

# Exploring Sexual Harassment in the Police Force in Japan: A Comparative Study between Japan and the United States

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The purpose of this article is to examine sexual harassment among the police in Japan. Major research questions were whether or not sexual harassment of female employees in the Japanese police force was similar to that (1) in ordinary Japanese workplaces, and (2) in the police in the United States. This is the first attempt to analyze sexual harassment among the police in Japan based on empirical data.

Based on a recent survey in Japan, both quantitative and qualitative analyses were conducted. It was found that sexual harassment in the Japanese police was very similar to that in ordinary workplaces in Japan, while several differences were detected between Japan and the United States, including the most common forms of harassment, perpetrator types, and so on. These differences could be attributed to the particular characteristics of Japanese society.

The study has several limitations mainly due to the lack of sufficient data. In particular, the victimization rate of female employees should be more carefully examined by future studies.

## Introduction

Sexual harassment in the workplace has become one of the most serious issues in modern organizations almost everywhere in the world. This is particularly true in traditionally male-oriented organizations, such as police or military institutions. Thus far, a number of surveys and considerable research have been already conducted to explore the issue of sexual harassment in police forces in major developed countries of the West, especially in the United States. Some theoretical frameworks have also been developed to analyze the results of these empirical studies.

Japan is one of the most developed democratic countries in the world, and the Japanese police have been highly regarded mainly due to the relatively stable public safety situation there. At the same time, however, police forces in Japan also have faced the issue of sexual harassment of female employees (including both police officers and civilian workers) in their workplaces. According to recent media reports (e.g., *Asahi Shimbun*, January 24, 2014), incidents of internal misconduct related to sexual harassment of female employees in police forces has sharply increased in the past several years, while only a few academic research or studies have been conducted on this matter in Japan to date. The lack of sufficient knowledge of the issue also makes it difficult for the leadership of the police to take effective countermeasures on this matter.

Given this situation, the purpose of the present study is to examine the sexual harassment experi-

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ences of female employees in the police in Japan based on a recent survey conducted by the Kochi Prefectural Police in Japan. This is the first and only survey that has extensively investigated the sexual harassment issue among the Japanese police and released the data to the public. In terms of the methodology, the current study aims not only at conducting a quantitative analysis of the survey data, but also providing a preliminary theoretical analysis by utilizing major theoretical frameworks such as the organizational model and the sociocultural model.

### ***Definition of sexual harassment***

Needless to say, both males and females can be victims of sexual harassment. Also, sexual harassment can occur between individuals of the same sex; reports of that particular type of sexual harassment cases are still very rare, however, at least among the police in Japan. Thus, the scope of the present study focuses on only those cases where men are perpetrators and women are victims within their workplaces.

To date, there is no consensus among academic scholars on the definition of *sexual harassment* (Somvadee & Morash, 2008, p. 488). Based on extensive empirical studies, Fitzgerald (1988; 1995; 1999) however, asserted that sexual harassment can be defined as “unwanted sex-related behavior at work that is perceived by the recipient as offensive, exceeding her/his resources, or threatening her/his well-being.” Fitzgerald also pointed out that sexual harassment could be categorized into the three types of behavior (i.e., gender harassment, unwanted sexual attention, and coercive sexual behavior [*quid pro quo*]), although there could be some overlaps between them.

According to Sibley Butler and Schmidtke (2010, p. 197), each category is defined as follows. *Gender harassment* is “derogatory comments and/or behaviors targeted at women designed to belittle or intimidate.” These include behaviors such as dirty jokes or stories that are told in the workplaces, or comments that put women down. *Unwanted sexual attention* is defined as “comments or behaviors of a sexual nature that the victim perceives to be inappropriate.” These include sexually suggestive comments that are made to or about a person as well as inappropriate physical touching. *Coercive sexual behavior (quid pro quo)* is defined as “one organizational member using either reward or punishment in an attempt to induce another organizational member to comply with requests of a sexual nature.” The majority of earlier studies in this area have relied on Fitzgerald’s definition and classification (Cortina & Berdahl, 2008, p. 471; Lonsway, Paynich, & Hall, 2013, p. 178; Sibley Butler & Schmidtke, 2010, p. 197). The present study also does so, since it makes it easier for the purposes of comparison.

### ***Gender equality in workplaces-Basic Data***

According to a report issued by the Government of Japan (Gender Equality Bureau of the Cabinet Office, 2011), the percentage of female workers in workplaces in Japan overall was estimated at 42.2%, while the corresponding figure in the United States was thought to be 46.0%. The percentage of female workers at management levels in ordinary workplaces in Japan, however was estimated to be only

10.6%, while the same ratio in the United States was approximately 42.7%. The same ratios in France, Germany and the U.K were also estimated to be, 38.5%, 37.8%, and 34.6%, respectively. The data indicate that gender equality in ordinary workplaces in Japan still lags behind in comparison with the United States and other major developed countries of the West.

With respect to the situation in the police, as of April 2014, the ratio of female police officers among all sworn police officers in Japan was approximately 7.7% (National Police Agency of Japan), while that in the United States was thought to be 12–15% (Brown, 2000, p. 77; Somvadee & Morash, 2008, p. 485). Also, the ratio of female police officers among all police officers at the senior management level (those at the rank of police inspector or higher) in Japan is only about 1.2%, while similar data are not available for the police in the United States. The data indicate that gender equality among the Japanese police lags in comparison with ordinary workplaces in Japan, as well as the police in the United States.

## Literature Reviews

### *The United States*

In the United States, there have been a number of earlier surveys and research studies that focused on sexual harassment in police forces. Based on the major findings of previous literature as well as their own recent extensive research, Lonsway and her colleagues (2013) summarize the major characteristics of sexual harassment among the police in the United States as follows.

- It is estimated that 50–75% of female employees in law enforcement in the United States have experienced some form of sexual harassment behaviors in their workplaces. (In some studies, this figure was reported at more than 90%.)
- The most common forms of harassment were verbal gender harassment that was not necessarily aimed at sexual engagement or targeting specific individuals, followed by unwanted sexual attention expressed verbally. The most common harassers using these types of behavior were coworkers/peers.
- Unwanted sexual attention in physical forms and coercive sexual behavior were experienced less frequently. These behaviors were more likely to be committed by supervisors rather than peers or subordinates.
- Very few the female victims (15–20%) formally complained when they were sexually harassed. This is mainly because of the general phenomenon that women in nontraditional professions such as the military or police were less likely to report complaints than those in ordinary types of work.
- The major reasons given for not-reporting were “the situation is not serious enough to file a formal complaint,” “fear of retaliation by supervisors and/or coworkers,” “nothing would be done even if a complaint were filed,” and the like.

### *Japan*

As noted above, to date, almost no academic research or surveys have been conducted on the issue

of sexual harassment in police forces in Japan. On the other hand, several surveys have been carried out on sexual harassment in ordinary workplaces (such as private companies and municipal governments) in Japan. Although the results of these surveys vary because of the different natures of each workplace, a study by the Japan Trade Union Confederation (JTUC) summarized the major findings of previous surveys as follows.

- It is estimated that approximately 50–70% of female workers experienced some form of sexual harassment in their workplaces in Japan.
- The most common forms of harassment were sexual and/or sexist remarks and physical touching.
- It is estimated that less than 20% of these victims informally indicated and/or formally reported their complaints. The major reason for not-reporting is “concern about the negative impact of reporting on my career.”
- Perceptions toward several potential types of harassment (e.g., showing women’s swimsuit pictures in workplaces, making sexist remarks or sexually suggestive jokes, and so on) were very different between female and male workers. In general, male workers were less sensitive to potential harassing behaviors than female workers. As a result, male workers often did not even recognize that they were harassing female colleagues in their workplaces.

It is worth noting that, in ordinary workplaces in Japan, harassment in non-verbal forms such as physical touching is one of the most common forms, while in the police in the United State, physical harassment is not so common as its verbal counterpart.

### ***Theoretical models***

According to Sibley Butler and Schmidtke (2010), there are three major theoretical models that have often been used to analyze sexual harassment in workplaces in the United States, namely, the organizational model, the sociocultural model, and the attraction model. It should be noted that these three models are not necessarily mutually exclusive. In other words, all models were significant in accounting for the different types of sexual harassment, while none was able to account for all types of behaviors.

*The organizational model* argues that “sexual harassment occurs because of structural contexts that exist within the organization” (Sibley Butler & Schmidtke, 2010, p. 198). In other words, several issues related to organizational characteristics, such as workplace norms, climate, and culture, are major causes of sexual harassment. The empirical research by Sibley Butler and Schmidtke on the U.S. military revealed that several institutional factors, such as leaders’ attitudes and effectiveness regarding formal complaint procedures, significantly affected the level of harassment in U.S. military workplaces (Sibley Butler & Schmidtke, pp. 198–201; pp. 212–213).

*The sociocultural model* argues that harassment occurs “because of traditional sex role expectations of men and women,” and that “because it is a natural outcome of a patriarchal system where men hold power that is legitimized by social beliefs (Sibley Butler & Schmidtke, 2010, p. 201).” In other words,

this focuses not only on characteristics of each institution (which are the major subject of the organizational model), but also on the broader social context prevalent in the society at large.

*The attraction model* argues that “harassment is predicated on the natural attraction of men and women, with the ultimate outcome of creating a sexual relationship” (Sibley Butler & Schmidtke, 2010, p. 201). In other words, this model emphasizes the biological context of natural behaviors of human beings, rather than social or institutional elements. As a logical consequence, this model tends to be more pessimistic about effective prevention of sexual harassment than the other two.

### **Research Questions and Hypotheses**

Given the above-mentioned literature reviews, the current study examines the following research questions: (1) whether or not the sexual harassment of female employees among the police in Japan is similar to that in ordinary workplaces in Japan, (2) whether or not the sexual harassment of female employees among the police in Japan is similar to that among the police in the United States, and, (3) if there are any significant differences, what are major causes of these differences.

We predict that sexual harassment among the police in Japan could be worse than that in ordinary workplaces in Japan. This is because, as mentioned above, overall gender equality in the police lags in comparison with ordinary workplaces in Japan. We also expect that harassment among the police in Japan could be worse than that among the police in the United States. This is also because, as already noted, overall gender equality among the police in Japan seems behind in comparison with that in the United States.

### **Methods**

#### ***Police in Japan***

The survey which the present study relies on was conducted by the Kochi Prefectural Police in Japan in 2013. The Japanese police have adopted a quasi-centralized system. It consists of 47 prefectural police forces with more than 290,000 employees in total. More than 250,000 of these are sworn police officers and the remainder are civilian workers. Although each prefectural police organization enjoys some operational autonomies, most important policies, including organizational structure, management policies, and operational standards, are highly standardized under the supervision of the central government. As a result, all 47 prefectural police forces share high levels of similarities in almost all aspects, especially in organizational culture and norms. Kochi Prefecture is located in the southwestern part of Japan, with an area of approximately 7,105 square kilometers (slightly larger than Delaware) and a population of approximately 738,000 (roughly the same as Alaska).

#### ***Sample***

At the time of the survey, the Kochi Prefectural Police consisted of approximately 2,000 employees, 1,588 of whom were sworn police officers, the remainder civilian workers including both full-time and

part-time. Among the 1,588 sworn police officers, approximately 6.7% (106) were female, while approximately 55% of civilian workers were female. Among the 106 female police officers, only three had reached the ranks of senior management (such as police inspector or higher). This was less than 2% of all police officers in these senior management ranks.

The survey was conducted by the Kochi Prefectural Police itself between October 15 and November 18, 2013. Each employee received a hard-copy questionnaire from the survey team of the administrative section of the police headquarters. Each was asked to return the completed questionnaire directly to the survey team, not through their own supervisors, during the designated period. As a result, 1,865 employees (1,592 male and 273 female), or approximately 93%, responded.

The questions covered the following: (1) experience of sexual harassment in the workplace during the course of the respondent's career, (2) form of sexual harassment, (3) type of perpetrator, (4) reaction after experiencing sexual harassment, (5) perception of the formal complaint procedure, (6) policy recommendation for improving the situation, and (6) perception of possible sexual harassment. In order to assure anonymity, the questionnaires asked for no information regarding detailed demographic information of the respondents (except for gender) such as age, rank, education, marital status, etc.

## Results

### *Incidence of sexual harassment*

Approximately 6.6% of all respondents (including both males and female employees) indicated that they had experienced some types of sexual harassment at their workplaces at least once during the course of their career in the police. There was a significant difference, however, between males and females in terms of the incidence ratios. Approximately 34.8% of the female respondents indicated that they had experienced sexual harassment at their workplaces, while only 1.8% of the male respondents did so ( $p < .000$ ).

Contrary to our initial expectation, the incidence of female employees in the police who responded that they had experienced sexual harassment in their workplaces (34.8%) was lower than that in ordinary workplaces in Japan (50–70%). This figure was also lower than that among the police in the United States (50–75%).

### *Forms of sexual harassment*

Table 1 shows a summary of the percentage of female respondents who had experienced each type of sexual harassment at least once at their workplaces. Approximately 24.9% of the female respondents indicated that they had experienced some forms of *gender harassment* at their workplaces, whereas 24.2% of the female respondents indicated that they had experienced some forms of *unwanted sexual attention* in their workplaces. Although the incidence of gender harassment was slightly higher than that of unwanted sexual harassment, there was no statistically significant difference between the two.

**Table 1.** Percentage of female employees experiencing sexual harassment at least once in their workplaces (n=273) (multiple choice)

	OVERALL	
		34.8%
UNWANTED SEXUAL ATTENTION		24.2%
1 Asking questions about your physical features (e.g., bust and/or hip size)		3.7%
2 Asking questions about your sexual experiences or private sexual activities		3.3%
3 Making offensive sexual remarks or jokes to or about you		5.1%
4 Staring or leering at you in obscene manners		2.9%
5 Continuing to send you mail/e-mails or calling you even though you tried to let the person know you did not want this		5.1%
6 Continuing to ask for dates, dinner, etc.		5.1%
7 Touching you in a way that makes you uncomfortable		15.4%
8 Forcing you to have a sexual relationship		3.3%
GENDER HARASSMENT		24.9%
1 Making offensive sexist remarks to put down your gender (e.g., suggesting that people of your gender are not suited for the kind of work you do)		8.1%
2 Telling sexual stories or jokes that are offensive to you		9.2%
3 Showing or displaying sexual pictures or materials that are offensive to you		2.2%
4 Forcing you to do something social such as serving alcohol, singing karaoke duets, cheek-to-cheek dancing at workplace parties		14.7%
5 Forcing you to do something unrelated to your job description (e.g., serving tea at workplaces) due to your gender		10.3%
6 Giving an inappropriately low evaluation of your job performance due to your gender		2.2%

Among *gender harassment*, “different treatments due to gender,” such as “force you to do something unrelated to your job description (e.g., serving tea) due to your gender (10.3%),” and “force you to do something social, such as serving alcohol, singing karaoke duets, or dancing cheek-to-cheek at workplace parties (14.7%)” were the most common forms of harassment. This result was inconsistent with the experiences among the U.S. police where verbal harassment (e.g., offensive sexist remarks, dirty jokes, and so on) was the most common form in this category.

Among *unwanted sexual attention*, “physical touching in a way that made you uncomfortable (15.4%)” was the most common form of harassment. This result was also inconsistent with the experiences in the U.S. police forces where verbal harassment (e.g., offensive sexual remarks and so on) was the most common form in this category.

With regard to *coercive sexual behavior (quid pro quo)*, the questionnaires did not include this category, so that is difficult to make a judgment. The questions in the unwanted sexual attention category included behavior such as “coercive sexual relationship,” and only 3.3% of all female respondents indicated that they had experienced this form of harassment. In addition, survey respondents were given space in which to write “other” types of sexual harassment they had experienced, and no respondent mentioned that they had experienced coercive sexual behaviors. Thus, our best guess is that coercive sexual behavior might be very rare, although the possibility still cannot be ruled out. This result was

**Table 2.** Percentage of types of male harassers (Multiple Choice)

	Overall (n=95)	Experiencing Gender Harassment (n=68)	Experiencing Unwanted Sexual Attention (n=66)
(i) Supervisor	83.2%	86.8%	81.8%
(ii) Senior	24.2%	27.9%	30.3%
(i) or (ii)	91.6%	94.1%	92.4%
(iii) Coworker	12.6%	11.8%	15.2%
(iv) Subordinate	4.2%	2.9%	6.1%
(x) Junior	1.1%	1.5%	1.5%
(xi) Others	1.1%	0.0%	1.5%

**Table 3.** Percentage of reactions of female victims (multiple choice)

	Overall (n=95)	Experiencing Gender Harassment (n=68)	Experiencing Unwanted Sexual Attention (n=66)
1 Do nothing	34.7%	36.8%	36.4%
2 Report complaint formally	3.2%	4.4%	3.0%
3 Consult with external authority (e.g. lawyer)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
4 Protest directly to the harasser (verbally, by e-mail, etc.)	3.2%	2.9%	3.0%
5 Indicate rejection by attitude	23.2%	26.5%	24.2%
6 Indicate protest by implicit attitude	43.2%	45.6%	45.5%
7 Consult informally with external close friend(s)	23.2%	19.1%	28.8%
8 Consult informally with colleague(s) in the workplace	23.2%	20.6%	27.3%
9 Consult with my family	12.6%	11.8%	13.6%

consistent with the experience among the U.S. police where coercive sexual behaviors were the least common form of sexual harassment among the three categories.

### *Types of perpetrators*

Table 2 summarizes types of perpetrators of sexual harassment. Among the female respondents who had experienced some types of sexual harassment at least once in their workplaces (n=95), approximately 83.2% of them indicated that the harassers were their supervisors. In fact, supervisors of the victims were the most common harassers in the survey, followed by seniors (24.2%) and coworkers (12.6%). This result was again inconsistent with the experiences among the U.S. police, where the most common harassers were coworkers or peers.

### *Reactions of female victims*

Table 3 summarizes the reactions of the female victims of sexual harassment. Among the female employees who had experienced sexual harassment (n=95), only 3.2% of them indicated that they had made official complaints. This result was consistent with the situation among the police in the United



**Table 4.** Reasons for “Do nothing” reaction of female victims (multiple choice)

	Overall (n=33)	Experiencing Gender Harassment (n=25)	Experiencing Unwanted Sexual Attention (n=24)
1. Concern that nothing would be done despite my action	42.4%	48.0%	41.7%
2. Fear of retaliation by the harasser or fear that my action may make the situation worse	36.4%	40.0%	37.5%
3. Concern that I would suffer some disadvantage because of my action	27.3%	28.0%	25.0%
4. Didn't think that the situation was so serious as to take actions	21.2%	12.0%	25.0%
5. Didn't think it was harassment	9.1%	8.0%	12.5%
6. Concern that I might be also responsible for the situation	12.1%	8.0%	16.7%
7. Felt ashamed of talking about it with someone	15.2%	16.0%	16.7%
8. Didn't want my colleagues to know that I was harassed	24.2%	20.0%	33.3%
9. Didn't know how to deal with the situation	21.2%	20.0%	25.0%
10. Little or no knowledge of formal complaint procedure	12.1%	8.0%	16.7%
11. Thought that the harassment had already stopped	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

States, although the ratio in Japan was lower than that that in the United States (15–20%). Also, only 3.2% of the female victims indicated that they had protested directly to harassers (verbally, by e-mail, etc.). On the other hand, 34.7% of the female victims indicated that they had chosen to “do nothing.” Also 43.2% of the female victims indicated that they had only tried to protest implicitly. These responses were mostly the same between victims of gender harassment and unwanted sexual attention, and there was no significant statistical difference between them.

As is indicated in Table 4, the major reasons for the “did nothing” reaction were generally the same as those in the United States. The concern that “nothing would be done despite my action” was the most common (42.4%), followed by “the fear of retaliation by the harasser or fear that my action may make the situation worse (36.4%)” and “the concern that I would suffer some disadvantage because of my action (27.3%).” Again, these characteristics were mostly the same between victims of gender harassment and unwanted sexual attention.

### ***Official complaint procedure***

Regarding respondents' perceptions of the official complaint procedure, among all female respondents (n=273), 83.2% indicated that they knew, or at least had some knowledge of, the official complaint procedure. This means that the awareness level of the system was fairly high. Among those female employees who had some knowledge of this procedure (n=227), however, only 19.4% of them indicated that they were willing to use the formal procedure if they were sexually harassed (NO 40.5%; Don't Know 31.3%; N/A: 8.8%). This low ratio coincided with the fact that only 3.2% of the female victims had actually made official complaints.

Among female employees who indicated the reluctance of using the formal reporting system (n=

**Table 5.** Policy recommendation in order to improve the situation (multiple choice)

	Overall (n=1,865)	Male (n=1,592)	Female (n=273)
1. Educating male employees	50.1%	50.2%	49.8%
2. Educating female employees	36.8%	37.2%	34.4%
3. Educating management level officers	55.7%	55.9%	54.6%
4. Increasing awareness of the formal complaint procedure	20.3%	19.5%*	24.9%*
5. Creating new complaint procedures by external third parties	26.4%	26.0%	28.9%
6. Enforcing severe penalties on harassers	35.3%	35.4%	34.8%
7. Others	3.3%	3.3%	3.3%
8. N/A	5.9%	6.2%	4.0%

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

92), the major reasons were “don’t know the details of the procedure (57.6%)” and “concern about whether my privacy will protected (47.8%).” In other words, female employees’ distrust of the formal reporting procedure or the lack of sufficient knowledge seemed to be the major reasons for their reluctance to rely on the system.

### ***Policy recommendations***

The survey included questions to all respondents (both male and female) concerning their ideas of how to improve the sexual harassment situation in their workplaces. As summarized in Table 5, more than half of the respondents indicated that it was necessary to enhance education and training of male employees as well as senior management; these were the most common recommendations (50.1% and 55.7%, respectively). This is consistent with the fact that the most common perpetrators of sexual harassment were male and supervisors/seniors of the female victims.

Following the above-mentioned two categories, 34.8% of the respondents recommended “enforcing severe penalties on harassers,” and 26.4% of the respondents recommended “creating new complaint procedures by external third parties.” This result indicated that employees had serious distrust of the current organizational policies for dealing with incidents of sexual harassment.

It is also worth noting that only 19.5% of the male respondents indicated a necessity to increase the awareness of the formal complaint procedure, while 24.9% of the females responded that they considered it necessary. There was a significant statistical difference between males and females on this issue ( $p = .039 < .05$ ). It could be said that female employees were more seriously concerned about this issue, and this could be due to the fact that female employees were more likely to be victimized by sexual harassment than their male counterparts.

### ***Perceptions of potential sexual harassment***

The final part of the survey included questions asked all respondents (both male and female) about their perceptions of each potential type of sexual harassment. As summarized in Table 6, the results in-

**Table 6.** Perception Test: “Do you believe the following behavior to be sexual harassment?”

	Overall (n=1,865)	Male (n=1,592)	Female (n=273)	Female without SH (n=178)	Female with SH (n=95)
GENDER HARASSMENT					
1. Making gender-related remarks such as “Be manly,” “Be womanly,” “Women should...,” etc.	53.2%	53.1%	53.5%	46.1%***	67.4%***
2. Calling colleagues or subordinates in workplaces “girl,” “boy,” “baby,” etc.	47.6%	49.1%**	38.8%**	30.3%***	54.7%***
3. Forcing colleagues or subordinates to do something social because of gender	88.2%	88.6%	86.1%	82.0%*	93.7%*
4. Forcing subordinates to do something unrelated to her/his job description because of her/his gender	69.3%	70.7%**	61.2%**	56.7%*	69.5%*
5. Giving an inappropriately low evaluation to a subordinate’s job performance because of her/his gender	86.5%	86.3%	87.9%	83.1%**	96.8%**
UNWANTED SEXUAL ATTENTION					
6. Asking questions or making remarks about colleagues’ or subordinates’ hair styles or/and fashions in workplaces	58.5%	60.3%***	48.0%***	45.5%	52.6%
7. Asking questions of colleagues or subordinates about her/his physical features such as bust and hip size.	87.9%	88.0%	87.2%	82.6%**	95.8%**
8. Touching colleagues’ or subordinates’ bodies casually in workplaces	79.1%	80.6%***	70.7%***	66.3%*	78.9%*
9. Staring or leering at someone in workplaces in an obscene manner	86.6%	86.2%	88.6%	86.0%	93.7%
10. Continuing to call or send mail/e-mails to colleagues or subordinates even though she/he doesn’t want it	93.0%	92.5%	95.6%	94.9%	96.8%
11. Continuing to ask colleagues or subordinates for dates, dinner, etc. forcefully	88.5%	88.5%	88.6%	87.1%	91.6%
12. Forcing sexual relations on colleagues or subordinates	93.1%	92.4%**	97.4%**	97.2%	97.9%

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$

indicated that there were substantial gaps between men and women in this connection.

Surprisingly, in some cases, male employees showed less tolerance than their female counterparts. Among possible types of *gender harassment*, 49.1% of the male respondents regarded “calling colleagues or subordinates in workplaces ‘girl,’ ‘boy,’ ‘baby,’ etc.” to be sexual harassment, while only 38.8% of the female respondents shared the same perception. Also 70.7% of the male respondents regarded “force subordinate to do something unrelated to her/his job description because of her/his gender (e.g., force women to serve tea at the workplace)” to be sexual harassment, while only 61.2% of the female respondents shared the same perception. Among possible types of *unwanted sexual attention*, 60.3% of the male respondents regarded “ask questions or make remarks about colleagues’ or subordinates’ hair styles or/and fashions in workplaces” to be sexual harassment, while only 48.0% of the female respondents shared the same perception. Also, 80.6% of the male respondents regarded “touching colleagues’ or subordinates’ bodies casually in workplaces when saying hi!” to be sexual harassment, while only 70.7% of the females felt the same. In all cases, the T-test results indicated that the gaps between males and females were statistically significant ( $p = .0017 < .01$ ,  $p = .0017 < .01$ ,  $p = .0001 < .001$ ,  $p = .0002 < .001$ , respectively).

This result is quite contrary to the situation in ordinary workplaces in Japan, where male workers tend to be less sensitive to potential harassing behaviors than female workers. At the same time, how-

ever, this result seemed to replicate a number of prior studies on the police in the United States, which argued that female police officers who experienced possible sexual harassment were more reluctant to describe themselves as having been sexually harassed than those in other fields (e.g., Harrington & Lonsway, 2007; Lonsway et al., 2013, p. 202; Somvadee & Morash, 2008). Thus, it could be said that this tendency is a universal characteristic of police institutions.

In addition, it is worth noting that, among female employees, significant perception gaps also existed between those who indicated they had experienced sexual harassment and those who did NOT. In general, the latter group expressed more tolerance than the former. It should be noted that these perception gaps among female employees are more significant with possible gender harassment than with possible unwanted sexual attention. This is probably because unwanted sexual attention tends to target specific individuals and to be taken personally, while in general gender harassment is less likely to target specific individuals so that it is regarded as less serious.

## **Discussion**

### ***Comparison with ordinary workplaces in Japan***

The survey results indicated that the overall characteristics of sexual harassment among the police in Japan were very similar to those in ordinary workplaces in Japan.

One exception was that the victimization rate of female employees in the police (34.8%) was much lower than that in ordinary workplaces (50–70%). This result was contrary to our initial prediction. As was mentioned before, however, some previous studies in the United States argued that female police employees there tend to be more reluctant to accept that they had been sexually harassed than those in other fields. If such an organizational culture also holds among the police in Japan, it is probably too early to conclude that sexual harassment among Japanese police is less serious than that in ordinary workplaces there. This hypothesis also could be supported by the survey result that among the Japanese police, female employees were sometimes more tolerant of possible sexual harassment than their male counterparts.

In addition, according to the National Police Agency of Japan (2013, p. 3), the turnover rate of female employees in the initial 10 to 15 years of their careers (in their 20s or early 30s) is 40–50%, which is much higher than that of male employees, although exact figures are not publicly available. Therefore, it is possible that only those female employees who had been able to deal with serious sexual harassment had survived and continued working. If this is true, it is possible that the views of those females who were unable to tolerate sexual harassment in the police and quit their jobs were not properly represented in the survey results, and that actual sexual harassment among the police could be worse than that in ordinary workplaces. This hypothesis could be supported by the fact that there were significant gaps among female employees in perceptions of possible sexual harassment, although the hypothesis should be more carefully examined by future studies.

In terms of theoretical analysis, these above-mentioned factors underlying the possible differences

between the police and ordinary workplaces could be related to the institutional culture of the police. Therefore, this issue could be well explained by the organizational models.

### ***Comparison with the police in the United States***

The survey results indicated that the overall characteristics of sexual harassment among the police in Japan were similar to those among the police in the United States, although there were also several differences. Firstly, at a glance, the victimization rate of female employees in the Japanese police (34.8%) was much lower than that in the United States (50–75%). This result was contrary to our initial prediction. As has already been explained, however, this phenomenon could be attributed to the high turnover ratio of female employees among the Japanese police. Therefore, this issue should be more carefully examined by future studies.

Secondly, among the U.S. police, the most common forms of harassment were verbal gender harassment, followed by unwanted verbal sexual attention. In contrast, among the Japanese police, non-verbal harassment, such as physical touching or forcing female employees to do something social because of their gender was common. These characteristics of the police in Japan were consistent with the situation in ordinary workplaces in Japan. Thus, this phenomenon could be a reflection of the overall social characteristics in Japan where these behaviors are still acceptable to some extent.

Thirdly, with regard to the most common types of perpetrators, among the Japanese police, supervisors or seniors of the female victims were the most common, whereas coworkers or peers were the most common harassers in the United States. This difference could be also a reflection of the particular social situation in Japan, where the ratio of female workers in management is still much lower than that in the United States.

In terms of theoretical analysis, not only the organizational model, but also the sociocultural model, could provide good explanations for these possible differences between the police in Japan and the United States. Apart from several above-mentioned differences, sexual harassment among the police in Japan and the United States share a number of common characteristics, such as the typical reactions of female victims.

### ***Policy implications***

The survey results indicated that the respondents harbored serious distrust of institutional policies to handle sexual harassment. Their recommendation to adjust several institutional elements (such as education and training of male and senior officers, formal complaint procedures, and so on) would be a reflection of such distrust. This observation, in fact, replicates the findings of several earlier studies in the United States (e.g., Sibley Butler & Schmidtke, 2010), and could be supported by theoretical arguments based on the organizational model. It goes without saying that proactive initiatives by top leaders would be critical to effectively implement these policies and to adjust institutional culture.

### ***Limitations and implications for future research***

The present study has several limitations mainly due to the lack of sufficient data. The survey on which the present study relied did not include detailed data concerning respondents' demographic classifications such as age, rank, education, and marital status. The survey also did not include questions about the respondents' job satisfaction, workplace environment, and so on. With these data, more thorough statistical analysis on causal relations between respondents' backgrounds and their harassment experiences could have been possible.

Another issue is associated with possible sample bias, mainly due to the high turnover rate of female employees in the Japanese police. As already noted, it is possible that those female workers who had been unable to deal with sexual harassment in their workplaces had quit police jobs so that their views were not properly reflected in the survey. By reaching out to them, the survey could be more accurate. Moreover, it is true that the Kochi Prefectural Police is a very typical police force in Japan. However, in terms of the number of employees, it represents less than 1% of the entire Japanese police. Thus, additional surveys should be conducted in other prefectural police forces in order to generalize the analysis of the present study.

### **Conclusion**

The major findings of the present study can be summarized as follows. Firstly, the characteristics of sexual harassment among the police in Japan were very similar to those in ordinary workplaces in Japan. One possible difference was the victimization rate of female employees. This issue should be more carefully examined by future studies, taking into account the tendency of female workers in police institutions to be more reluctant to admit that they were harassed than those in ordinary workplaces. Secondly, the characteristics of sexual harassment among the police in Japan also have a number of similarities with those of their U.S. counterpart. There were also several differences between them, such as the most common types of harassment and the most common types of perpetrators. These differences could be a reflection of the particular social characteristics in Japan. In addition, the victimization rate of female employees could be different between Japan and the United States as well. This issue should also be examined more carefully by future studies. Finally, the existing theoretical models such as the organizational models and sociocultural models seemed useful to analyze the above-mentioned phenomena, although more thorough empirical tests are necessary to verify their applicability.

The present study is the first extensive empirical study on sexual harassment among the police in Japan. Although the above-mentioned limitations exist, it could be said that this study provides an important first step towards a better understanding of sexual harassment among the police in Japan, as well as some policy implications for improving the situation.

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