ORIGINAL PAPER

Sexual Harassment at Work and E-government: An Assessment of the Thirteen Pacific Island Countries

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Abstract

This study investigated how effectively the national governments of the thirteen Pacific Island Countries (PICs) are using the e-government website to create awareness on national-level policies on sexual harassment in the workplace. A total of 85 e-government websites from thirteen PICs were assessed by using the content analysis methodology. The findings from this study confirmed that large-small island countries, such as Fiji, Cook Islands, Samoa, and the Solomon Islands are effectively using the e-government website to provide information and create awareness on national policies against sexual harassment in the workplace as compared to the small PICs. Large PICs have the infrastructure and resources to effectively use information computer technology to provide awareness on national-level policies that protect workers against sexual harassment policies in the workplace. This study's findings will be important for the policymakers, human rights and gender activists, employees, and employers.

Keywords Sexual harassment · E-government · Infrastructure · Human rights

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Introduction

It is a fundamental right of each individual to have access to a safe and conducive work environment. Both employers and employees play a critical role in creating this safe working environment for males and females alike (Australian Aid 2021). However, the rising number of sexual harassment cases in the workplace acts as a barrier towards creating a safe and conducive working environment for workers of all age groups and backgrounds. The Pacific Island Countries (PICs) are not an exception to this problem. These small island developing countries have been negatively affected by the rising number of cases of sexual harassment in the workplace (Australian Aid 2021). Sexual harassment in the workplace includes unwelcome conduct of sexual nature from one party to another in which the victim feels offended, intimidated, or humiliated. Many people believe that sexual harassment only includes physical assault in the workplace, but sexual harassment can be both physical and non-physical (ILO 2015). Some of the examples of sexual harassment in the workplace are unwanted physical contact, sexual jokes, making comments on someone's dressing style, persistently asking somebody to go out, sending sexually assaulting messages and displaying sexual images in the office and requesting sexual favours in return for employment in the institution (ILO 2015). According to the ILO (2015) policy brief, sexual harassment in the workplace can be divided into two major categories. The first category includes quid-pro-quo, whereby the person or the victim of the sexual harassment case is forced or pressured to engage in sexual activity (ILO 2015). The second category of sexual harassment in the workplace includes creating a hostile working environment whereby the victim feels intimidated and uncomfortable by the perpetrator's comments (ILO 2015).

Furthermore, one of the studies conducted by the Fiji Women's Rights Movement (2016) found one in every five women face sexual harassment in the workplace in Fiji. These statistics are alarming for a small developing country like Fiji. Similar alarming statistics are available across other PICs such as Kiribati, Tuvalu, Cook Islands, Marshall Islands, Samoa, Vanuatu, Federated States of Micronesia, Niue, Nauru, Palau and Tonga. As compared to males, females experience greater sexual harassment in the workplace as Pacific societies focus on male dominance and female insubordination (Australian Aid, 2021). Not only in Pacific society, but this phenomenon is also present in all male-dominated societies. According to Fiji Women's Rights Movement (2016), women in the Food, Beverage and Hospitality sector face the highest incidence of sexual harassment, followed by public service, health, retail and education. Advocates against sexual harassment in the workplace highlighted that creating awareness on the national level policies related to worker protection from sexual harassment is critical to addressing the rising problem of sexual harassment in the workplace (Australian Aid, 2021).

Against this backdrop, this study's primary aim is to undertake a thorough assessment of how effectively the national governments of the PICs are using the e-government website to create awareness on national-level policies on sexual harassment in the workplace. In this modern era of technological innovation, e-government websites can be used as an important tool to create awareness on the national level

policies that protect workers from sexual harassment (Australian Aid, 2021). The content analysis of e-government websites is a widely accepted methodology related to e-government studies. This study draws from the content analysis methodology to assess how effectively relevant government ministries in the thirteen PICs use their e-government website to disseminate information on worker protection policies on sexual harassment in the workplace. A close synthesis of the existing literature shows that most of the studies on content analysis of the ministries e-government websites are focused on large developed and developing countries. None of the existing studies has investigated how effectively the Pacific Islands are using e-government websites to provide information on worker protection policies on sexual harassment. This study is original as it seeks to fill this gap in the existing literature by undertaking a detailed assessment of worker protection policies on sexual harassment provided on the e-government websites of 13 PICs. These countries are (1) Fiji, (2) Kiribati, (3) Tuvalu, (4) Cook Islands, (5) the Marshall Islands, (6) Samoa, (7) Vanuatu, (8) Micronesia, (9) Niue, (10) the Solomon Islands, (11) Nauru, (12) Palau, and (13) Tonga. This study's findings will be important for the policymakers, human rights and gender activists, employees, and employers who advocate how the government can use information computer technology to create awareness on worker protection policies on sexual harassment.

This article is divided into seven sections. Section two provides an overview of the national employment policies and laws on sexual harassment in the workplace. Section three provides an overview of the theoretical perspectives. Section four reviews the literature, and section five outlines the research methodology used in this paper. Section six presents and discusses the research findings. Section seven outlines the conclusion, limitations, and directions for future research.

Overview of National Employment Policies and Laws on Sexual Harassment in the Workplace

The rationale for national employment laws is to protect the workers and provide workers with a fair and productive working environment. Importantly, the national government plays a critical role in developing and implementing employment laws. Each Pacific Island country has its national policies and laws on sexual harassment in the workplace.

Fiji

The Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations, Tourism, and Environment, together with the Non-government organisations (NGO's) are working towards addressing sexual harassment in the workplace (Ministry of Labour 2009). The government of Fiji considers the issues concerning sexual harassment in the workplace as a matter of national priority and interest. Essentially, it is the role of the government to develop a conducive working environment that is free from harassment and

discrimination (Ministry of Labour 2009). The National Policy on Sexual Harassment in the workplace was implemented in the year 2007. One of the primary objectives of this national policy in Fiji was to set out the individual's acceptable behaviour and the role of the employees and employers in addressing sexual harassment in the workplace (Ministry of Labour 2009). This national policy on sexual harassment in the workplace also stipulates the rights of the workers and how they are protected under the Human Rights Act (1999), Section 154 of the Penal Code, and the Employment Relations Act (2009) (Ministry of Labour 2009).

Kiribati

The government of Kiribati has undertaken a national-level approach to addressing sexual and gender-based violence in Kiribati. The primary role of the national level policy is to eliminate all forms of harassment in the workplace. The government of Kiribati has given it a firm conviction that it seeks to collectively work and eradicate all forms of harassment and violence in the workplace (Government of Kiribati, 2010). According to the ILO, the workers and employers in Kiribati are protected under the Employment and Industrial Relations Code (2015), and this act repeals the Employment Ordinance (1977), Industrial Relations Code (1988), and Trade Union and Employer Organizations Act (International Labour Organization 2019a, b).

Tuvalu

The Employment Act of Tuvalu stipulates the policies that protect workers against sexual harassment in the workplace. The ILO is playing a critical role in ensuring that the Employment Act, Trade Unions Act, and Industrial Relations Code is reviewed to ensure that the employment law protects the worker's rights in Tuvalu (ILO 2019a, b). The Tuvalu National Gender Policy shows that the Tuvalu government gives a high level of priority in addressing gender equality and creating a safe working environment for women. This policy document effectively recognises that the government of Tuvalu is implementing culturally sensitive measures to ensure that women are not harassed at work (Government of Tuvalu, 2014). The specific areas that this policy focuses on are institutional strengthening and capacity building of relevant stakeholders in society. This policy also seeks to end the violence against women in the workplace (Government of Tuvalu, 2014). The policy document undertakes a strategic approach and is focused on private key outcomes to create a conducive environment for gender mainstreaming (Government of Tuvalu, 2014). The specific quality outcome seeks to achieve the following: (1) capacity building, (2) legislation strengthening, (3) increasing economic empowerment of women and (4) enhancing women's economic participation (Government of Tuvalu, 2014).

Cook Islands

The sexual harassment policy in the Cook Islands can be divided into two categories. The first category includes the civil service policy, and the second category

includes the national policies on sexual harassment that protects the workers working in all sections of the economy. Recently, numerous articles were published on the need for the government authorities in the Cook Islands to review its sexual harassment policies. A commonplace where sexual harassment exists in the Cook Islands case is in the tourism industry (Dateline Pacific 2019). The public service code of conduct provides guidelines on the expected behaviour from the public sector employees and what they are expected to do while at work and not at work (Government of the Cook Islands, 2014). According to the Cook Islands Government (2011), the Cook Islands National Policy on gender and women's development was adopted in the year 1995. Since the implementation of this national policy, there has been a significant change or growth noticed in the accessibility of the women's health and necessary livelihood facilities (Government of the Cook Islands, 2014). Some of the fundamental areas where this policy focuses on are (1) promoting gender equality, (2) economic empowerment of women, (3) recognition of women's human rights, (4) gender equality, and (5) capacity building of women (Government of the Cook Islands, 2014).

Marshall Islands

According to the Marshall Islands Government (2015), the Marshall Islands government is committed to developing a work environment whereby both men and women feel free to work. The Republic of Marshall Islands National Strategic Plan 2015–2017 is based on developing an equitable society for everyone, peace, and wellbeing. This country commits to enhancing gender equality via the recognition and implementation of several international conventions. Some of these conventions are Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Convention on the Children's Rights (Marshall Islands Government 2015).

Samoa

Samoa's national policy on gender equality ensures that all society's cohorts can lead a good life. This policy recognises that gender equality and equity are the basis for sustainable development goals and aspirations. This policy emphasises that everyone in society has the right to live a healthy lifestyle regardless of their background (Ministry of Women, Community & Social Development 2017). According to Samoa's Women Shaping Development Program (2015), the fundamental objective of national policy on gender equality is to improve gender equality in Samoa. The program's main aim is to improve women's economic empowerment, improve women's participation, and reduce the number of gender-based violence reported in Samoa. In addition to this, the enabling outcomes from the national policy on gender equality are (1) enhanced institutional and (2) technical capacity building (Samoa's Women Shaping Development Program 2015).

Vanuatu

Vanuatu has implemented its National Gender policy on gender equality in the workplace from the year 2015 to 2019. Through the implementation of these policies, Vanuatu's government has made it clear that it places a high level of commitment to fostering the growth of gender equality issues. Another progress of the Vanuatu government is the amendment of Vanuatu's amendment Act. This was done to allow the representation of women in the workforce. The quota of women represented in the municipal market's workforce has increased by 30% (United Nations Human Rights 2019). According to the Chamber of Commerce and Industry (2014), the Employment Relations Bill proposed in the year 2015 stipulates to eliminate all forms of discrimination in the workplace, particularly the restrictions placed on women for working late at night. Furthermore, the Employment Relations Bill also requires employers to remove all forms of victimisation and sexual harassment behaviour (Chamber of Commerce and Industry 2014).

Federated States of Micronesia

According to the United Nations Human Rights Council periodic review, addressing domestic violence and sexual harassment in the workplace requires the involvement of everyone in society to address the concerns associated with sexual harassment. This report also questions the need for the victims to prove the rule of law that physical resistance was evident during any form of sexual harassment, whether at work or outside the work. The rule of law also requires the victims to resist any form of physically assaulting behaviour (United Nations Human Rights Council 2019). The participation of women in several areas of decision making in society is missing. According to Braun (2012), the FSM national congress has 14 seats, and none of these seats was ever filled by a woman. The FSM has ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 2004, but unfortunately, the review confirmed that FSM was non-compliant on 61% of the critical indicators of the CEDAW (United Nations Women 2019a, b).

Niue

There is limited research on gender-based violence in Niue (Thomas 2017). The few studies that do exist are focused on the need for the new government to reassess issues concerning gender-based violence in Niue (Thomas 2017). The studies that have scrutinised the existing laws and regulations on gender-based violence have concluded that Niue has a judicial system that needs to be reformed to provide support to gender-based violence victims (Thomas 2017). Gender-based violence exists in the community and exists in urban and informal, and professional workplaces (Thomas 2017). Some studies have confirmed that new legislation is needed to modernise the new standards and promote women's rights (Thomas 2017). The issues concerning gender-based violence are taboo in several small islands developing

countries in the Pacific. Therefore, discussing these issues may be considered a concern in the small island developing countries (Thomas 2017).

Solomon Islands

Similar to the context of other large-small island developing countries in the Pacific region, the Solomon Islands also has its national gender equality and women's development policy 2016 to 2020 to achieve gender equality and provide equal opportunities for women in the Solomon Islands (Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs 2016). In addition to its national gender policy, the Solomon Islands government has also adopted and implemented several human rights and gender equality frameworks, such as CEDAW and SDGs (Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs 2016). The main aim of its national gender policy is to provide equal opportunities to men and women. The national gender policy also ensures that private stakeholders create a conducive working environment for women. The national gender policy focuses on improving health services, education opportunities, economic empowerment of women, and encourage women to participate in decision-making and eliminate all forms of violence against women (Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs 2016).

Nauru

Similar to the context of other small island developing countries, Nauru is also facing issues related to lack of economic empowerment and gender inequality. Nauru does not have policies on domestic violence and sexual harassment in the workplace. As far as the common law rules are concerned, Nauru also applies the common law rule that requires proof of physical resistance to establish the defence on rape and sexual harassment (United Nations Women 2019a, b).

Palau

According to AusAid (2019), Palau women have traditionally held positions, power, and respect in Palauan society. These societies are called matrilineal societies, whereby the kinship is traced through the mother's background. It can be concluded that Palau's females enjoy equal rights as men, and in some instances, they enjoy greater empowerment than men. Unlike the trend in the small island developing countries, women dominate the public sector and other judiciary areas. Palau has not ratified the CEDAW. According to Kitalong (2019), Palau's issues on sexual harassment in the workplace is handled under the 2012 Family Protection Act (United Nations Women 2019a, b).

Tonga

According to the Pacific Community (2019), the government of Tonga has long recognised the importance of gender equality in promoting sustainable development in the workplace. Tonga has implemented its Revised National Policy on Gender and Development and its strategic plan action. This policy is specifically based on improving people's livelihood, particularly girls, boys, men, and women in Tonga. Some of the critical areas of gender mainstreaming policy are (1) increased women leadership and familial environment for women, (2) developing an environment that incorporates gender policy in the development of women, (3) equitable access to employment and economic assets, and (4) addressing the vulnerability experienced by the female-headed households.

Theoretical Perspectives

There are several reasons why sexual harassment occurs in the workplace. Most of these reasons has been extensively polarised in the existing literature, which includes a high level of sexual desire of perpetrators (Bevens and Loghnan 2019), dressing of victims (Bragg et al., 2018), lack of awareness of workers on policies against sexual harassment and lack of policies against sexual harassment in the workplace (Nimri et al. 2021). The phenomenon of sexual harassment in the workplace is complex and sophisticated, and there is no single theoretical framework that best explains sexual harassment in the workplace. A close synthesis of existing literature reveals that there are six widely accepted theoretical perspectives that have been used to provide an assessment of sexual harassment that occurs in different geographical and social settings. These perspectives are (1) sociocultural (Burnay et al. 2019), (2) organisational (Jacobson and Eaton 2018), (3) sex-role spillover (Min et al. 2021), (4) natural-biological (Na 2011), (5) four-factor theory (Jung and Yoon 2020), and (6) social cognitive theories (Goh et al. 2021). Out of these six theoretical perspectives, the social cognitive theories best explain how creating awareness on national-level sexual harassment policies influences individuals social-cognitive processing, which may help solve the rising problem of sexual harassment in the workplace. The government can use information computer technology, particularly the e-government website, to provide readily available information on the policies against sexual harassment in the workplace. When individuals gain knowledge and increase awareness of such policies, it will create fear and stop them from engaging in sexually assaulting behaviour (Pina et al. 2009; Medeiros and Griffith 2019).

Furthermore, according to Shupe (2020) and Zaikman and Marks (2017), three fundamental components of Social Cognitive Theory explains the phenomena of sexual harassment in the workplace. These are (1) long term memory content and structure (belief content), (2) social-cognitive processing (cognitive mechanisms-attention), and (3) cognitive products (end-stage beliefs, attributions and thoughts). Specifically, these components explain the behaviour of sexual harassment perpetrators in the workplace and what can the victims do to protect themselves. Shupe (2020) argued that women are least likely to label their experience as sexual

harassment in the workplace as they fear damage to their self-identity. Any observation on women demonstrating such behaviours in the workplace requires intervention programs to create awareness on the importance of reporting sexual harassment to the relevant authorities (Pina et al. 2009; Medeiros and Griffith 2019). The national policies against sexual harassment in the workplace should articulate how victims can protect themselves from harassers and seek justice if they feel they have been sexually harassed in the workplace (Pina et al. 2009; Medeiros and Griffith 2019). These national policies that protect workers from sexual harassment should be designed to change end-stage beliefs, attributions and thoughts of workers on the fight against sexual harassment (Pina et al. 2009; Medeiros and Griffith 2019). Perpetrators, who in many instances are the bosses of the victims, should fear the adverse implications in the form of punishments if they break regulations, regulations and policies against sexual harassment (Pina et al. 2009; Medeiros and Griffith 2019).

Both males and females are harassed in the workplace; however, it is perceived that females face greater harassment as compared to males (Golden et al. 2001; Halper and Rios 2019; Zaikman and Marks 2017). Generally, attractive male's behaviour is less likely to be seen as harassing than the behaviour of unattractive males (Golden et al. 2001; Halper and Rios 2019; Zaikman and Marks 2017). These perceptions evolve as part of the core organisational culture that is either tolerable or intolerable towards sexual harassment. At this point, the relevant government authorities can intervene with rules and regulations to curb the rising problem of sexual harassment in the workplace. It is noticed in the PICs that the local authorities have rules and regulations in place, but these rules and regulations are not effectively implemented in the workplace (Naidu 2012a, b). One of the main reasons behind this is that both employers and employees lack awareness of these national-level laws against sexual harassment in the workplace. The research question proposed in this study integrates the Social-Cognitive theory to explain how effectively governments in the PICs can use e-government website to create awareness and provide information on the national level laws against sexual harassment in the workplace (Naidu 2012a, b).

Literature Review

For several years, academic research has mainly focused on violence against women by men. The specific forms of violence that have been of academic and research interest are rape, sexual abuse and harassment, intimate partner violence, and human trafficking (Pina et al. 2009; Medeiros and Griffith 2019). However, as our society is modernising and awareness of sexual harassment is increasing, studies on sexual harassment faced by disabled and males are also emerging (Pina et al. 2009; Medeiros and Griffith 2019). The existing studies on sexual harassment in the workplace can be divided into two categories. The first category includes studies investigating sexual harassment faced by women and disabled groups in the workplace (Pitot 2021; Wang et al. 2021). In contrast, the second category consists of sexual harassment experienced by males in the workforce (Brassel et al. 2019; Cortina and

Areguin 2020; DeSouza 2004; Prado et al. 2020; Roper and Halloran 2007). One common argument of these studies is that irrespective of who is facing sexual harassment, specific intervention programs and techniques can address the rising problem of sexual harassment in the workplace. Although the studies on sexual harassment experienced by different gender groups are well documented in the existing literature, very few studies have focused on the specific intervention mechanisms that can address the rising problem of sexual harassment in the workplace. Thus, the current study examines how effectively the governments use information computer technology interventions, particularly the e-government website, to provide information on the sexual harassment national laws that protect workers.

Overall existing studies have confirmed that sexual harassment is present in different organisational contexts and geographical settings. Pitot (2021) found that around 60.3% of women in one of the USA's radiology department are victims of sexual harassment, and approximately 80% of women have faced gender discrimination in the workplace. Pitot and his colleagues proposed that creating awareness of the laws and regulations against sexual harassment in the workplace will cultivate a hostile organisational culture towards sexual harassment in the workplace. Cense (2019) argued that sex education helps individuals to understand the sexual orientation of individuals from different cultural backgrounds. Undoubtedly, this knowledge helps individuals develop an identity of sexual self within their sociocultural context while taking formal positions in organisations. The government policymakers can intervene in the work setting by using specific policies against sexual harassment and creating awareness of these policies. Wang et al. (2021) found that around 53% of women based on a sample extracted from four metropolitan cities in China showed resistance when faced with sexual harassment in the workplace. Approximately 53% of these women mentioned that their boss was the perpetrator in the sexual harassment case. Lahsaeizadeh and Yousefinejad (2012) argued that sexual harassment faced by women in Iran is correlated with dressing style, makeup and acceptance of gender rules in society. Nemoto (2010) found that women face different forms of sexual harassment in the workplace. These include taking clients to the hostess club, playing the hostess role after the work drinking meetings and sexual advances during normal work hours. This study's findings confirmed that the women's interpretation of sexual behaviour differs based on organisational context. The Japanese organisation culture presents an organisational society dominated by male and female subordination, which fosters harmful behaviours. Firms can undertake stringent measures to re-evaluate sexualised workplace customs and large gender gaps in the organisational hierarchy present in Japanese firms.

The sexual harassment experienced by males is different from females, as males experience sexual harassment from males and females (Brassel et al. 2019; DeSouza 2004; Prado et al. 2020). It is common for men to be sexually harassed by females who may be holding position power in organisations (Brassel et al. 2019; DeSouza 2004; Prado et al. 2020). The same-sex sexual harassment experienced by men heavily impacts males as it questions their masculine identity in several ways (Cortina and Areguin 2020; Roper and Halloran 2007). Research has confirmed that men who are sexually harassed are less experienced and younger in the workplace (Holland et al. 2016). It has also been noted that men are greatly threatened by

sexual harassment when the perpetrator is gay (Cortina and Areguin 2020; O'connor 2017). Same-sex sexual harassment is atypical of a male-dominated workplace where the work environment is more sexualised and less professional (Cortina and Areguin 2020; Holland et al. 2016). Scarduzio et al. (2018) found that it is common for gay male supervisors to harass less experienced male workers.

Advocates against sexual harassment in the workplace have confirmed that information computer technology enabled awareness intervention mechanisms by the government can effectively address the rising cases of sexual harassment by creating a safe and secure working environment. The employment law, international labour conventions, and national legal justice systems in the large developed and developing countries provide provisions to protect its citizens from any form of emotional and physical harm (Liebregts and Stam 2019; Pohler and Riddell 2019). However, several small island developing countries do not have proper national-level laws to protect workers against sexual harassment in the workplace. Even if laws exist, employers and employees lack awareness and knowledge of these laws (Naidu 2012a, b). In this digital era, policymakers and practitioners can undertake a proactive approach to addressing the rising problem of sexual harassment in the workplace by developing national-level laws against sexual harassment and effectively disseminating information on these laws on the e-government websites of the authorities responsible for addressing sexual harassment. This study contributes to the existing literature by examining how effectively the governments are using e-government websites to disseminate information on national laws against sexual harassment in the workplace.

Research Methodology

The main aim of this study is to examine how effectively the government is using the e-government website to create awareness against sexual harassment in the workplace. To answer this research question, this study used the qualitative content analysis method to examine the extent to which the government has provided policy related information on sexual harassment policies on the e-government website of the responsible authorities. There are two advantages of using the qualitative content analysis process to gather data and information for this study (Abubakari et al. 2020; Neuendorf 2011; Thompson 2019). First, content analysis is one of the most flexible methodologies that has been widely used to provide real time data on the information presented on electronic sources and hardcopies of the documents (Abubakari et al. 2020; Neuendorf 2011; Thompson 2019). Second, researchers in the field of sexuality and culture are using the content analysis methodology to interpret messages and communication that takes place between the perpetrators and the victims (Abubakari et al. 2020; Neuendorf 2011; Thompson 2019). Figure 1 captures the qualitative content analysis process used for answering the research questions proposed in this study.

Furthermore, there are two ways how the policymakers can use the e-government website to generate awareness on the national level policies against sexual
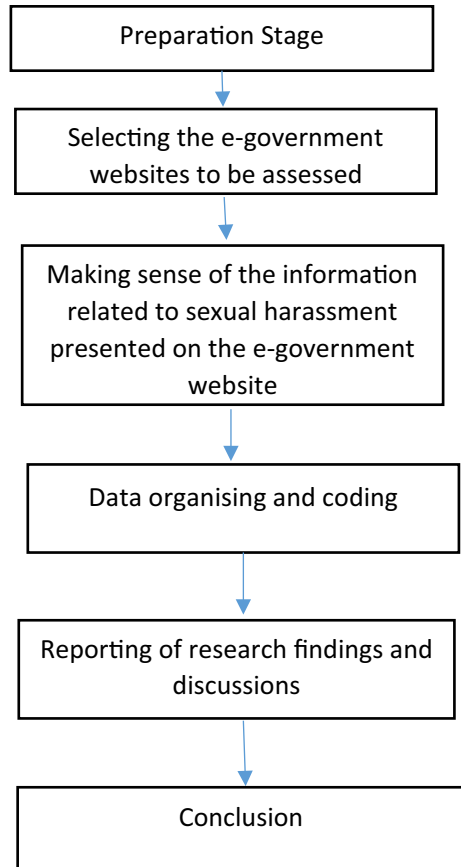
harassment in the workplace (Kaaya 2004; Chan et al. 2008; Zhao et al. 2019). First, the policymakers can provide details of the national policy on sexual harassment in the workplace on the e-government website. This information can be provided in HTML format or uploaded on the e-government website in pdf format. Second, the government officials contact details can be provided on the e-government website so that users can directly contact the relevant government departments if they have any questions or queries on the national policies against sexual harassment in the workplace. Two assessors conducted data collection and assessment. A detailed content analysis of the e-government websites of the 13 Pacific Island Countries was conducted with specific emphasis on the information related to sexual harassment that was provided on the e-government website. The assessors also reviewed the extent to which the e-government websites that housed the information on sexual harassment in the workplace allowed the users to interact with the government officials on concerns, queries, and issues related to sexual harassment in the workplace.

Table 1 provides details of the e-government websites that were assessed for the thirteen Pacific Island Countries. In the case of Samoa, 14 e-government websites

Table 1 Details of the E-government website

No.	Country	Number of E-government websites assessed	Number of ministries	Link of ministries
1	Fiji	10	15	http://www.commonwealthofnations.org/sectors-fiji/government/government_ministries/
2	Kiribati	10	13	http://www.president.gov.ki/ministries/
3	Tuvalu	0	9	http://www.tuvaluislands.com/gov_addresses.htm
4	Cook Islands	7	10	https://dlca.logcluster.org/display/public/DLCA/4.1+Cook+Islands+Government+Contact+List
5	Marshall Islands	3	10	https://www.infomarshallislands.com/ministries-name-change/
6	Samoa	14[a]	15	http://www.commonwealthofnations.org/sectors-samoa/government/government_ministries/
7	Vanuatu	6	9	http://www.commonwealthofnations.org/sectors-vanuatu/government/government_ministries/
8	Federated States of Micronesia	7	8[b]	https://www.fsmgov.org/ngovt.html
9	Niue	1	3	http://www.gov.nu/wb/pages/ministries.php
10	Solomon Islands	9	19	http://www.commonwealthofnations.org/sectors-solomon_islands/government/government_ministries/
11	Nauru	1	19[c]	http://www.commonwealthofnations.org/sectors-nauru/government/government_ministries/
12	Palau	7	8	https://www.palaugov.pw/executive-branch/ministries/
13	Tonga	10	15	http://www.commonwealthofnations.org/sectors-tonga/government/government_ministries/

[a] Ministry of Works, Transport and Infrastructure (MWTI) e-government website of Samoa could not be assessed because it was giving errors

[b] FSM government system is divided based on departments rather than ministries

[c] There are 18 ministries and one department

Source: Created by the Authors of this paper (2019)

were assessed, followed by 10 for Fiji, 10 for Kiribati, 10 for Tonga, 9 for the Solomon Islands, 7 for Palau, 7 for the Federated States of Micronesia, 7 for the Cook Islands, 6 for Vanuatu, 3 for the Marshall Islands, 1 for Niue, 1 for Nauru, and 0 for Tuvalu. "Appendix" provides the details of the e-government websites that were assessed for this study.

Research Findings and Discussions

The findings from this study confirm that the e-government website of Fiji, Cook Islands, Samoa, and the Solomon Islands provides specific details on the national level laws, regulations, and policies against sexual harassment that protects employees in the workplace. One of the key features of the laws, regulations and policies that are uploaded on the e-government website is that these documents emphasise not only the protection of workers from sexual harassment but it emphasises on the protection of workers from all forms of harm, both in the workplace and society. The sexual harassment policies provided on the e-government websites of the large PICs cover the protection of males, females, and disabled groups against sexual harassment in the workplace. According to Pina et al. (2009) and Medeiros and Griffith (2019), sexual harassment is faced by both males and females; therefore, it is important that sexual harassment policies equally protects both gender groups in society. According to Pohler and Riddell (2019) and Liebregts and Stams (2019), information computer technology enabled awareness intervention mechanisms can effectively address the rising problem of sexual harassment in the workplace. Large PICs, such as Fiji, Cook Islands, Samoa, and the Solomon Islands, have the resources and the infrastructure to use the e-government website to provide information on the national level laws against sexual harassment in the workplace.

In the case of Fiji, the National Policy on sexual harassment in the workplace provides details on what is sexual harassment and how employees can protect themselves from sexual harassment. This policy document also stipulates the roles and responsibilities of the employers on addressing sexual harassment in the workplace and the roles and responsibilities of employees in ensuring that they take the right action if they are the victims of sexual harassment (Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment, Local Government, Urban Development and Housing 2019). By uploading the policy documents on the e-government websites of Fiji, Cook Islands, Samoa, and Solomon Islands, these countries governments are effectively using information computer technology to address the social and workplace concerns that workers face at work. According to Pitot (2021), providing information related to policies against sexual harassment will help to develop an organisational culture that is hostile towards sexual harassment. By providing information on national-level policies against sexual harassment in the workplace, the government authorities are providing necessary information to create awareness on how employees are protected against sexual harassment.

The strategies that are undertaken by Fiji, Cook Islands, Samoa, and Solomon Islands governments can be modelled by PICS that are lagging behind in creating

awareness on the national level policies against sexual harassment in the workplace. According to Naidu (2012a, b), employers and employees lack knowledge and awareness of the employment laws. The policymakers of Fiji, Cook Islands, Samoa, and the Solomon Islands have recognised the importance of effectively disseminating information on the e-government website; however, employers and employees need to be aware that the information is available online. This implies that an awareness campaign needs to be undertaken in tertiary institutions and public places to disclose public information on the e-government website. The Mauritian self-service kiosks model can be adopted by the PICs to promote e-government services for acquiring government information (Naidu 2017). Drawing from the Social Cognitive theories, it can be argued that human behaviour can be easily changed by making the information readily available to users (Shupe 2020; Zaikman and Marks 2017). Information can be made available on the information computer technology-enabled platform or hardcopies to create awareness on issues affecting workers in the workplace. As soon as users can acquire information related to the national level policies against sexual harassment in the workplace, they can protect themselves as soon as they are faced with sexual harassment while at work (Shupe 2020; Zaikman and Marks 2017). The cognitive power, thoughts and beliefs of workers can be changed by making the information available on national policies against sexual harassment in the workplace (Shupe, 2020; Zaikman and Marks 2017).

The Marshall Islands, Niue, and Tuvalu do not have an e-government website that provides information to the general public on the national level laws, regulations, and policies that protect workers from sexual harassment in the workplace. Similarly, the e-government website of Kiribati, Vanuatu, Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, and Tonga provides only brief information on the commitment of the national government towards protecting minority groups from all forms of harm in the workplace. The information provided on the e-government websites of Kiribati, Vanuatu, Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Palau and Tonga is insufficient to provide knowledge and awareness on the roles and responsibilities of both employers and employees on addressing sexual harassment in the workplace.

Most of the e-government websites that were studied provide contact details of the ministries that can be contacted if employers and employees have questions or queries about sexual harassment in the workplace. By setting up an online helpline for the victims facing domestic violence and sexual harassment in the workplace, Fiji's government is undertaking a lead role in providing support to these victims. The e-government website of Kiribati, Cook Islands, Samoa, Vanuatu, Federated States of Micronesia, Niue, Solomon Islands, Nauru, Palau and Tonga, does provide contact details of the government officials that can be contacted for issues and concerns related to sexual harassment in the workplace. Tuvalu and Marshall Islands do not have an e-government website; therefore, these countries citizens are disadvantaged when contacting government officials on issues and concerns related to sexual harassment in the workplace. Drawing from the studies conducted by Pina et al. (2009) and Medeiros and Griffith (2019), it can be argued that the governments of the PICs that do not provide contact details of the ministries that can be contacted for questions and queries related to policies against sexual harassment in the workplace are not taking a proactive approach towards addressing sexual harassment

experienced by workers. Workers will feel secure if they have complete knowledge and awareness related to policies against sexual harassment in the workplace. If they lack experience and understanding, they will not take corrective measures to protect themselves from harm caused by sexual harassment in the workplace (Pina et al. 2009; Medeiros and Griffith 2019).

Conclusion, Limitations and Directions for Future Research

To conclude, the findings from this study showed that only large PICs, such as Fiji, Cook Islands, Samoa and the Solomon Islands, are providing information on the national level laws, regulations and policies that protect workers from sexual harassment in the workplace on their e-government website. In comparison to the large PICs, the small PICs, such as the Marshall Islands and Tuvalu, are disadvantaged as these countries lack the physical infrastructure to host an e-government website and use the information computer technology-enabled tools to create awareness against sexual harassment policies in the workplace. Additionally, it is also critical for the e-government websites to provide contact details of the ministries and the relevant personnel that can be contacted to address queries and concerns related to national-level laws and regulations against sexual harassment in the workplace. The findings from this study have implications for the policymakers and practitioners, human rights and gender activists, employees, and employers as they advocate for the strengthening of organisational level policies against sexual harassment in

Table 2 Availability of the information related to national level laws, regulations and policies on sexual harassment on the E-government website

No.	Country	E-government Website Link	Assessment Details
1	Fiji	http://www.employment.gov.fj/ http://www.mwcpa.gov.fj/index.php/women1/womens-plan-of-action-2010-2019.html	The Ministry of Employment, Productivity, and Industrial Relations has a comprehensive e-government website that provides details on the laws that protect minority groups from sexual harassment in the workplace. The National Policy on sexual harassment is uploaded on the e-government website. The Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation also provides a brief outline of how the Ministry promotes the protection of minority groups from all forms of violence and harm in society
2	Kiribati	http://www.president.gov.ki/ministry-of-women-youth-and-social-affairs/ https://www.employment.gov.ki/index.php/about-us/mission-vision	Each Ministry does not have its e-government website. The work of each Ministry is mentioned on the central government website. The Ministry of Women, Youth and Social Affairs is responsible for addressing issues related to sexual harassment in the workplace. Any grievance related to sexual harassment can be reported to the Ministry of Labour. The Ministry of Labour website does not provide specific details on how employees are protected against sexual harassment in the workplace
3	Tuvalu	No e-government website available	The Ministry of Local Government, Women, and Youth is responsible for addressing issues related to sexual harassment in the workplace. This Ministry does not have an e-government website
4	Cook Islands	https://www.intaff.gov.ck/?page_id=69	The gender equality and women's empowerment page provide details of the initiative undertaken by the government to promote equality and provide protection and support for the minority groups in the workplace. A number of policy documents have been uploaded on this webpage and some of these documents are (1) the Cook Islands Gender Equality Policy, and (2) details on Family Law Bill. These two important legislations are designed to eliminate any form of harassment and violence against minority groups in the workplace
5	Marshall Islands	No e-government website available	The Ministry of Internal Affairs is responsible for addressing issues related to sexual harassment in the workplace. This Ministry does not have an e-government website

Table 2 (continued)

No.	Country	E-government Website Link	Assessment Details
6	Samoa	https://www.mcil.gov.ws/ http://www.mwcsd.gov.ws/	The Ministry of Commerce, Labour, and Industry website of Samoa provides extensive details on employment services, labour market, and industrial relations issues. Noticeably, the first page of the e-government website is too general, and it does not provide specific details on national-level laws, regulations, and policies on sexual harassment in the workplace. The Ministry of Women, Community, and Social Development e-government website of Samoa provides details on sexual harassment in the workplace. Finding the document that has all the details related to the national policy is difficult as one has to browse through several links before accessing this document. The current gender implementation strategy document is from 2014 to 2018. This document is uploaded as a pdf document on the e-government website of the Ministry of Women, Community, and Social Development
7	Vanuatu	https://mjcs.gov.vu/index.php/gender-protection-cluster https://dwa.gov.vu/index.php	The e-government website of the Ministry of Justice and Community Services provides details on the gender and protection cluster of Vanuatu. There are no specific details provided on how the national laws, policies, and regulations protect the minority groups from sexual harassment in the workplace. However, there are numerous links provided at the end of the first page, and once you click on the Department of Women link, a new webpage opens, and there are numerous links available that provide detailed information on government policy related to gender mainstreaming and protection of minority groups in the workplace. Once you click on those links, there is no information uploaded on those links. It is mentioned that there is nothing to display as yet. There is a document uploaded on the national gender equality policy, and once you click on that link, it gives the message that 'you do not have permission to access this resource.'

Table 2 (continued)

No.	Country	E-government Website Link	Assessment Details
8	Federated States of Micronesia (FSM)	No e-government website for the Department of Health and Social Affairs https://doj.gov.fm/justice/index.html	Out of the eight departments in FSM, the department of Health and Social Affairs, which is a crucial department dealing with issues concerning the safety and protection of women, does not have their e-government website. The e-government website exists for seven out of eight government departments of FSM. The e-government website for the Department of Justice does not have any specific links on the national level laws, regulations, and policies on sexual harassment in the workplace
9	Niue	http://www.gov.nu/wb/pages/ministries.php	Ministry of Infrastructure, Ministry of Natural Resources, and Ministry of Social Services do not have an e-government website
10	Solomon Islands	https://www.labour.gov.sb http://www.mwycfa.gov.sb/	The Ministry of Commerce, Industry, Labour and Immigration's e-government website provides pdf files of the labour laws that protect employees in the workplace. The Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs of the e-government website provides specific details on how strongly the nation promotes gender equality and women's development by creating a supportive work environment for women. This e-government website also provides details of the policy priority outcomes of the Gender Equality and Women's Development (GEWD) Policy 2016–2020 policy framework. The Family Protection Act 2014 provides protection of families from crimes, such as domestic violence and sexual harassment
11	Nauru	http://www.naurugov.nr/	The government of Nauru has a central website and the works of each of the ministries are clearly mentioned on the central government website. There is limited information provided on how the national-level laws, policies and regulations protect the workers from sexual harassment in the workplace. The details of each of the ministries are categorised based on the portfolio of each minister

Table 2 (continued)

No.	Country	E-government Website Link	Assessment Details
12	Palau	https://www.palaugov.pw/mcca	The Bureau of Aging and Gender is responsible for coordinating programs and activities on gender equality in Palau. Importantly, the work of this bureau falls under the banner of the Ministry of Community & Cultural Affairs. The e-government website of the Ministry of Community & Cultural Affairs does provide detailed statistics on sexual assaults, but it does not provide information on the laws that protect workers from sexual harassment in the workplace
13	Tonga	http://www.justice.gov.to/ http://www.mlci.gov.to/	The e-government website of the Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Labour, Commerce, and Industries is giving site error

Source: Created by the Authors of this paper (2019)

Table 3 Availability of the contact details of the relevant government officials on the E-government website

No.	Country	E-government Website Link	Assessment Details
1	Fiji	http://www.employment.gov.fj/ http://www.mwcpa.gov.fj/index.php/women1/womens-plan-of-action-2010-2019.html	The Ministry of Employment, Productivity, and Industrial Relations e-government website provides phone numbers, email addresses and a contact form that can be used to contact the government officials. The Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation e-government website provides a specific helpline for domestic violence and harassment issues faced by minority groups in society
2	Kiribati	http://www.president.gov.ki/ministry-of-women-youth-and-social-affairs/	Postal address and telephone number is provided. The Ministry of Employment and Human Resources e-government website provides contact details of the government personnel who can be contacted if citizens have any queries
3	Tuvalu	No e-government website available	The Ministry of Local Government, Women, and Youth are responsible for addressing issues related to sexual harassment in the workplace. This Ministry does not have an e-government website
4	Cook Islands	https://www.intaff.gov.ck/?page_id=38	The Ministry of the Internal Affairs e-government website of the Cook Islands provides email and phone contact details that the citizens can use to contact government personnel on social policy issues, labour and employment services
5	Marshall Islands	No e-government website available	The Ministry of Internal Affairs is responsible for addressing issues related to sexual harassment in the workplace. This Ministry does not have an e-government website
6	Samoa	https://www.mcil.gov.ws/ http://www.mwcsd.gov.ws/contacts	An employment grievance form is provided, and employees can contact the Ministry of Commerce, Labour, and Industry if they have any employment grievances. The Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development e-government website of Samoa provides in-depth details of the relevant contact person who can clarify citizens queries using their e-government website
7	Vanuatu	https://mjcs.gov.vu/ https://dwa.gov.vu/index.php	The Department of Women's Affairs e-government website does not provide any contact details of the staff who can be contacted for questions and queries. However, the Ministry of Justice and Community Services website does provide details of the relevant contact person who can be easily contacted for questions or queries
8	Federated States of Micronesia	https://doj.gov.fm/justice/index.html	Only phone contact of the Department of Justice is provided but not email addresses
9	Niue	http://www.gov.nu/wb/pages/ministries.php	Contact details of each Ministry are provided on the central government website
10	Solomon Islands	https://www.labour.gov.sb/contacts/ http://www.mwycfa.gov.sb/contact-us.html	The Ministry of Commerce, Industry, Labour and Immigration's e-government website provides an online contact form that can be used to contact relevant government personnel in cases of an employment dispute. The online form with contact details of the staff of the Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs is provided on the e-government website

Table 3 (continued)

No.	Country	E-government Website Link	Assessment Details
11	Nauru	http://www.naurugov.nr/contact-us.aspx	The citizens can contact the relevant government personnel by using the e-government website online contact system. They have to provide their name, email and phone number if they wish to contact the government officers
12	Palau	https://www.palaugov.pw/mcca	The phone numbers of the relevant departments are provided on the e-government website but not the names and email addresses of the relevant government personnel who can be contacted with questions and concerns on laws, regulations, and policies on sexual harassment in the workplace
13	Tonga	http://www.justice.gov.to/ http://www.mlci.gov.to/	The e-government website of the Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Labour, Commerce, and Industries is giving site error

Source: Created by the Authors of this paper (2019)

the workplace. Advocates against sexual harassment in the workplace can easily access the information provided on the e-government website and use this information to strengthen existing organisational policies. Organisational policies have to be aligned with national policies against sexual harassment in the workplace. If organisational policies are not aligned with the national policies, it is the responsibility of the employers to contact the government officials and seek the necessary help to complete this critical task of creating a safe and conducive culture in the workplace. The large PICs that are providing information on national policies against sexual harassment in the workplace on the e-government website are able to easily create awareness on what the worker's rights are and how can workers protect themselves from sexual abuse and harm. One of the limitations of this study is that it is based on a limited sample of 13 PICs. Future studies can expand this study by expanding the coverage of the sample in this study (Tables 2, 3).

Appendix: List of E-government Websites Assessed

No	Country	E-government Website Link
1	*Fiji*	http://www.foreignaffairs.gov.fj/
		https://www.defence.gov.fj/
		http://www.education.gov.fj/
		http://www.employment.gov.fj/
		http://www.lands.gov.fj/
		http://www.townplanning.gov.fj/index.php/department/ministry
		http://www.agriculture.gov.fj/
		http://www.moit.gov.fj/
		http://www.youth.gov.fj/
		http://www.mwcpa.gov.fj/index.php/women1/womens-plan-of-action-2010-2019.html
2	*Kiribati*	http://www.mlpid.gov.ki/
		https://www.melad.gov.ki/
		https://mcic.gov.ki/
		https://mhms.gov.ki/
		https://www.micttd.gov.ki/
		https://mise.gov.ki/
		https://www.employment.gov.ki/index.php/divisions/labour
		http://www.mfed.gov.ki/
		https://www.mfmrd.gov.ki/
		https://www.mfa.gov.ki/
3	*Tuvalu*	No e-government website available
4	*Cook Islands*	http://www.mfem.gov.ck/customs
		http://ici.gov.ck/
		https://agriculture.gov.ck/biosecurity/
		https://environment.gov.ck/
		https://www.health.gov.ck/
		https://www.transport.gov.ck/maritime/
		https://www.intaff.gov.ck/

No	Country	E-government Website Link
5	*Marshall Islands*	http://www.rmimrd.com/about
		http://rmi-mof.com/
		http://www.rmimrd.com/
6	*Samoa*	https://www.maf.gov.ws/
		https://www.mcil.gov.ws/
		https://mcit.gov.ws/
		http://mesc.gov.ws/
		https://www.mof.gov.ws/
		https://www.mfat.gov.ws/
		https://www.health.gov.ws/
		https://www.mjca.gov.ws/
		https://www.mnre.gov.ws/
		https://www.samoapolice.ws/
		https://mpmc.gov.ws/
		https://www.mpe.gov.ws/
		https://www.revenue.gov.ws/
		http://www.mwcsd.gov.ws/
7	*Vanuatu*	https://malffb.gov.vu/
		https://doft.gov.vu/
		https://mjcs.gov.vu/
		https://mol.gov.vu/index.php/en/
		https://doi.gov.vu/
		https://moysd.gov.vu/
		Ministry of Internal Affairs Vanuatu [no separate webpage]
		Ministry of Ni-Vanuatu Business [no separate webpage]
		Ministry of Trade, Commerce, Industries and Tourism [no separate webpage]
8	*Micronesia*	https://dfa.gov.fm/
		http://www.fsmrd.fm/documents/
		https://tci.gov.fm/
		http://www.dofa.gov.fm/
		https://doj.gov.fm/justice/fsm_doj.html
		https://decem.gov.fm/
		http://national.doe.fm/
9	*Niue*	http://www.gov.nu/wb/pages/ministries.php
10	*Solomon Islands*	https://www.labour.gov.sb
		http://www.mca.gov.sb/
		http://www.mecdm.gov.sb/
		http://www.mof.gov.sb/Homepage.aspx
		https://www.fisheries.gov.sb/
		http://www.mfaet.gov.sb/
		http://www.mofr.gov.sb/main.do
		https://www.mpgis.gov.sb/
		http://www.mwycfa.gov.sb/
11	*Nauru*	http://www.naurugov.nr/
12	*Palau*	https://www.palaugov.pw/mcca
		https://www.palaugov.pw/executive-branch/ministries/education/
		https://www.palaugov.pw/executive-branch/ministries/health/
		https://www.palaugov.pw/executive-branch/ministries/justice/
		https://www.palaugov.pw/executive-branch/ministries/natural-resources/
		https://www.palaugov.pw/executive-branch/ministries/public-infrastructure/
		https://www.palaugov.pw/executive-branch/ministries/state/

No	Country	E-government Website Link
13	*Tonga*	http://www.finance.gov.to/
		http://www.pmo.gov.to/
		http://www.psc.gov.to/
		www.mic.gov.to/
		http://www.justice.gov.to/
		http://www.parliament.gov.to/
		http://www.revenue.gov.to/Article.aspx?ID=682
		http://www.mafff.gov.to/
		www.mic.gov.to
		http://www.tongafish.gov.to/

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