Author's response to reviews

Title: Workplace sexual harassment and depressive symptoms: a cross-sectional multilevel analysis comparing harassment from clients or customers to harassment from other employees amongst 7603 Danish employees from 1041 organizations

Authors:

Maria K Friborg (mkf@nrcwe.dk)
Jørgen V. Hansen (jvh@nrcwe.dk)
Per T. Aldrich (pea@cowi.com)
Anna P. Folker (anpf@si-folkesundhed.dk)
Susie Kjær (sukj@cowi.com)
Maj Britt Dahl Nielsen (mbdn@cowi.com)
Reiner Rugulies (rer@nrcwe.dk)
Ida Madsen (IHM@nrcwe.dk)

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Reviewer comment:

This is a re-submission of a description of a large-scale examination of workplace sexual harassment and its impact on depression. The authors modified the title appropriately and I am satisfied with how they handled analyzing the data by gender. Their decision to keep the organizational factors in the manuscripts is not scientifically justified, however, and these factors continue to detract from the manuscript. Specifically, the authors have chosen to keep the organizational factors in the manuscript because they "were part of our study aims." They argue that it is important to publish null results, which I agree with completely IF there had been any justification for the inclusion of the factors in the first place. The authors have not offered any justification for examining the organizational factors, and I believe it's because there is no empirical or theoretical justification. If there is, they should include it. If there is no justification for why there were in the study aims in the first place, they should remove this from the analyses. This would leave a much more straightforward article.

Author Response:
We have now expanded the rationale for the analyses on organizational factors on p. 9 of the manuscript (see below). Deleting the analyses from the manuscript, we respectfully maintain would be inappropriate given that these analyses correspond to one of the aims of our study and given the importance of reporting null-findings. Furthermore, the organizational analyses were the reason for the choice of study population and sample selection. If they were omitted from the paper, we would need to also choose a different study population which was not limited to employees working at the organizations participating in the WEADW study. In effect this would be a completely different study, and the results from the present study would not be reported. We hope that the rationale behind the analyses is more clear in this revised version of the manuscript.

P. 9:

“We chose the above-mentioned psychosocial workplace initiatives as we expected them to potentially be able to buffer any negative mental health consequences of sexual harassment. Access to treatment by a psychologist might for instance help employees cope with harassment. Thus the association between harassment and depressive symptoms might be weaker in workplaces that offer access to such treatment. This would be likely given data supporting effects of psychotherapy on depression [45]. Also, organizations which evaluate their psychosocial working conditions might be more likely to uncover problems relating to sexual harassment and initiate interventions to prevent and manage this exposure. Furthermore, organizations implementing activities to prevent sickness absence might have implemented initiatives dealing with sexual harassment, if harassment was identified as a problem within the organization. If such initiatives to manage sexual harassment were successful, the effects of sexual harassment on employee mental health might be weakened in organizations with such interventions compared to organizations without such interventions.”