

Gülriiz Uygur & Hülya Şimğa (Eds.) (2018). Network to Combat Sexual Harassment and Assault at Universities: SHA Studies. Famagusta: EMU Press, 148 pages, ISBN: 978-605-95-95-18-6

*Every time a women stands up for herself, without knowing it, without claiming it, she stands up for all women.
(Maya Angelou)*

A Story of Stand Up and Stay Standing for All Women and Girls

This book is a product of collective experience and solidarity based on the struggle of different groups in order to prevent sexual harassment and assault at universities. Gender inequality, which exists in many areas, also manifests itself in universities that have hierarchical relationships. I believe that this book will also be a guide for Women's Studies Centers about the topic of sexual harassment and assault. Of the 187 universities in Turkey, there are 95 Women's Research Centres. It is very vital that these centers have a feminist perspective. Universities contributed with their own Sexual Harassment and Assault prevention experiences to the book are: Ankara University, Atılım University, İstanbul Bilgi University, Eastern Mediterranean University, Dokuz Eylül University, İstanbul Koç University, Mimar Sinan University, Middle East Technical University, Sabancı University and Van Yüzüncü Yıl University. By sharing their experiences with other stakeholders, they emphasized the importance of SHA Network and intercollegiate dialogue and cooperation. It started with the question "What can be done against sexual harassment and assault at universities?" and thirteen workshops were held in six years in different universities. This book is an attempt to record and investigate exactly this process.

Another point of this book is to talk about *the unspoken*. The problem of sexual harassment and assault occurs in almost every part of society but is *untouched* occurs on and off campus. Universities have the potential to transcend the people involved in achieving gender equality. According to Songur (2017), universities are creating multiplier effect on the transfer of information and culture by spreading their graduate students to various professional areas and different geographical regions (cited by Songur & Şimşek, 2018:27). In this context, increasing awareness of gender equality in universities is of great importance in order to provide a safer and egalitarian environment in the whole society. As a matter of fact, universities can't be considered as independent of society. In this book review, it is aimed to address the differences, similarities, gains and difficulties encountered in these experiences, each of which is very valuable.

What is Sexual Harassment? Why is There?

In order to combat sexual harassment and assault effectively, it is necessary to make the theoretical and legal definition and read the violence correctly. Sexual harassment and assault are related to sexual violence and occur as a result of undesirable sexual behavior. Sexual harassment is, above all, a human rights violation. It is an obstacle to a person's development of body immunity, material and spiritual presence. It can also be seen as a form of injustice and discrimination (Uygur & Şimğa, 2018:1). Individuals who are sexually harassed and assaulted are often made up of disadvantaged groups of communities (such as women, children, and LGBTI individuals). In patriarchal societies with unfair balances of power, discrimination is carried out on the basis of gender, sexual orientation and gender identity. In patriarchal societies where women are secondary and men are more advantageous, *heterosexual masculinity* gains importance and reproduce itself. Victims remain even more invisible due to the lack of awareness of sexual harassment, fear, social pressure, lack of knowing what to do, and inability to access support mechanisms. This is why sexual harassment, which remains an unspoken area, tends to be seen only as crimes caused by individual distress. However, gender inequality is the main reason behind sexual harassment. Contrary to the popular belief, sexual harassment and assault are a social problem, not individual one. "If a person has been abused, it's because of his/her dress-up and inappropriate attitude" (Uygur & Şimğa, 2018:12) is one of the exemplary arguments distancing the issue of being social but rather personal. Gender-based violence is a result of patriarchal society and exists in all kinds of social relationships such as family, friendships, workplace environment and educational life and requires a struggle in a wide range of areas.

Legally, according to the Istanbul Convention (Art.40), in order to consider an act as sexual harassment, it should be; a) Directed against a person and violated his dignity or carried out for this purpose, b) The fact that this behavior is related to sexuality, c) Not to be asked by the person to who it is directed, d) It must be verbal, non-verbal, or a physical behavior. As Uygur (2015) and Bartlett (1995) mentioned, the traditions that carry gender roles, the rules of law established under the influence of these traditions, prejudices, for example, prejudices about masculinity, prejudices about femininity and LGBTI individuals have prejudicial results in terms of legal norms and legal practice (cited by Songur & Şimşek, 2018:29). For this reason, the fact that the rules of law are free of these prejudices and cultural norms and have gender awareness, are very important in the legal fight against sexual harassment. In academic writing, sexual harassment began to be addressed in the context of workplaces since the 1970s. Farley (1978) and MacKinnon's (1978) work has contributed greatly to the conceptualization of sexual harassment. For example, MacKinnon's work conceptualizes sexual harassment as undesired sexual impositions in the context of unequal power relations (cited by Ecevit & Başpınar, 2018:98). Benson (1984) on the other hand, has described it as a form

of violence that the powerful often practice from powerless to power, and called it "counter power" (E.g. sexist/abusive/sexually explicit behavior towards academic by a student, extreme interest) (cited by Ecevit & Başpınar, 2018:101).

The situation in Universities: Importance of SHA Units

Universities, one of the major institutions in society, are also not free from sexual harassment and assault. Although universities are a hotbed of knowledge, and pre-acceptance that it appeals to a certain level of education and socio-cultural level and areas free from sexual harassment and assault, it is not really the case. Specific to the universities in Turkey; It is possible to examine the issue as a part of hierarchical order, political and cultural conservatism, sexist attitudes, social and institutional male sovereignty, and culturally ambiguous perception of sexual harassment in the context of their relationalities (Ecevit & Başpınar, 2018:99). According to Wilson (1973) conservatism is based on the idea that social hierarchical relations should be in social organization It is that those who want them and the alikes to be socially dominant in the social hierarchy develop biased attitudes and behaviors towards the other (cited by Ecevit & Başpınar, 2018:104). Also according to Whitley (1999), this understanding feeds racism and sexism (cited by Ecevit & Başpınar, 2018:104).

Sexist stereotypes produce generalizations of gender roles. These generalizations depict men and women as different and often the opposite. This understanding places the heterosexual man at the top of the hierarchical position; Rejects the concept of equality and claims that heterosexual men deserve many advantageous positions and resources in society more than others. A sexist attitude towards women and LGBTI + individuals is sometimes in the form of conservative sexism, sometimes hostile, and sometimes contradictory emotional sexism. Since the 1990s, Turkey has become politically and socially conservative (Ecevit & Başpınar, 2018:105).

Male dominance and heteronormativity are two important forms sexism. The two forms of sexism form a hierarchy between different gender and sexual orientations. In this hierarchy, heterosexual men are in the strongest and advantageous position. This situation also manifests itself in universities. The presence of men in higher status, the lack of trust in the woman's statement, the lack of value to listen to the victim or suppressing her voice, the insistence of evidence about events in the usually private area, and exposing the victim that cause to secondary victimization, can be seen as a reflection of sexism and hegemonic masculinity in universities. In addition, LGBTI+ students are also marginalized through discrimination at university campuses and may be the target of sexual harassment, physical and sexual assault. According to Rankin's (2005) research, more than a third of LGBTI+ respondents have experienced sexual harassment in the past year. Although it is not easy to express different sexual orientations and identities on university campuses in Turkey, solidarity groups are not very

warmly welcomed. Finally, lack of adequate awareness about sexual harassment and assault plays an active role in defining and therefore ignoring the experience as "harassment/assault" (cited by Ecevit & Başpınar, 2018:109). In light of all these cases, people who are educated or working in an environment that is not actively combated by harassment are disadvantaged against harassment. In particular, students who are in an institution that is not actively combated by harassment can learn to be indifferent to harassment, and in the future they may remain silent. For this reason, it is very important to establish units related to sexual harassment and assault in universities (SHA Units), establishing and active working of women's research centers, publishing policy and ethical behavior documents, as well as carrying out awareness and education studies, establishing safe campuses, as all writers of the book agreed.

What Has Been Done in Universities?

Although each university that contributes to this book has taken action on different dates, in different ways, by following different methods, it is also important to specify the points they have in common.

Similarities

The most fundamental common point of these universities is that they are working to prevent sexual harassment and assault in universities, ensure that victims are not remain silent/helpless, and that support mechanisms are engaged and that gender equality is achieved. In addition, they have taken initiatives both at their own universities and under the SHA Communication Network. It has been understood that, Ankara University's call in 2012 to discuss sexual harassment in universities and the resulting workshop has been an important source of motivation for many universities. Basic standards have been set for what should be done in these workshops. In addition, a certificate of attitude has been put forward. In summary, since the first meeting, the Network has reached consensus in five areas to raise awareness of sexual harassment and assault, and participants have been invited to act in line with this consensus: a) giving compulsory courses in the field of gender studies (preferably); b) conducting workshops for students, distributing flyers and guidebooks; c) establishing a unit of gender experts; d) mobilizing gender-oriented activities and formations among students such as student clubs and initiatives; e) to adopt and announce an attitude document on the subject in macro-above-university structures such as national higher education units (Aliefendioğlu & Güven-Lisaniler, 2018:64). "YÖK Gender Equality Attitude Document" published by Higher Education Institution in 2015 can be said to be one of the most important outputs of these workshops. Academicians from other universities that have not mentioned above have also made many valuable contributions to the SHA Network. In addition, the ability of universities to lobby and pressure their own administration has increased.

Another common point is that the main working principles of established units are "privacy, trust and care, women's statements are essential and secondary victimization". All universities are aware that sexual harassment is already a difficult area to talk and combat. For this reason, they believe that applications that come to them should be investigated in accordance with the principle of privacy. Even if the supports offered by universities in this challenging process are different, they indicate that it is important that applicants do not suffer again. Finally, all universities emphasize the importance of both disincentives and awareness studies. Fundamentally, the struggle for gender equality is one of the most important steps to work on sexual harassment and assault. As a matter of fact, mandatory/elective Gender Lessons/Trainings are given in most schools and workshops/speeches are held on the subject and posters/brochures are prepared. Finally, it is very important that the senior management of universities are sensitive to sexual harassment and gender equality. The support of university institutions and administrators who serve as facilitators in the struggle given is very important for the realization of SHA studies. It should be noted that administrators, academicians, students, administrative officers and all other officials at universities can work collectively to create safe campuses/spaces. All the universities agreed on that.

Differences

Once one touches these partnerships, it is necessary to address the noticeable differences. Every university has its own subjective experience. The differences are basically; processes focus on the content and functioning of the established unit, difficulties, methods of combat, and activities. First, attempts by universities to combat sexual harassment and assault occurred on different dates. Some universities have been interested in this issue for 10 years, while some others for the last 2 years. Some universities have had fewer bureaucratic hurdles, and others have had to make a lot of effort in every sense. All of these challenges are detailed in the book. Secondly, they have been organized in some universities as "units", others as "commissions" or "committees". Some of these units are connected to The Women's Research Centers, while others operate autonomously. Again, these units differ from each other in the documents they produce. Some universities have produced "policy documents", while others have produced "ethics documents" or "strategy documents" or "guidelines" for units. Documents that basically serve the same purpose are shaped or adapted to the structure of schools. Some schools have established House of Representatives, while others have committees or consulting centers. The ways these units function also differ. From the form of application to the initial interview and disciplinary investigation, universities have built their own systems. Differences have also been observed in the difficulties encountered. While some universities have a supportive and open upper management, some institutions do not even want

to talk about sexual harassment and assault. Resistance can also come from students. Universities have shaped the ways of dealing with these challenges according to their own experience. Applying anonymously to units via the Website or by e-mail is one of these ways of coping. Some universities emphasize the importance of conducting perception research and analyzing the current situation. In some universities, student clubs (such as LGBT, Women's organizations) took an active role in CTS studies, while others encountered the timid and/or hostile attitudes of the students.

As a concluding remark, this book has emerged as a product of the collaboration and exchange of ideas of the SHA Network in universities. Academics, who had played a role in this network, shared their experiences, suggestions and understanding of the problem about combatting the sexual harassment and assault. Once again, it is important to share the importance of collective act through this book's review. This collective act resulted in as a very important network of SHA, for *assault and harassment free* universities. Hopefully, this book will also be a good guide to start your own struggle.

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