous issues within Canadian workplace environments and are experienced by many. Individuals experiencing harassment and violence at work experience long-lasting negative mental and physical health consequences. Support from significant others in one's life is just one way to aid these individuals in coping with their experiences and the consequences that come with them. Organizations across Canada must create more advocacy and training support for their employees to feel safely able to report their experiences. Organizations must support their employees in these reports and ensure that every individual within their workplace feels safely able to come forward about their experiences, with increased support from managers and co-workers. Victim-survivors of harassment and violence do not ask for this to happen to them and should not have to continue to suffer due to insufficient support from their workplace. It is a hope of this research project that organizations will understand the severity of this issue and will create more support for their employees accordingly. Prevention of harassment and violence at work begins within the organization and the ways in which they end the perpetuation of harassing and violent environments.

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Appendix A – Interview Guide

Interview Guide: Workers

This interview guide is intended to prompt discussions with workers regarding their experiences of harassment, their knowledge and impressions of resources available, and supports that are available to those who experience harassment in the workplace, as well as the barriers workers may face when reporting. In order to gather detailed, contextually specific information from a diverse array of workers across Canada, interviews will be semi-structured using qualitative questions that are broad and open-ended. Follow-up questions will be adapted as needed. Note for Interviewer: Watch for any signs of distress. Stop occasionally to check in with participants – are they ok, would they like to continue, etc. Remind them that “we can stop anytime”.

Confirm that the participant is over 18 years of age and has experienced harassment at work.

Introductory Questions:

- Please tell me about your workplace, industry/sector, and the work that you do.
 - What is your current job title? In what industry do you hold this position?
 - Follow-up: How long have you been in your current position? In your profession?
 - Employment status?
 - Follow-up: How your workplace organized? For example, small, large, separate departments, work in groups/independently, is there an HR department, the organizational hierarchy (team lead, supervisor, etc.).
- How would you describe your work environment?
 - Follow-up: What is the gender balance of your workplace? Mostly men, women, evenly distributed?
 - Follow-up: What is the gender of your immediate supervisor?
 - Follow-up: Do you consider your workplace to be diverse?

Experiences of Harassment:

Ask participant to describe their experience of harassment. Pay particular attention to the context within the workplace of the experience– e.g., how participants describe their experiences, whether they use specific words/terms repeatedly, how they label their experience(s), where the harassment took place (at office, at a workplace event, online), duration of harassment, who was involved (position within the workplace of the harasser, where coworkers present, etc.). Be attentive to not label a participant’s experience for them.

- For you, what is harassment (sexual, psychological, discriminatory)?

COVID-19:

- Has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted your experiences of harassment in any way?? If so, how? (Listen for ways in which the harassment has escalated/intensified, whether behaviours are manifesting themselves more overtly online, examples of online harassing behaviours, whether there has been pressure to meet in person notwithstanding COVID restrictions, etc.)

Impact of Workplace Harassment:

- What were the consequences for you from experiencing harassment (health, isolation, job loss, etc.)?
- Have these experiences had an impact on your confidence, sense of self, feelings of self-worth, or other aspects of how you view yourself? If so, how?
- Have these experiences impacted how you view yourself as a worker? Your relationship with your employer or workplace? If so, how?
- How have these experiences impacted your relationships with those around you? How would you describe these changes?
 - Personal relationships, e.g., with family, friends, or children? For example, has your experience of trust with those relationships changed?
 - Work relationships, e.g., with co-workers or management?

Reporting & Retaliation

- Did you report your experience of harassment at your current or previous workplace? If so, how would characterize that experience? Who did you tell/report to? Was it a formal or informal report?
 - Follow-up: What made you decide to report (or not)?
 - Follow-up: Were the outcome positive or negative for you? Why/why not?
 - Follow-up: What happened to the person who harassed you?
 - Was an investigation conducted? If so, were you informed of the outcomes? How long did the investigation take?
 - Follow-up: Do you think this process for reporting is effective? Please describe why/why not.
 - Follow-up: Are there changes you would like to see to the reporting procedures? If so, please describe.
- Have you or a coworker experienced retaliation for reporting or otherwise objecting to being harassed at work? If so, please describe.
 - Follow-up: Does retaliation differ based on whether it occurs before reporting or after?
 - Follow-up: What about retaliation more broadly, for example forms of retaliation (such as increased harassment) that might occur as a result of a worker rejecting someone's initial sexual advances?

Effective Supports and Areas for Improvement

- Was there anyone you shared your experiences with and, if so, how would you describe their response and the support you received, if any?
 - Did their response(s) meet your expectations? Why or why not?
 - Did their response change over time?
 - Based on these responses, how did you cope with your experiences? (For example, going to private therapy, exercising, withdrawal, etc.)

- Thinking about the current supports at your workplace available to workers who experience harassment, what do you think is effective?
- What are the changes and/or improvements that you would like to see? This could include ways to improve existing supports and resources or thinking of new ones.
- Thinking about your work environment, what kinds of things might prevent or encourage harassment?
 - Follow-up: Are there changes you would like to see in your workplace? If so, please describe.

Workplace Practices Related to Preventing and Responding to Harassment and Supporting Workers:

Resources and Supports

- What kind of measures helped (or would have helped you) to get through your situation?
- What resources or supports are available in your workplace for those who experience harassment at work?
 - Follow-up: Are these internal or external to your workplace? Both?
 - Follow-up: What are your thoughts on these resources/supports? Are they effective?
 - Follow-up: What would you change about them?
- Are there resources or supports outside of your workplace that you have found helpful? If so, please describe them.
 - Follow-up: What prompted you to connect with them?
 - Follow-up: Do you feel these external resources would be able to provide support for workers that have experienced harassment at work?
- Does your workplace have a policy on harassment?
 - Follow-up: Was it readily available or you? /Easy to access?
 - Follow-up: Did it contain information that was useful/helpful (e.g., reporting procedures, investigations procedures, deadlines for filing, etc.)?
- Did you take legal steps or speak to a lawyer about your experience(s)? Why? What were your expectations?

Barriers/Challenges

- What kinds of challenges or barriers might people at your workplace that are experiencing harassment face?
 - Follow-up: Thinking about sexual harassment, do the barriers/challenges change? Are their additional ones?
 - Follow-up: Are there issues specific to workers social and/or employment status? For example, issues related to gender, race, length and type of employment, language, sexual orientation, etc.
- What do you think could be done to change this/protect workers?

Training

- What kinds of training or information (if any) have you received related to harassment at work?
 - Follow-up: What did you think about them?

Closing:

- What areas do you think we should pay more attention to regarding harassment at work?
- What kinds of outcomes do you hope to see from our research?
- Do you have any additional comments or things that are important for us to know that we have not touched on already?

Reminder to researcher: Check in with the participant before concluding the interview. Remind them of the resource list provided to them prior to the interview/via email.

Thank you very much for your time!

Appendix B – Recruitment Email Script

Email Script for Recruitment

Subject Line: Invitation to participate in research

Hello,

We have received your email (from a survey you completed) indicating interest in participating in a study being conducted by the Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children, Western University, and the University of Toronto. The aim of this study is to improve workplace practices (e.g., policies, procedures, and training programs) to prevent and respond to harassment at work and to support those affected. Your responses will provide important information to help us assess how well workplaces are meeting the needs of workers.

Anyone 18 years of age or older who has experienced harassment at work may participate in this study. If you agree, you will be invited to participate in an interview for the duration of approximately one hour (via telephone or virtually (online) using an online platform).

Please answer the following questions so that we can schedule your interview:

1. When are the best days and times to conduct the interview?
2. We are using Zoom to conduct interviews online. Are you comfortable using Zoom for the interview?
3. Please indicate the province/territory in which you live (so that we can consider the time zone when scheduling the interview):

If you would like more information on this study or would like to receive a letter of information about this study, please contact the researcher at the contact information given below.

Thank you,

[Your name]

Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children
Western University

Appendix C – Scheduling Interview Email Script

Scheduling Interview Email – second email to be sent to survey respondents who agreed to participate (VIA ZOOM) in an interview to schedule the email.

NOTE: Attach the following documents: Zoom tutorial; Letter of Information and Consent, List of Support Resources-BILINGUAL

If participants return their completed LOI/C, save it in the subfolder *Completed Letters of Info&Consent* (in OneDrive). Add their unique code (e.g., P1, P2...) to the beginning of the file name when saving their letter/form (this way they appear in order by code.)

Subject line: Scheduling interview

Hello [Name],

Thank you for your continued interest in participating in an interview for this study.

Your interview has been scheduled for [**Date/Time – e.g., Wednesday, December 2, at 2:00pm EST**].

Please confirm (by replying to this email) your availability to attend the interview or if you would like an alternative date/time. *A zoom link and telephone numbers (if you prefer to call in) will be sent prior to our interview.* (A brief Zoom tutorial is attached).

Please find attached a Letter of Information and Consent containing information about the study. Please complete the last page of the letter and return a copy to us. Alternatively, please answer the following questions (by reply to this email):

This study has been explained to me and any questions I had have been answered. I know that I may leave the study at any time. I agree to take part in this study. (Yes/No):

Do you agree to the audio-recording of this interview? (Yes/No):

Direct quotes from this interview may be used in research reports. However, only pseudonyms will be used to accompany quotes. No information that identifies you will be used. Do you agree to the use of the quotes? (Yes/No):

We will review the letter together and you will have the opportunity to ask questions before the interview begins. You have the option to have a support person present during the interview (e.g., friend, relative, advocate). Anyone present **must be 18 years of age** or over and will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement.

Thank you for your participation and I look forward to our conversation.

Sincerely,

[Researcher Name]

Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children, Western University

Appendix D – Letter of Information and Consent

Letter of Information and Consent – Worker Interview

Study Title: Harassment and Violence at Work in Canada

Principal Investigator: Barb MacQuarrie, Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children, Western University

Introduction

Thank you for your interest in participating in this research study that will examine the types of actions taken by workers who have experienced harassment at work and the related workplace responses, supports, and preventative measures and their effectiveness. You are being asked to participate because you are a member of one of the organizations collaborating in this study or you have previously completed our online survey and have indicated an interest in participating in further research.

This study is a collaboration between the Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children (CREVAWC), Western University, and the University of Toronto.

Why this study is being done

Harassment occurs across all occupations and industries. It can have negative short- and long-term impacts on employees who directly experience harassment and who observe their coworkers experiencing harassment. The aim of this study is to improve workplace practices (e.g., policies, procedures, and training programs) to prevent and respond to harassment at work and to support those affected. Your responses will provide important information to help us assess how well workplaces are meeting the needs of workers and learn more about the impacts of harassment.

Confidentiality

All information collected during this study will be kept confidential and only authorized members of the research team will have access to it. Anyone outside of the research team (i.e., translator and transcriptionist) will have signed a confidentiality agreement. The data will be stored at Western University on encrypted and password protected computers/servers and any hardcopy material will be stored in a locked cabinet in a locked and secure area at the University. Unless you choose to tell them, no one, including your employer, supervisor, union representatives or coworkers will know whether you have participated in this study. Your name, email address and/or telephone number will be collected only for the purposes of contacting you in relation to this study. You will not be named in any reports, publications, theses, or presentations that may result from this study. The interview transcriptions will not contain actual names or any identifying information. An ID Number and pseudonym will be used in place of original names and all other identifying information will be removed or substituted. A list of ID numbers, pseudonyms, and names will be maintained and securely stored separate from all other data. All data will be destroyed after 7 years. A translator may be present during this interview, if you have indicated one will be with you when scheduling the interview. Delegated

institutional representatives of Western University and its Non-Medical Research Ethics Board may require access to your study-related records to monitor the conduct of the research in accordance with regulatory requirements.

If you agree to participate

Anyone 18 years of age or older who has experienced harassment at work may participate in this study.

If you agree, you will be asked to participate in an interview for the duration of approximately one hour.

Interviews will be conducted via telephone or virtually (online) using an online platform with available security options (e.g., password for entry). It is possible that information could be intercepted by unauthorized people (hacked). This risk cannot be completely eliminated. Interviews will be audio-recorded, if you permit, and will be transcribed in their entirety by a professional transcriptionist who will sign a confidentiality agreement. Recordings will be transferred via Western's corporate online secure file sharing platform, Microsoft Office OneDrive. If you prefer not to have the interview audio-recorded, written notes will be recorded instead.

If required, you have the option to request a translator be present during the interview. We use the free services of Across Languages. Their translators are qualified and certified.

Potential Risks and Benefits

By participating in this study, you may learn some new information about harassment as a workplace and societal issue. It may help you understand your experiences and the possible actions that workplaces can take to provide appropriate responses and supports to workers affected by harassment. It is possible that there are no direct benefits to you from participating in this research, but information gathered may provide benefits to society as a whole which include, an increased understanding of workplace and government practices to address harassment, ways to improve these practices, and how they shape the experiences of workers affected by harassment.

If you are currently or have in the past been impacted by harassment, you may find it distressing to respond to some questions. Attached to this letter is a list of resources by province so that if you feel distressed you can speak to someone for support or obtain information about local supportive services. You may also have a support person present during the interview (e.g., friend, relative, advocate).

Voluntary Participation

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions, or withdraw from the study at any time, even once the interview is complete, with no negative consequences. Please note: once the study has been published we will not be able to withdraw your information.

Questions

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of this study, you may contact The Office of Human Research Ethics (519) 661-3036, 1-844-720-9816, email: ethics@uwo.ca. This office oversees the ethical conduct of research studies and is not part of the study team. Everything that you discuss will be kept confidential. If you have any questions about this study, please contact Barb MacQuarrie at [researcher's phone number and email].

Study Title: Harassment and Violence at Work in Canada

Principal Investigator: Barb MacQuarrie, Centre for Research & Education on Violence Against Women & Children, Western University

Consent

You do not waive any legal right by consenting to this study.

This study has been explained to me and any questions I had have been answered. I know that I may leave the study at any time. I agree to take part in this study.

Print Study Participant's Name

Signature

Date

(You will be given a signed copy of this consent form.)

Do you agree to the audio-recording of this interview? Yes No

Direct quotes from this interview may be used in research reports. However, only pseudonyms will be used to accompany quotes. No information that identifies you will be used. Do you agree to the use of the quotes? Yes No

The person below acted as a support person for the participant during the consent process and attests that the study as set out in this form was accurately translated and has had any questions answered.

Print Name of Support
Person

Signature

Date

My signature means that I have explained the study to the participant named above. I have answered all questions.

Print Name of Person Obtaining
Consent

Signature

Date

This letter is yours to keep for future reference.

Appendix E – Provincial and National List of Resources



Workplace Harassment and Violence Resources /

Ressources de soutien relativement au harcèlement et à la violence au travail

If you, or anyone you know, need support or information on sexual harassment and violence, below is a list of Canadian resources organized by province/territory.

Si vous, ou quelqu'un que vous connaissez, avez besoins d'aide ou d'informations en rapport avec la violence et le harcèlement sexuel, n'hésitez pas à vous servir de la liste d'organismes canadiens et de ressources de soutien ci-dessous. Notez que les ressources bilingues ou francophones sont marquées d'un astérisque.

***Alberta : Association des juristes d'expression française de l'Alberta – ajefa.ca**

La mission de l'AJEFA est de faciliter l'accès au public aux services juridiques en français et de promouvoir l'utilisation de la langue française dans l'administration de la justice en Alberta.

Alberta: One Line for Sexual Violence – 1-866-403-8000

Offers talk, text and chat to people in all areas of Alberta who have been impacted by sexual violence. *(Seulement disponible en anglais)*

Alberta: Workers Resource Centre: 1 (844) 435-7972 / 1 (403) 264-8100 / www.helpwrc.org

The Case Work program provides individual assistance to workers who live or work in the Alberta area and need help with Employment Standards complaints, Employment Insurance claims and appeals, Workers' Compensation claims (we do not do WCB appeals), employment-related complaints under the Alberta Human Rights Act, and claims for employer short/long term disability and Canada Pension Plan disability benefits.

(Seulement disponible en anglais)

Alberta: Sexual Assault Services in Alberta - <https://aasas.ca/get-help/>

(Seulement disponible en anglais)

***Colombie-Britannique : Inform'Elles – <http://www.informelles.ca/>**

Depuis 1998, l'équipe d'Inform'Elles travaille auprès des femmes francophones en situation de violence en Colombie-Britannique. Notre mission est de favoriser l'accès à des services d'information, de sensibilisation et de soutien aux femmes et aux jeunes filles francophones en Colombie-Britannique en situation de violence.

***British Columbia/Colombie-Britannique: WorksafeBC – <https://www.worksafebc.com/>**

We are committed to creating a province free from workplace injury or illness, and to providing service driven by our core values of integrity, accountability, and innovation. By partnering with workers and employers, we help British Columbians come home from work safe every day.

Si vous avez été accidenté.e au travail et si vous voulez faire une demande d'indemnités à WorkSafeBC, communiquez avec son Centre de télé-réclamations (en anglais) où des représentants

de WorkSafeBC qui parlent français pourront vous aider à remplir un rapport de blessures et à comprendre le processus de réclamation.

British Columbia: VictimLinkBC – 1-800-563-0808

a toll-free, confidential, multilingual telephone service available across B.C. and the Yukon 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It provides information and referral services to all victims of crime and immediate crisis support to victims of family and sexual violence, including victims of human trafficking exploited for labour or sexual services.

(Seulement disponible en anglais)

British Columbia: Access Pro Bono's (APB) Employment Standards Program – 1.877.762.6664 / <http://accessprobono.ca/>

Provides free legal representation by volunteer lawyers and law students to low income employees or former employees appearing before the Employment Standards Branch and the Employment Standards Tribunal (e.g. vacation pay, termination pay, overtime, statutory holiday pay, etc.)

Standards Program accepts clients from across the province. Legal representation is contingent on eligibility for Access Pro Bono's services, a merit assessment of the case, and volunteers' availability.

(Seulement disponible en anglais)

British Columbia: TAPS Employment Standards Legal Advocacy Project - 250.361.3521 / www.tapsbc.ca/

Provides free face-to-face advocacy representation services for non-unionised employees. TAPS Advocates are available to assist employees in resolving disputes with their employers under the BC Employment Standards Act.

(Seulement disponible en anglais)

British Columbia: Society for Male Survivors of Sexual Abuse – (604) 682-6482 / [http:// bc-malesurvivors.com/home/](http://bc-malesurvivors.com/home/)

A non-profit society, established to provide therapeutic services for males who have been sexually abused at some time in their lives.

(Seulement disponible en anglais)

Manitoba: The Workers' Organizing Resource Centre – (204) 947-2220 / www.worc.ca/intro.asp

The mandate is to help establish, maintain and facilitate community organizations that represent and enforce people's rights within our community and to advocate on behalf of workers who do not have access to a union for protection of their rights in the workplace and beyond.

(Seulement disponible en anglais)

Manitoba: Sexual Assault Crisis Line – 1-888-292-7565

A 24-hour phone line that provides information and crisis intervention to sexual assault victims and those close to them.

(Seulement disponible en anglais)

***Manitoba: Justice Victim Services – 1-866-484-2846 /**

www.gov.mb.ca/justice/crown/victims/index.html

In general, Victim Services helps people access their rights, understand their responsibilities and

connects them to other services or agencies. Services are provided free of charge and are available in person, by phone, fax or Internet.

En général, le personnel des Services aux victimes aide celles-ci à faire valoir leurs droits et à comprendre leurs responsabilités et les met en contact avec d'autres organismes et services. Les services sont offerts gratuitement en personne, par téléphone, par télécopieur et sur Internet.

***Manitoba : La ligne provinciale d'information et d'aide confidentielle en cas de crise de violence familiale – 1-877-977-0007**

Appelez sans frais, 24 heures par jour, la ligne provinciale d'information et d'aide confidentielle en cas de crise de violence familiale

***Manitoba : Chez Rachel – 204-925-2550 / chezrachel.ca**

Chez Rachel fournit des services accessibles et sécuritaires, du counselling et du soutien pratique. Nous aidons les femmes à retrouver une vie normale et un avenir meilleur. Nous avons des programmes variés pour les femmes et leurs enfants qui leur permettront de développer de meilleures aptitudes, d'avoir confiance en elles-mêmes et de vivre de façon indépendante.

***New Brunswick/Nouveau Brunswick: Chimo Helpline / Ligne d'écoute Chimo – 1-800-667-5005**

A provincial crisis phone line, accessible 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to all residents of New Brunswick. Provides a listening ear, helpful information, crisis intervention and referrals to resources in the province of N.B.

Chimo est une ligne d'écoute provinciale ouverte à tous les résidents du Nouveau-Brunswick et accessible 24 heures par jour. Nous offrons une écoute active et des renseignements pertinents.

***New Brunswick/Nouveau Brunswick: Sexual Assault Support Line / Ligne d'écoute en matière d'agression sexuelle – 506-454-0437**

A 24-hour confidential sexual assault support line for anyone affected by sexual violence, or anyone supporting someone affected by sexual violence. The support line is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and 365 days a year. Our mission is to serve our community by providing a competent level of crisis intervention, referrals and vital information in a caring, confidential manner.

Si vous avez été victime de violence sexuelle, vous pouvez recevoir de l'aide. Lorsque vous serez prête, VSNB vous propose des services et des programmes offrant un soutien, de l'information et des options.

Newfoundland: Newfoundland & Labrador 24 Hour Support and Information Line - 1-800-726-2743

A 24-Hour Support and Information Line where callers can reach an empathetic, non-judgmental volunteer.

(Seulement disponible en anglais)

Newfoundland: NL Sexual Assault Crisis & Prevention Centre - www.endsexualviolence.com

A non-profit, community-based, charitable organization that exists to support individuals of all genders who have been impacted by sexual violence.

(Seulement disponible en anglais)

Nova Scotia: The Sexual Assault and Harassment Phone Line – 1-902-425-1066 Non-judgmental, active listening and support to anyone who has experienced or has been affected by sexualized violence. Calls are taken from 12pm - 12am, 7 days a week. There are only 2 phone line operators taking calls and they may be helping another person when you call. If you are unable to get through, please try again later. The phone line is operated by Dalhousie Student Union.
(*Seulement disponible en anglais*)

Nova Scotia: NS Mi'kmaq Crisis and Referral Line – 1-855- 379-2099
The Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq Crisis and Referral phone line is available 24/7 toll free to Mi'kmaq people across the province. The Centre also provides online support through the Eskasoni Crisis Worker Facebook account. Both are a service of Eskasoni Mental Health.
(*Seulement disponible en anglais*)

Nova Scotia: Halifax Workers Action Centre – (902) 221-0755 / www.halifaxworkersaction.ca
Provides help to workers with labour standards issues, unpaid wages, terminations, workplace discrimination, and more. We provide free, one-on-one assistance at our employment law information clinics.
(*Seulement disponible en anglais*)

Nova Scotia: Sexual Assault Centres – www.novascotia.ca/coms/svs/sexual-assault-centres
(*Seulement disponible en anglais*)

***Nova Scotia/ Nouvelle-Écosse: Legal Advice for Sexual Assault Survivors Program / Consultation juridique pour les personnes qui ont subi une agression sexuelle**
Call 211 to register. You do not need to provide details about what happened. You only have to say that you were sexually assaulted in Nova Scotia, and that you would like to speak with a lawyer.

Composez le 211 au téléphone pour vous inscrire. Il n'est pas nécessaire de donner des détails sur ce qui s'est passé. Il suffit de dire que vous avez subi une agression sexuelle en Nouvelle-Écosse et que vous voulez parler à un avocat.

***Nova Scotia/Nouvelle-Écosse: Nova Scotia Sexual Violence – breakthesilencens.ca**

***Northwest Territories/Territoires du Nord-Ouest: NWT Help Line / La Ligne d'aide des TNO – 1-800-661-0844**
Offers free support to residents of the Northwest Territories, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It is 100% free and confidential. The NWT Help Line also has an option for follow-up calls.

La Ligne d'aide des T.N.-O. offre du soutien aux résidents des Territoires du Nord-Ouest en tout temps. Il s'agit d'un service entièrement gratuit et confidentiel. Nous pouvons également offrir du suivi par téléphone.

***Nunavut: Nunavut Kamatsiagtut Helpline – Toll Free (867) 979-3333**
For all people who need someone to talk to about their troubles, concerns, and anything that bothers you. trained volunteers are on the phone 24 hours every day of the week. Volunteers come from

many walks of life and are always available with an open mind and listening ear for those who need someone to talk to about issues that matter to you. All of our volunteers speak English and many speak Inuktitut and French.

Bien que le site Web de cet organisme ne soit disponible qu'en anglais, il indique que plusieurs de leurs bénévoles parlent français et Inuktitut.

Ontario: Workers' Action Centre – 1-855-531-0778 / www.workersactioncentre.org/resources/

Our organization and members are committed to improving the lives and working conditions of people in low-wage and unstable jobs. We want to make sure that all of us have a voice at work and are treated with dignity and fairness. On this page you will find materials on your rights at work. You can phone us if you need advice about a workplace problem you are facing, and request to speak to someone in your language.

(Seulement disponible en anglais)

Ontario: Assaulted Women's Helpline – 1-866-863-0511 / Toll-Free TTY 1.866.863.7868 / #SAFE (#7233) on your Bell, Rogers, Fido or Telus mobile phone

Offers a 24-hour telephone and TTY crisis line to all woman who have experienced abuse. We provide counselling, emotional support, information and referrals.

(Seulement disponible en anglais)

Ontario: Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres – www.sexualassaultsupport.ca/support

Sexual assault centres provide free counselling and information about sexual violence. Get contact information for a centre near you.

(Seulement disponible en anglais)

***Ontario: Ontario Network of Sexual Assault Domestic Violence Care and Treatment Centres / Réseau ontarien des centres de traitement ou de soins en cas d'agression sexuelle ou de violence familiale – www.sacc.to/gylb/satc/SATCcentres.htm**

Specialized teams of doctors, nurses and counsellors provide emergency medical treatment and emotional support to youth (over the age of 12), women, and men who have experienced a recent sexual assault (within two years). Services are confidential and free of charge. Able to take care of victims who have physical disabilities. Will arrange for interpreters to help understand individuals who have difficulty with the English language. On call 24 hours a day.

Le ministère de la Santé de l'Ontario finance 34 centres de traitement et de soins en cas d'agression sexuelle et de violence familiale basés dans des hôpitaux. Une équipe d'infirmières et de médecins est disponible sur demande 24 heures par jour, 7 jours par semaine par le biais du service des urgences, de telle sorte que les victimes d'agressions sexuelles peuvent recevoir des soins médicaux et psychologiques spécialisés.

***Ontario : FEM'AIDE – 1.877.336.2433 / 1.866.860.7082 (ATS)**

Fem'aide offre aux femmes d'expression française aux prises avec la violence sexiste, du soutien, des renseignements et de l'aiguillage vers les services appropriés dans leur collectivité 24 heures par jour.

***Ontario : Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes (AOcVF) – <https://aocvf.ca/>**
AOcVF a pour mandat de travailler à la prévention de la violence, à la formation continue des intervenantes et des directions, au démarchage en vue de mettre en place de services en français, à l'analyse des enjeux et à la réalisation de matériel éducatif et de sensibilisation en français, selon une analyse féministe de la situation sociale et communautaire.

Ontario: Sexual Harassment and Assault Resource Exchange (SHARE) – 1-866-625-5179 or 416-597-4900 / TTY: 416-597-4903 or 1-866-612-8627 / <https://www.hrlsc.on.ca/share/welcome>
The Sexual Harassment and Assault Resource Exchange (SHARE) is a service that supports all workers who have experienced sexual harassment or assault at work. We provide free, confidential legal information to workers about all their available options to address their experience. Sexual Harassment and Assault Resource Exchange's (SHARE) goal is to support diverse groups of workers who are exposed to sexual harassment and assault by providing them with legal information to make informed decision about which steps, if any, they would like to take. SHARE is a project of the Human Rights Legal Support Centre and is funded by the Department of Justice Canada.

Le programme Échange de ressources pour le Harcèlement et l'Agression Sexuelle (ÉRHAS) offre des services de soutien à tous les travailleurs qui ont subi du harcèlement sexuel ou des agressions sexuelles en milieu de travail. Nous offrons des renseignements juridiques gratuits et confidentiels aux travailleurs sur les options qui s'offrent à eux pour faire face à leurs expériences. L'objectif du programme ÉRHAS est de soutenir les groupes diversifiés de travailleurs exposés au harcèlement ou aux agressions sexuelles en leur fournissant des renseignements juridiques leur permettant de prendre des décisions éclairées sur les démarches qu'ils pourraient vouloir entreprendre, le cas échéant. ÉRHAS est un projet du Centre d'assistance juridique en matière de droits de la personne. Il est financé par le ministère de la Justice du Canada.

***Prince Edward Island/L'Île-du-Prince-Édouard: The Island Helpline / Ligne d'écoute de l'Î.-P.-É. – 1-800-218-2885**

When you call the Island Helpline, you can expect a kind and caring staff person to answer who is trained in crisis intervention. Staff provide emotional support, problem solving and crisis intervention services 24/7. Staff can also help by offering information about community resources and supports near you.

La Ligne d'écoute de l'Î.-P.-É. est un service gratuit et confidentiel qui offre un soutien affectif et des interventions en cas de crise aux Insulaires de tout âge. Bien formés et bienveillants, nos bénévoles et nos employés peuvent recevoir vos appels 24 heures par jour.

Prince Edward Island: The PEI Rape and Sexual Assault Centre – 1-866-566-1864 / <http://peirsac.org/index.php>

The mission of the PEI Rape and Sexual Assault Centre is to support survivors of sexual assault and abuse in their healing and to ensure that all people living in PEI are safe from sexual violence. Does not provide support or crisis intervention outside of regular work hours.
(*Seulement disponible en anglais*)

Prince Edward Island/L'Île-du-Prince-Édouard: Victim Services - Queens and Kings County / Services aux victimes des comtés Queens et Kings – (902) 368-4582

Prince Edward Island/L'Île-du-Prince-Édouard: Victim Services - Prince County / Services aux victimes du comté Prince – (902) 888-8218

Victim Services assists victims of crime throughout their involvement in the criminal justice system. Assistance is available to victims of crime anywhere on Prince Edward Island. If you live off-Island and are victimized by a crime that occurred on PEI, you are also eligible for services.

Aucune description des services aux victimes n'est disponible en français sur le site Web de cet organisme. Cependant, certaines pages du site sont traduites en français et des services en français sont peut-être disponibles.

***Québec : Le Groupe d'aide et d'information sur le harcèlement sexuel au travail de la province de Québec inc. / The Help and Information Center on Sexual Harassment in the Workplace – (514) 526-0789 / <https://www.gaihst.qc.ca/>**

Le Groupe d'aide et d'information sur le harcèlement sexuel au travail de la province de Québec inc. (G.A.I.H.S.T.) est un organisme communautaire établi en 1980 et qui vient en aide aux personnes ayant subi du harcèlement sexuel et/ou psychologique dans leur milieu de travail.

A non-profit community center established in 1980 that has been helping individuals who have been subjected to sexual and/or psychological harassment at work.

***Québec : Tel-Aide – (514) 935-1101 / www.telaide.org**

Offers a free listening service, in English and in French, which is anonymous, confidential and 24/7. Our service is accessible to everyone who suffers from loneliness or stress, who are emotionally distressed or angry, or who simply need to confide in someone who will listen without judgement.

Centre d'écoute téléphonique fondé en 1971 et le plus important au Québec, Tel-Aide a pour mission d'offrir un service d'écoute en français et en anglais, gratuit, anonyme et confidentiel 24 heures par jour. Ce service est accessible à toute personne qui souffre de solitude, de stress, qui est en détresse psychologique ou en colère, ou qui a simplement besoin de se confier à quelqu'un qui les écouterait sans les juger.

***Québec : Le Centre de Travailleurs et Travailleuse Immigrant-e-s / The Immigrant Workers Centre – (514) 342-2111 / <https://iwc-cti.ca/>**

Le Centre de Travailleurs et Travailleuse Immigrant-e-s défend les droits des immigrant-e-s dans leurs lieux de travail et se bat pour la dignité, le respect et la justice

Defends the rights of immigrants in their places of work and fights for dignity, respect, and justice.

***Québec : Centres locaux des services communautaires (CLSC) / Local Community Service Centres (CLSCs) – <https://santemontreal.qc.ca/population/ressources/clsc/>**

Les CLSC offrent des services de santé et des services sociaux dans leurs installations, mais aussi à l'école, au travail et à domicile.

Offer basic front-line health and social services. They also have the mandate to provide the population within the territory they serve with preventive or curative health and social services and rehabilitation and reintegration services.

Saskatchewan: Sexual Assault Services of Saskatchewan – 306.757.1941 / www.sassk.ca

A provincial non-profit organization that works collectively with front-line agencies, community partners, and governments that provide support and advocacy for those affected by sexual violence in Saskatchewan.

(Seulement disponible en anglais)

Saskatchewan: Victim Services – www.saskatchewan.ca/residents/justice-crime-and-the-law/victims-of-crime-and-abuse/help-from-victim-service-units-and-agencies

The Victim Services programs work closely with police and assist victims in the immediate aftermath of a crime or tragedy and throughout the criminal justice process. Services offered, provided by staff and volunteers, include crisis intervention, information, support, referrals to other specialized programs and services.

(Seulement disponible en anglais)

Saskatchewan: Emergency/Crisis Hotlines –

www.sk.211.ca/saskatchewan 247 hour crisis hotlines#

(Seulement disponible en anglais)

Yukon: VictimLinkBC – 1-800-563-0808

A toll-free, confidential, multilingual telephone service available across B.C. and the Yukon 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It provides information and referral services to all victims of crime and immediate crisis support to victims of family and sexual violence, including victims of human trafficking exploited for labour or sexual services.

Bien que le site Web ne soit disponible qu'en anglais et qu'il ne précise pas si des services en français existent, le service téléphonique serait offert en plusieurs langues.

Bien que le site Web ne soit disponible qu'en anglais et qu'il ne précise pas si des services en français existent, le service téléphonique serait offert en plusieurs langues.

*** Yukon: Women's Directorate / Direction de la condition féminine –**

<https://yukon.ca/en/womens-directorate>

We're responsible for ensuring that gender considerations are integrated into government policy-making, legislation and program development. We offer a range of public education materials on gender equality, health and violence prevention. We also provide funding support to groups and initiatives that enhance gender equality and security. We work closely with a network of gender equality seeking groups and non-government organizations and agencies throughout Yukon for ensuring that equality concerns are brought forward.

Notre mandat : veiller à ce que la problématique hommes-femmes fasse partie intégrante du processus d'élaboration des politiques, lois et programmes du gouvernement. Pour ce faire, nous proposons un éventail de ressources éducatives sur l'égalité et la santé des femmes et sur la prévention de la violence envers les femmes; offrons du soutien financier aux groupes et aux initiatives qui favorisent l'égalité et la sécurité des femmes et collaborons étroitement avec un réseau de groupes de femmes et d'organismes non gouvernementaux de partout au Yukon pour faire avancer la cause des femmes.