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# THE MEDIATING ROLE OF TRUST IN THE MANAGER IN THE EFFECT OF PERCEPTION OF GENDER EQUALITY ON SEXUAL HARASSMENT REPORTING IN THE WORKPLACE

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The primary purpose of this study is to determine the mediating role of trust in the manager in the effect of the perception of gender equality on sexual harassment reporting in the workplace. This research is a relational survey model based on the quantitative research method. It has been determined that participants' perceptions of gender equality had a significant and positive effect on sexual harassment reporting and trust in managers. Also, a positive effect of trust in the manager on sexual harassment reporting was determined. Trust in the manager plays a mediating role in the effect of perception of gender equality on sexual harassment reporting in the workplace, implying that sexual harassment reporting in the workplace has cultural roots, such as the perception of gender equality, and trust in the manager predicts this perception.

Keywords: gender equality, sexual harassment reporting in the workplace, trust in the manager



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## INTRODUCTION

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Gender equality forms the focal point of feminist debates. The distinction between biological sex and gender is critical in defining gender discrimination. The disadvantaged group of gender discrimination is women, and being a woman is a sufficient reason to be the addressee of the gender discrimination that arises under the influence of patriarchy. Gender is a social phenomenon seen especially in societies where patriarchy is strong, but not all discriminatory behaviours against women in organisations are based on gender (Hogg & Vaughan, 1995; Anand, 2009). While biological sex is specific to the individual, gender is particular to a social structure in which gender stereotypes emerge through social relations (Hawkesworth, 2006). According to the Global Gender Gap 2021 Index, while the average gender equality rate in Europe, America, and Central Asia is 75%, this rate drops to 65% in the Middle East, Asia, and Africa Regions (World Economic Forum, 2021). Gender equality scores in the 102 countries representing these regions have increased compared to 2020. Research shows that the problem of gender discrimination is one of the general problems of societies dominated by patriarchy. In communities where gender inequality is high, women may encounter significant problems expressing their gender roles in their private and business lives. There may be religious and cultural reasons behind these problems. Studies on gender discrimination show that prejudiced perception of gender equality leads to deviant behaviours such as sexual harassment, especially against women (Bolzendahl & Myers, 2004; Savas, 2018). It also shows that problems arising from gender discrimination, such as sexual harassment in the workplace, are not an exceptional problem but a common problem experienced by female employees (Paludi & Barickman, 1991; Parish et al., 2006; Poonia, 2019).

Sexual abuse stemming from gender discrimination and gender inequality can lead to "sexual harassment" behaviours in private areas and workplaces. In the United States, workplace sexual harassment is a significant problem experienced by 13-31% of men and 40-75% of women (Leskinen & Cortina, 2014). While the number of sexual harassment cases reported in the USA in 2016 was 14,900, this number is estimated to be 20,500 when unreported cases are considered. The situation is estimated to be similar in other countries (Anderson & Suris, 2013). Sexual harassment cases are also a significant problem in China, which has the world's largest population. As urbanisation accelerates in China, the number of women victims of sexual harassment is increasing daily (Parish et al., 2006). In a study involving 3,821 people to determine

the prevalence of sexual harassment in China, it was found that 12.5% of women and 15.1% of urban women were sexually harassed, and in a study conducted with 6,592 Chinese university students, 75.8% of women and 36.6% of men stated that they faced different types of sexual harassment. In another study, 25% of women aged 18-24 and 13% of men indicated they were exposed to sexual harassment online (Sojo et al., 2016). Although women are more exposed to sexual harassment, men are also exposed to sexual harassment (Paludi & Barickman, 1991).

Other studies on sexual harassment are essential in showing this problem's prevalence worldwide. According to the report published by Eurofound (2013), sexual harassment in the workplace is found to be less than 2% in European countries (Lee et al., 2014). In Turkey, it has been found that this rate is 6%, and women are sexually harassed three times more than men. In a study conducted on nurses in public hospitals in Turkey, it was found that the factor affecting the working quality of nurses was sexual harassment (Cam & Ustuner, 2021). In a study conducted on female teachers in Turkey, the rate of sexual harassment is 15% of all teachers (Toker, 2016), which is 27.9% in nursing (Ayar et al., 2022). In another study on nurses in Turkey, 37% of the participants were found to have been sexually harassed. The same study revealed that approximately 80% of the harassed nurses did not report the harassment to the hospital management (Celik & Celik, 2007). According to the statistics of the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Turkey, 33,570 (26.4%) cases against 127,297 crimes against sexual immunity in 2021 are within the type of sexual harassment. When the data between 2014 and 2021 are examined, the conviction rate for Sexual Harassment Crime was 25.7% in 2014, which increased to 46.6% in 2021 (Turkish Ministry of Justice, 2021).

Another problem is the impact of sexual harassment on the survivors. Due to the prevalence of sexual harassment in the workplace, the issue was highlighted in the International Labour Organization's Convention on Equal Treatment and Equal Opportunity for Men and Women, adopted at the International Labour Conference in 1985. In the research conducted by the European Union Fundamental Rights Agency on 17,335,000 women, it was determined that 45% of the participants were exposed to sexual assault. Of those who were abused, 41% stated that they felt anger, and 36% felt shame because of the harassment (Harnois & Bastos, 2018).

Trust in the manager, which is the mediating variable of this study, shows the state of being confident in the manager's words, actions, and decisions (Sen & Gunaydin, 2019). Employees' trust in the organisation, colleagues, and man-

agers in the execution and coordination of individual activities are of great importance regarding job satisfaction, work peace, and organisational health (Gazeloglu et al., 2019). In societies where the perception of gender equality is against women, the need for organisational trust is increasing. The general view that the manager will exhibit predictable and acceptable behaviours following the general moral rules is accepted as a sign of confidence in the manager (Hutchinson, 2018).

Research on sexual harassment behaviour in the workplace has focused on the sexual harassment acts faced by female employees (Wang et al., 2008). In the relevant literature, no study was found in which the variables of "perception of gender equality," "sexual harassment in the workplace," and "trust in the manager" were evaluated together in the same equation. For this reason, the research will contribute to filling the literature gap. The theoretical basis of the "Gender" variable in the study is based on "feminist theory" (Kemp, 2009). Feminist theory is a theoretical approach that claims that women are secondary, unequal, and under the pressure of patriarchy in social life. The gender inequality produced by patriarchy is based on the theory of social influence, which expresses an order in which social hierarchies dominate (Collins, 2019; Ferguson, 2017). The theoretical basis of "sexual harassment," the second variant of the study, is based on the theory of "Sexual Harassment of Working Women (1979)" put forward by Catharine A. MacKinnon in her book *Towards a Feminist Theory of State*. Sexual harassment is when someone bothers another person without making any bodily contact to satisfy their sexual desires and desires. Sexual harassment, insult, and verbal abuse are antisocial behaviour (Leskinen & Cortina, 2014). The theory of trust in the manager variable is based on Gabarro's (1978) manager-employee trust model. Trust in the manager expresses the belief in the manager's organisational support, understanding of distributive and procedural justice, honesty, competence, and helpfulness towards employees (Gazeloglu et al., 2019; Sen & Gunaydin, 2019).

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

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While the concept of gender is physiologically related to the individual being "masculine" or "feminine," gender is associated with the social meaning of "femininity" and "masculinity." The concept of gender expresses the place, duties, and responsibilities of women and men in society, that is, their social roles, in a sociological sense. They are stereotypes about how a person thinks about themselves, how society sees them, or

how they interact with themselves. The perception of gender equality is the basis of gender discrimination in society. The prevailing perception of gender equality in a particular society determines the place and position of men and women (Manning et al., 2018). Although "gender equality" is underlined in various national and international laws, the roles assigned to men in patriarchal societies are more important than those given to women.

Gender stereotypes are learned through social interactions with adults during childhood (Massey, 2013; Warin & Adriany, 2017). Gender discrimination is learned in the social structure and reflected in the attitudes and behaviours of the individual. The perception of gender equality determines the social roles and status of femininity and masculinity over time. The relatively high level of gender discrimination can cause physical, social, and gender identity problems in societies. Stereotypes regarding the perception of gender equality can cause sexual harassment problems in the workplace (Chandler & Munday, 2016).

The United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) defines workplace sexual harassment as unwanted sexual advances, requests for sexual intercourse, and other verbal or physical behaviour of a sexual nature (Hentze & Tyus, 2021). Sexual harassment is any expressed or implied word or action that is unwanted or inappropriate and results in sexual abuse. Equal treatment of women and men was detailed in the Directive on the principle of equal treatment for women and men, dated 1976, and the legal regulations of the member states on ensuring gender equality were discussed within the framework of legal harmonisation in the European Union Directive 2002/73 on the prevention of sexual harassment. This directive defines sexual harassment as any physical, humiliating, or embarrassing verbal or nonverbal behaviour of a sexual nature that aims or causes a violation of human dignity.

Researchers in various countries worldwide are studying the phenomenon of sexual harassment in the workplace. Still, one of the first studies on the subject was activist Catharine MacKinnon's 1979 study on the Sexual Harassment of Working Women. MacKinnon (1979) examined the phenomenon of sexual harassment in the workplace from a broad perspective. Studies show that sexual harassment occurs in factories, schools, colleges, movies, and even places of worship. Perpetrators of sexual harassment can be customers, teachers, supervisors, colleagues, or others. In addition, the power and authority of superiors in organisations are among the causes of sexual harassment in the workplace.

The perception of gender equality and sexual harassment in the workplace increases the importance of trust in managers, especially in work environments where one-third of human life is spent. In a study conducted in the United States, 51% of victims of sexual harassment at work stated that their superiors harassed them (Martel & Teacher, 2011). Therefore, it is assumed that trust in the manager can function as an essential mediating variable in this study.

Employees' feelings of organisational trust are strengthened by their trust in their managers. Trust in the manager is a type of interpersonal trust, and the manager plays an essential role in forming feelings of trust among the employees (Atkinson, 2004, p. 573; Delbridge & Keenoy, 2010, p. 781). While trust in the top manager provides trust in the organisation, trust in the lower-level managers reinforces the trust in the management and managers. While trust in the manager gives a feeling of confidence that there will be no discrimination for various reasons in the organisation, it also provides a sense of confidence that there will be no discrimination on the grounds of gender (Bénabou & Tirole, 2016, p. 142).

## **METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES**

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### **Purpose and scope**

The primary purpose of this research is to determine whether "trust in the manager" functions as a mediating variable in the relationship between "perception of gender equality" and "sexual harassment reporting in the workplace".

### **Participants and sampling**

To answer the research question, the data were collected from a group of nurses working in public hospitals in Konya (Turkey). The research population comprises the nurses of two public hospitals in Konya, Turkey. There are 1,281 nurses in total in the hospitals. The data were obtained from 395 nurses using simple random sampling from public hospitals. Simple random sampling is one of the probabilistic sampling techniques that saves time and resources. The sampling units are randomly drawn from the population list in simple random sampling. The sample was determined from the square number table using the = RANDBETWEEN function of Microsoft Excel. The simple random sampling method has been preferred because it is a technique (Tutar & Erdem, 2020) that allows choosing several individuals or units to represent a part of the population, and everyone has an equal chance of being selected. Detailed information on the specifics of the sample is given in Table 4.

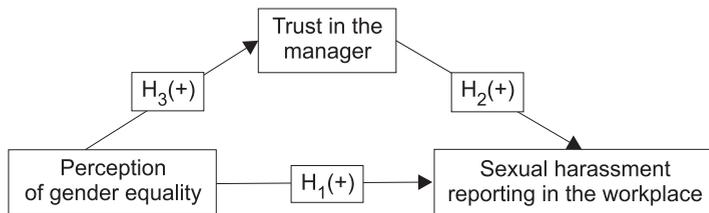
## Data collection instruments

The original scale expressions are seen in Table 2. The 25-item "Perception of Gender Scale" developed by Altinova & Duyan (2013) is one-dimensional. The Perception of Gender Scale is a self-report assessment tool designed to evaluate the gender roles and perceptions of individuals. The original alpha coefficient of this scale was determined as 0.872. All items in the scale were rated using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 – strongly disagree to 5 – strongly agree. The 19-item "Sexual Harassment Reporting Attitudes Scale" was developed by Cesario et al. (2018). The Sexual Harassment Reporting Attitudes Scale measures the risks of reporting, the moral obligation of reporting, and the benefits. Participants rated all items using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 – strongly disagree to 5 – strongly agree. The alpha coefficient of the original Sexual Harassment Reporting Attitudes Scale is 0.87. The 8-item "Trust in the Manager Scale" was developed by Nyhan & Marlowe (1997). The Trust in the Manager Scale was developed to represent personal trust in that it is the immediate supervisor who is the most critical mediator of organisational or environmental complexity. Responses were obtained on a seven-point Likert scale, 1 for "nearly zero" to 7 for "near 100%". The original alpha coefficient of this scale is 0.912. The expressions of the scales used in the research are given in Table 2.

## Measurement model and hypotheses

The following model and hypotheses were developed to assume that the perception of gender equality affects attitudes towards sexual harassment reporting in the workplace and that there will be a positive relationship between these two variables. The model assumes that trust in the manager will mediate the reporting of sexual harassment in the workplace. In the model, perception of gender equality is the independent variable, and reporting sexual harassment in the workplace is the dependent variable. Trust in the manager was taken as a mediating variable.

➤ FIGURE 1  
Research model



The following hypotheses were developed based on the model above:

Hypothesis 1 (H<sub>1</sub>): Perception of gender equality significantly positively affects sexual harassment reporting in the workplace.

Hypothesis 2 (H<sub>2</sub>): Trust in the manager significantly positively affects sexual harassment reporting in the workplace.

Hypothesis 3 (H<sub>3</sub>): Perception of gender equality significantly positively affects trust in the manager.

Hypothesis 4 (H<sub>4</sub>): Trust in the manager plays a mediating role in the effect of perception of gender equality on reporting sexual harassment in the workplace.

### Validity and reliability

The Cronbach Alpha test was used to test the reliability of the scales used in the study. The Alpha coefficients were determined as  $\alpha = 0.783$  for the perception of gender equality,  $\alpha = 0.894$  for sexual harassment reporting in the workplace, and  $\alpha = 0.821$  for trust in the manager. A principal component analysis was conducted to verify the research. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted with the AMOS program to test the validity of the single-factor research structure. The latent variables in the scale used in the study were examined by confirmatory factor analysis. Afterwards, the single-factor structure was reexamined, and the obtained Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ ) values were compared to determine whether there was a significant difference between them (MacKenzie & Podsakoff, 2012, p. 549). Table 1 shows the confirmatory factor analysis findings.

TABLE 1  
Model-data fit values  
and single factor  
model-data fit values

Data-model fit indices	Single Factor Model Data-model fit indices	Comparative Model Fit
Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ ) = 1394.71 DF = 957, $p < 0.01$ GFI = 0.891 NFI = 0.902 CFI = 0.931 TLI = 0.925 RMSEA = 0.046 CMIN/DF = 1.457	Chi-Square Single Factor ( $\chi^2$ ) = 5261.27 DF = 1274 GFI = 0.352 NFI = 0.356 CFI = 0.418 TLI = 0.394 RMSEA = 0.121 CMIN/DF = 4.130	$\Delta\chi^2 = 3866.56$

Note:  $\chi^2$ , Chi-Square; DF, Degree of Freedom, GFI = Goodness of Fit Index, NFI = Normalised Fit Index, CFI = Comparative Fit Index, TLI = Tucker-Lewis Index; RMSEA = Root Mean Square of Approximate Errors,  $\chi^2/DF$ , Relative Chi-Square.

The research data were tested according to three different measurement models; the results were obtained using the

fit indices  $\chi^2/DF$ , RMSEA, GFI, TLI, CFI, and NFI, and the excellent fit and validity measures are shown in Table 1. Table 1 shows that the  $\chi^2$  value for the 3-factor model is significant. However, since the  $\chi^2/DF$  value is below (1.457) 5, the model meets the fit criteria for validity. Additionally, the data are consistent in terms of GFI = 0.891, CFI = 0.931, NFI = 0.902, TLI = 0.925, and RMSEA = 0.046 (Browne & Cudeck, 1992; McDonald & Marsh, 1990; Tanaka & Huba, 1985; Kline, 2015). In Table 2, factor loadings for scale expressions are indicated.

TABLE 2  
Factor loadings for  
scales

	Perception of Gender Equality Scale	Standardised factor loads
PGS5	Women politicians can also be successful.	0.748
PGS12	A working woman should give the income she earns to her husband.	0.742
PGS13	A working woman is a better mother to her children.	0.738
PGS9	Men should always protect women.	0.734
PGS2	A woman should only work if her family has financial difficulties.	0.730
PGS3	Working women can also devote enough time to their children.	0.726
PGS6	Women should not work after marriage.	0.726
PGS4	Women should not work after becoming mothers.	0.711
PGS10	A woman should not work if her husband does not allow it.	0.711
PGS11	Women can be managers.	0.705
PGS16	Men should provide income for the family.	0.687
PGS8	A working woman enjoys life more.	0.685
PGS15	A husbandless woman is like a home without a home.	0.683
PGS14	Men should also do household chores such as washing dishes.	0.680
PGS25	Men should make important decisions in the family.	0.678
PGS1	Marriage does not prevent a woman from working.	0.674
PGS7	Working life does not cause women to delay their housework.	0.674
PGS22	Girls should be given as much freedom as boys.	0.670
PGS23	For a woman to have her rights, she must be able to oppose her husband if necessary.	0.653
PGS21	The leadership of society should usually be in the hands of men.	0.629
PGS24	The woman must be younger than her husband in age.	0.610
PGS17	Women should refrain from opening places of business (such as cafes, markets, and real estate agents) on their own.	0.596
PGS19	A woman should not earn more than her husband.	0.587
PGS20	The man should always be the head of the household.	0.584
PGS18	The first duty of women is to take over the housework.	0.550
Sexual Harassment Reporting Attitudes Scale		
SH12	Reporting workplace sexual harassment only makes the problem worse.	0.798
SH11	A supervisor might not be aware that a sexual harassment problem exists unless it is reported.*	0.786
SH14	An employee has the right to report workplace sexual harassment to his or her supervisor.	0.775
SH10	In general, reporting workplace sexual harassment does no good.	0.763
SH15	Reporting workplace sexual harassment is the sole responsibility of the person being harassed.	0.760
SH9	A person who reports workplace sexual harassment should not be afraid of losing their job because of it.	0.742
SH13	Reporting sexual harassment creates tension in the workplace.*	0.717
SH7	Workplace sexual harassment problems will persist even if people report them.	0.714
SH5	People should not be afraid to report sexual harassment in their places of work.	0.710
SH6	Supervisors have better things to do with their time than deal with reports of sexual harassment.	0.701
SH3	A person who reports workplace sexual harassment is just a tattletale.	0.700
SH2	Reporting workplace sexual harassment is an effective way of stopping the problem.	0.689

(Continued, next page)

Perception of Gender Equality Scale (continued)		Standardised factor loads
SH8	Supervisors need to take reports of workplace sexual harassment very seriously.	0.686
SH4	Reporting workplace sexual harassment creates new problems for everyone.	0.658
SH1	If someone is being sexually harassed in their place of work, then s/he should report it to a supervisor.	0.611
SH16	All things considered, reporting workplace sexual harassment is a waste of time	0.412
SH17	People who report workplace sexual harassment risk being looked upon badly by their co-workers.	0.398
SH18	People who report workplace sexual harassment usually end up getting into trouble for it.	0.371
SH19	If I felt that I was being sexually harassed at my place of work, I would report it to a supervisor or other authority figure.	0.291
Trust in the Manager Scale		
TMS5	My level of confidence that __ will be able to do his or her job in an acceptable manner is __.	0.843
TMS4	My level of confidence that __ has an acceptable level of understanding of his/her job is __.	0.796
TMS6	When __ tells me something, my level of confidence that one can rely on what they tell me is __.	0.767
TMS2	My level of confidence that I will make well-thought-out decisions about his or her job is __.	0.758
TMS1	My level of confidence that __ is technically competent in all the critical elements of his or her job is __.	0.728
TMS3	My level of confidence that __ will follow through on assignments is __.	0.653
TMS8	My level of confidence that __ will think through what he or she is doing on the job is __.	0.445
TMS7	My confidence in __ to do the job without causing other problems is __.	0.238

The fair values of the research model showed that the theoretically determined model has a good fit. This result shows no standard method deviation in the research model (MacKenzie & Podsakoff, 2012, p. 550; Kline, 2015). The Chi-Square Difference Test was applied to  $\chi^2$  values to determine the fit between the single and multi-factor models, and a significant difference was found (Table 1 and Table 2). Accordingly, the three-factor model data show that it is a better fit. The study was continued with a three-factor (relational) model. Questions 7 and 8 with low factor load in the perception of trust in the manager scale and questions 16, 17, 18, and 19 of the sexual harassment reporting attitudes scale were not included in the analysis. Convergent and discriminant validity methods were applied to determine whether the study's tools measured the structure of the research model (Churchill, 1979). The standardised factor loadings of the items belonging to the scales are above the value of 0.5. Additionally, the t values at the parametric valuation point of factor loadings vary between 8.21 and 13.64. According to these values, the research model is considered significant.

Table 3 determines the convergence validity according to the Average Variance Extracted- (AVE) values for the data obtained from the relevant scale. The fact that the AVE value of the model is higher than 0.5 shows that the latent variables of the related items are valid (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). If the cor-

relation between variables is less than 0.80, it indicates a divergence, thus ensuring discriminative validity (Abubakar & Ilkan, 2016).

Variables	Med	SD	$\alpha$	CR	AVE	1	2	3
Perception of gender equality scale	3.83	0.718	0.783	0.942	0.522	-		
Sexual harassment reporting in the workplace	3.10	0.815	0.894	0.975	0.587	0.257*	-	
Trust in the manager	4.43	0.773	0.821	0.891	0.577	-0.211**	-0.176**	-

Note: SD – standard deviation; \*Significant at 0.05 (two-tailed). \*\* Significant at 0.01 (two-tailed)

TABLE 3  
Average, standard deviation, reliability, and correlation values of variables

As shown in Table 3, the departure ensured discriminative validity since the correlation values are less than 0.80, and a significant correlation is present. According to the Pearson Correlation analysis, a meaningful relationship was found between the perception of gender equality and sexual harassment reporting in the workplace ( $r = 0.257, p < 0.005$ ). It was revealed that there was a significant relationship between trust in the manager and sexual harassment reporting in the workplace ( $r = 0.176, p < 0.001$ ). Finally, a significant positive relationship between the perception of gender equality and trust in the manager was identified ( $r = 0.211, p < 0.001$ ). The correlation values indicate a significant relationship between the variables.

## RESULTS

### Demographic information

The demographic information about the participants in the study, such as gender, education level, age, and seniority, is shown in Table 4.

TABLE 4  
Demographic information

		N	%			F	%
Gender	Female	319	80.7	Marital status	Single	122	30.90
	Male	76	19.3		Married	273	69.10
Age	18–25	68	17.2	Education	Associate	26	34.9
	26–35	74	18.7		Bachelor	138	57.2
	26–45	98	24.8		Master's	28	7.1
	46–55	108	27.3		PhD	3	0.8
	56+	47	12.0				

Data were collected from 395 nurses within the scope of the study. Approximately 20% of the participants are men, and 80% are women. Most participants are married; the most intense age range is 45–55. Most of the participants have a bachelor's degree.

## Testing research hypotheses

The structural equation model applied to test the research hypotheses is shown in Table 5.

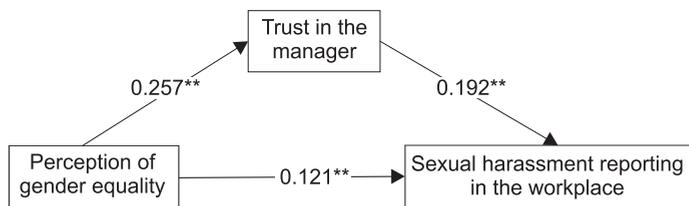
As shown in Table 5, perception of gender equality significantly affects sexual harassment reporting in the workplace ( $\beta = 0.121, t = 2.464, p < 0.05$ ). Accordingly, the H<sub>1</sub> hypothesis was supported. Trust in the manager significantly positively affects the perception of sexual harassment reporting in the workplace ( $\beta = 0.192, t = 2.702, p < 0.05$ ). Hence, the H<sub>2</sub> hypothesis was supported. According to the results of the analysis, perception of gender equality positively affects trust in the manager ( $\beta = 0.257, t = 3.124, p < 0.01$ ). Therefore, the H<sub>3</sub> hypothesis was supported. According to this result, while the perception of gender equality positively affects trust in the manager, it positively affects sexual harassment reporting (Figure 2).

Variables	$\beta$	<i>t</i> value	<i>SD</i>	<i>p</i>
H <sub>1</sub> : Perception of gender equality – Sexual harassment reporting in the workplace	0.121	2.464	0.079	0.004
H <sub>2</sub> : Trust in the manager – Sexual harassment reporting in the workplace	0.192	2.702	0.071	0.003
H <sub>3</sub> : Perception of gender equality – Trust in the manager	0.257	3.124	0.082	***

TABLE 5  
Direct effect

Note: *SD*, standard deviation; \* Significant at the 0.1 level (two-tailed); \*\* Significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed); \*\*\* Significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed)

FIGURE 2  
Structural equation model results



The impact analysis regarding the mediating role of trust in the manager in the relationship between the perception of gender equality and sexual harassment in the workplace is shown in Table 6.

The indirect effect of trust in the manager on the perception of gender equality and sexual harassment in the workplace was significant, and the mediating effect was 0.064. The confidence interval was lower limit = 0.012 and upper limit = 0.098,  $p = 0.02$ , and the variance rate explained was 32.8% (Table 5). Thus, trust in the manager partially mediates the effect of

TABLE 6  
Mediating effect

the perception of gender equality on sexual harassment in the workplace. Accordingly, the H<sub>4</sub> hypothesis was supported ( $p < 0.05$ ).

Trust in the manager	Total effect	Direct effect	Mediating effect	Min.	Max.	<i>p</i>	Result
Perception of gender equality – Sexual harassment reporting in the workplace	0.185	0.121	0.064	0.012	0.098	0.02**	Mediating effect (partial) TVE: 32.8%

Note: The confidence interval values for indirect effects were calculated using Bootstrap with  $N = 3950$ . TVE: Total variance explained; \*\*\* $p$  is significant at 0.01 level (two-tailed); \*significant at 0.1 level (two-tailed); \*\*  $p$  is significant at 0.05 level (two-tailed). If zero (0) does not match within the confidence interval values, the indirect effect is significant.

## DISCUSSION

According to the results of this study, participants consider that managers have important duties in reporting sexual harassment. This result shows that participants' perception of gender equality predicts their trust in managers in sexual harassment reporting in the workplace. These findings can be interpreted as indicating that as the trust in managers increases in organisations, the perception of sexual harassment and gender also increases. Moreover, the research results show that the hypothetical model of the research is valid.

In the case of working women, who are the subject of this research, managers with poor credibility and ethical standards in the workplace can abuse their authority and become the perpetrators of sexual harassment against women (Yildirim & Özbek, 2019). A study conducted in Canada shows that low-ranking people are harassed by their superiors (Anderson & Suris, 2013). Research shows that women and some male military personnel are sexually harassed by their superiors. According to studies conducted in Australia, Canada, France, the United Kingdom, and the United States, victims of sexual harassment are reluctant to report incidents because they are not sure what will happen to them later (Bowman, 1993; Yildirim & Özbek, 2019). In some other studies of the prevalence of sexual harassment against nurses worldwide through a meta-analysis, it has been found that nurses' silence about sexual harassment is related to social stigmatisation, to the negative impact of harassment on professional life, and to concerns about not taking action against the perpetrator (Zeigami et al., 2022; Weldesenbet et al., 2022; Park et al., 2015; Papantoniou, 2021). In another study that evaluated the prevalence of sexual harassment against nurses worldwide through a meta-analysis of observational studies, it was suggested that gender perception was associated with most sexual harass-

ment (Lu et al., 2020). In the study, it is understood that most of the sexual harassment against nurses is caused by ongoing sexism. In addition, being single or divorced (Papantoniou, 2021), having relatively little work experience (Maghraby et al., 2020), and being young (Weldesensbet et al., 2022) were also suggested to be among the predictors of sexual harassment among nurses.

The main complaints of sexually harassed nurses are low job satisfaction (Maghraby et al., 2020), high turnover intention (Pang et al., 2022), burnout (Tsukamoto et al., 2022), depression (Pang et al., 2022) and problems arising from organisational psychology such as post-traumatic stress disorder (Fabri et al., 2022). Another study suggested that prolonged exposure to sexual harassment leads to high emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation in nurses (Tsukamoto et al., 2022). Sexual harassment can negatively affect nurses' job satisfaction, which is one of the primary sources of motivation, and the level of tolerance towards others, and this situation causes nurses to experience compassion burnout, which is called secondary traumatic stress (Fabri et al., 2022). The fact that managers do not accept or ignore sexual harassment may cause nurses to be more reluctant to report sexual harassment (Papantoniou, 2021). It can be argued that nurses' reporting of sexual harassment is related to the reinforcement of confidence that the reporting will result in consequences for the perpetrators. The positive relationship between the perception of unreliable leadership in the workplace and sexual harassment has been suggested in some studies. In some studies, it is understood that it is essential to develop standards that establish trust in managers to improve the quality of the professional life of nurses in order to cope with such negativities (Cogin & Fish, 2007; Fabri et al., 2022). Some studies have determined that nurses with high perceptions of justice and developed self-esteem have high perceptions of being exposed to sexual harassment (Park et al., 2015). A trustworthy and fair working environment may enable nurses to develop attitudes towards reporting sexual harassment. The results of this study and the related literature show that sexual harassment due to gender discrimination in the workplace is a common problem and that trust in the manager is essential in overcoming this problem. Some findings that trust in the manager also increases trust in the organisation have been shared in the relevant literature (Perry & Mankin, 2004).

According to the findings, a significant positive relationship exists between the perception of gender equality and sexual harassment reporting in the workplace ( $\beta = 0.121, p < 0.05$ ). Hameduddin & Lee (2022), in their study of women working in offices in the United States, found that the perception of gender equality strengthens the perception of sexual harass-

ment. Wang et al. (2022), in their study on Chinese working women, found that the perception of gender equality increases the susceptibility to sexual harassment in the workplace. The positive relationship between trust in the manager and the perception of sexual harassment in the workplace ( $\beta = 0.192$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) shows that the model's validity is achieved. The findings could also suggest that it is essential for managers to be sensitive to gender equality in order for employees to feel safe. This research shows that gender perception has a positive relationship with trust in managers ( $\beta = 0.257$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This result is important as it shows that gender discrimination and reliable management cannot coexist. Trust in the manager partially mediates the perception of gender equality and sexual harassment reporting in the workplace ( $p < 0.05$ ). It can be argued that the manager's credibility is essential in sexual harassment reporting. Although trust in the manager is seen as a positive behaviour in the literature, studies on manager-employee relations have found that some negative behaviours, such as sexual harassment, are caused by the abuse of authority by managers (Anderson & Suris, 2013; Yildirim & Özbek, 2019).

This research is limited to examining whether trust in the manager mediates the relationship between the perception of gender equality and sexual harassment reporting in the workplace. The research did not focus on the source of the perception of sexual harassment in the workplace. Repeating this study with qualitative and mixed studies focusing on perpetrators and causes of sexual harassment in different samples may contribute to a better understanding of the subject. Also, future research into sexual harassment and other organisational behaviour variables (organisational trust, conflict, intimidation, organisational support, organisational exclusion) could be conducted. In this study, the role of variables such as culture and religion in the origin of the perception of sexual harassment was not examined. In future studies, the role of religion and culture in gender perception can be investigated.

## CONCLUSIONS

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In societies where gender inequality is high, women may face significant problems expressing gender roles in their private and business lives. Problems arising from gender discrimination, such as sexual harassment in the workplace, are not exceptional but are among the common problems experienced by female employees. Legal regulations for gender equality can help overcome the problem of sexual harassment resulting from gender discrimination in the workplace. However, the organisational dimension should not be ignored.

Negative effects such as post-traumatic stress disorder, compassion burnout (Fabri et al., 2022), depression (Pang et al., 2022), hypertension (Lawn et al., 2022), depersonalisation (Tsukamoto et al., 2022), and intention to leave work (Pang et al., 2022) require the introduction of unique mechanisms in reporting sexual harassment. It is accepted that the fairness of the manager will reinforce the employees' perceptions of trust towards the manager. Therefore, it is important to create an ethical and trust-based climate against gender discrimination in the workplace.

Trust in the manager and a sense of fairness can encourage nurses to report sexual harassment. Trust relationships that support sexual harassment reporting may reduce potential harassment by increasing the perpetrators' concerns about disclosure. Due to the correlational research design, additional (experimental) research is required to strengthen the validity of causal conclusions.

## Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest concerning this paper.

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## Posrednička uloga povjerenja u rukovoditelja u učinku percepcije rodne ravnopravnosti na prijavu seksualnog uznemiravanja na radnome mjestu

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Svrha ovog istraživanja je prije svega utvrditi posredničku ulogu povjerenja u rukovoditelja u učinku percepcije rodne ravnopravnosti na prijavu seksualnog uznemiravanja na radnome mjestu. Riječ je o modelu relacijskog istraživanja koje se temelji na kvantitativnoj istraživačkoj metodi. Utvrđeno je da su percepcije sudionika o ravnopravnosti spolova imale značajan pozitivan učinak na prijavu seksualnog uznemiravanja i povjerenje u rukovoditelja. Osim toga, utvrđen je pozitivan učinak povjerenja u rukovoditelja na prijavu seksualnog uznemiravanja. Povjerenje u rukovoditelja ima posredničku ulogu u učinku percepcije rodne ravnopravnosti na prijavu seksualnog uznemiravanja na radnome mjestu. Ovaj rezultat pokazuje da prijava seksualnog uznemiravanja na radnome mjestu ima kulturološke korijene, kao što je percepcija rodne ravnopravnosti, a povjerenje u rukovoditelja predviđa tu percepciju.

Ključne riječi: rodna ravnopravnost, prijava seksualnog uznemiravanja na radnome mjestu, povjerenje u rukovoditelja



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