



# Sexual harassment in Ecuadorian universities: content validation for instrument development

## *Acoso sexual en las universidades ecuatorianas: validez de contenido de un instrumento de medición*

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## Abstract

Sexual harassment in institutions of higher education (IHE) is a problematic about which awareness and exploration is on the rise in Ecuador. However, there is a notorious lack of data to aid in estimating the magnitude of the phenomenon. This feeds into the idea that we are not dealing with a problem that needs to be prioritized. In this article, we describe the process for validating contents among experts for the construction of an instrument to measure the prevalence of this phenomenon. This process was carried out with the judgment of experts of the practices by the level of interrater agreement method. (Grant y Davis, 1996). We concluded that the content validation phase for experts is important for the development of instruments on sexual harassment because there are multiplicity of definitions and it isn't clear the delimitation of the phenomenon. The panel of experts incorporated notions that are not contemplated in the literature. In reference to the hierarchy, emergent relationships in intersectional dynamics are included, something that cannot be left aside in the Ecuadorian context. The delimitation of practices related to content, effect, frequency, purpose, context and mode was also considered. Finally, the common approach favored having the same indicators to allow comparing results between universities in a feminist perspective.

**Keywords:** Sexual harassment, higher education, gender violence, contents validation, sexual harassment prevalence.

## 1. Introduction and problem

Sexual harassment in institutions of higher education (IHE) is a problem that needs to be discovered and solved. Groups of students and teachers have made public situations that were historically silenced and naturalized in the universities. However, there is a clear ignorance when it comes to identifying the conceptions

## Resumen

El acoso sexual en las instituciones de educación superior (IES) es una problemática que se está explorando y visibilizando en el Ecuador. Sin embargo, la falta de datos que ayuden a estimar la magnitud del fenómeno es notoria. Esto alimenta la idea de que no se trata de un problema prioritario. Este artículo da cuenta del proceso de validación de contenidos entre expertas para la construcción de un instrumento de medición de la prevalencia de este fenómeno. Este proceso se efectuó mediante el juicio de personas expertas para elaborar un inventario de prácticas y la selección de las más relevantes y representativas mediante el sistema de porcentaje de acuerdo (Grant y Davis, 1996). Se concluye que la fase de validación de contenidos por personas expertas es clave para la elaboración de instrumentos sobre el acoso sexual debido a la multiplicidad de definiciones y la escasa delimitación del fenómeno. El panel de expertas incorporó nociones que no están contempladas en la literatura. En referencia a la jerarquía se incluyó las relaciones emergentes en dinámicas interseccionales, algo que no puede dejarse de lado en el contexto ecuatoriano. También se consideró la delimitación de las prácticas asociadas al contenido, el efecto, la frecuencia, el fin, el contexto y el modo. Finalmente el planteamiento común favoreció contar con los indicadores para la medición y la futura obtención de cifras que no sean dispares para comparar los resultados entre universidades y en clave feminista.

**Descriptores:** Acoso sexual universitario, violencia de género, validación de contenido, prevalencia de acoso sexual.

around these practices. On the other hand, when the situation is detected the option is to silence it in order to avoid reprisals; to a large extent, this is because not all IHE have clear policies and routes to prevent, serve and punish harassment. The responsibility to solve this situation lies in the person who has lived the harassment, because it is understood that it is in their hands to put the complaint, as occurs with other types



of violence (Marugán and Vega, 2002). When the situation is denounced, the responsibility normally lies on the person who was attacked for having caused it or provoked it. If the case reaches the courts, the victim will be trapped in a slow and victimizing system. Finally, if law sentences favor the victims, the authorities of some IHE resort to trickery —administrative actions that circumvent the law—, to allow the aggressors to re-exercise their duties. These findings warn people about a regular-basis situation within the educational field that produces and reproduces patriarchal concepts and practices. Far from forming a space for social transformation, the IHE would seem to constitute mechanisms to perpetuate unequal relations.

These situations raised the research questions: what is happening in Ecuadorian universities in relation to sexual harassment? In what relationships does it appear? Who are the people attacked and aggressors? What are the effects of sexual harassment? How do act IHE act?

To answer these questions, inspired in the notion of knowledge (Haraway, 1995), a methodological choice was done from the political position of the authors. It seems necessary to have empirical data to provide visibility to this social problem. As several authors have stated (Blumer, 1971; Fuller and Myers, 1941; Kohn, 1976; Merton, 1971; Sullivan, Thompson, Wright, Gross and Spady, 1980; cited by Pérez Guardo, 2012), for a phenomenon to acquire the condition of social problem it must be positioned by a social group seeking its solution, a consensus must arise in society to point it as a social problem, and finally there must be data that evidence its presence and its effects. Since information on sexual harassment at the university level is scarce, the idea that it is not a priority problem is encouraged.

The aim of this research is to contribute to the visibility, detection, prevention and attention of sexual harassment in IHE. It has been considered important to visualize the prevalence of sexual harassment and its effects on the field of work and academy through the design and

subsequent application of a prevalence questionnaire developed by experts and validated in the country, with the purpose of establishing policies, plans and programs within the universities. In this article, the idea was to present the results of the validation content process in the construction of the identification instrument on the prevalence of sexual harassment in the universities.

The content validation in the development of an instrument is crucial, because during this phase the items to be measured are selected (Grant and Davis, 1996). It is also relevant to show the process and methodology of the content validation, which represents a contribution to the field of quantitative research. On the other hand, this process can also contribute to delimit the conceptualization of sexual harassment in the national context. In addition, it is necessary to understand this problem in terms of the effects and consequences that it has in the work and academic performance. In this sense, the idea of Preciado and Franco (2013) is shared: the procedures for the construction of quantitative instruments are essential contributions for those conducting research within unexplored fields.

Although gender violence in Ecuador has been positioned since the mid-80, sexual harassment at the university level has been little studied. There are some undergraduate theses about the topic (Álvarez and Guarderas, 2018; Ormaza, 2013), as well as a report of a qualitative research with a quantitative sample of the National Council of Women (Logroño, 2009). Other countries have deepened on the topic (Benson and Thomson, 1982; Bosch *et al.*, 2012; Fitzgerald *et al.*, 1988; Kury, Chouaf, Obergfell-Fuchs, and Woessner, 2004; Piqueras, 2013; Valls *et al.*, 2008). Likewise, there are also emerging researches in some Latin American countries, such as Mexico (Evangelista, 2017; Silva, Vázquez and Lara, 2012), Colombia (Castaño-Castrillón *et al.*, 2010) or Peru (Castañeda, Espinoza, and Manrique de Lara, 2016).

Based on the definition of sexual harassment, it is understood as a type of gender vio-



lence, which is part of a complex material and symbolic framework constituted by speeches and hegemonic hierarchy practices, related by racist and classist conceptions (Guarderas, 2014). These discourses and violent practices place the subject in a situation of inferiority and inequality, and are activated in the family relations, community, neighborhood, institutions and universities: "It is a mechanism to perpetuate the unequal power relations" (Guarderas, 2014, p. 98).

According to several authors (Bosch *et al.*, 2012; Pérez Guardo, 2012), the definition origin of sexual harassment was legal, and referred to harassment in the job world, and was defined as intrusive and unwanted male behavior on women. Bosch *et al.* (2012), mentioned that sexual harassment alluded to the value denial of women in the workplace, which was expressed in sexual terms with the intention of exercising power over them. The 1992, Paula Nicolson and Jane Ussher (cited by Pérez Guardo, 2012) included in the definition the academic field, and defined it as:

Any unwanted and unaccepted sexual innuendo, petition for sexual favors, physical or word contact, when that contact has the purpose or effect of interfering unreasonably in an individual's work, in his or her academic performance or attempting to create an intimidating, hostile or offensive work or academic environment (p. 5).

Therefore, the concept is associated with power relations: "Sexual harassment is a problem of power, not a sexual problem" (Kornblit and Petracci, 2002, cited by Bosch *et al.*, 2012, p. 9). Sexual harassment includes the use of authority to demand sexual satisfaction or impose unwanted sexual requirements on those who are assaulted in the context of a relationship, conceiving women as a sexual object and at the disposition the attacker (Hirigoyen, 2000). Therefore, it is necessary to emphasize that sexual harassment is not only a problem of hierarchical power, but of gender power, which can be intertwined with university hierarchies.

On the other hand, some definitions are found in the Ecuadorian context. The Comprehensive Penal Code (2014) explicitly establishes what is considered as sexual harassment:

The person applying for any act of a sexual nature for himself/herself or for a third party, to be in the position of labor, teaching, religious or similar authority, whether a guardian or curator, minister of worship, education or health professional, staff responsible in the care of the patient or that maintains family bond or any other form that implies subordination of the victim (...) (p. 28).

The comprehensive organic law for the prevention and eradication of gender- violence against women (2018) does not contain a specific article on sexual harassment, although it includes harassment as one of the practices of psychological violence, explicitly in sexual violence. The same law refers to violence in the educational field as "that which is exercised through words, actions, omissions or behaviors that infringe or induce teachers, administrative personnel, companions or other member of the educational community (...) against women" (p. 10).

As evidenced in the Penal Code in which is legally defined the sexual harassment that is carried out in the relations of power institutional work and education, however, in this definition are aside the patriarchal power relations that endow it with social significance.

This paper consists of three sections. The first one mentions the methodological perspective and the procedure of the investigation. The second part describes the main results of the instrument's construction process. It closes with the discussion and the conclusions.

## 2. Methodology, materials and methods

According to Balasch *et al.* (2005), the proposal of the critical and committed research aims to



identify and act against the forms of domination. As the authors indicate, the idea is to consider the knowledge produced as a version of the studied phenomenon, without staying in a mere interpretative activity but recognizing the transformative nature of scientific practice. Based on these assumptions, the research was conducted from the perspective of located and embodied objectivity (Haraway, 1991/1995), aware that research is to provide versions of the world to make it more livable and less violent.

For validating the instrument on the prevalence of sexual harassment, the following procedures suggested by Grant and Davis (1996) were used: selection of expert group, use of expert panel and content validation guides.

The selection of the expert group was based on four indicators: experience in quantitative or qualitative research on gender issues; relevant training in gender-related intervention, gender and health violence, work experience at the university, and geographical place of origin to guarantee the linguistic relevance of the instrument. Following Lynn (1986, cited by Grant and Davis, 1996) the group should be composed of three to 20 experts who would meet at least one of the indicators mentioned, and the participation of those who would meet more than one criterion was very pertinent. Also, another variable involved in this process was the desire and interest to participate in this process.

Five experts, who worked in universities as researchers in the field of gender, violence or health, were contacted. All except one responded immediately and expressed interest in participating in this process. These people, as the snowball sample system, contacted other researchers and auditors related to the topic. A group of 15 experts were formed: 10 had expertise in gender research; two in quantitative and qualitative research; and a health investigator. There was also the participation of a student welfare person attending bullying situations at the university. The experts were from two private and four public universities; three universities exclusively

dedicated to postgraduate studies and four of undergraduate and postgraduate universities; six universities from Quito and one from Cuenca. The origin of the experts covered the geographic regions of the country where more universities operate: Sierra Norte, Sierra Sur and Costa. A group of experts outside the process was also formed to review the final construct. The seven external people were experts in gender, communication and psychology.

In reference to the use of the expert panel (Grant and Davis, 1996), three group workshops were held and several virtual individual consultations were carried out. At first, an approximation was made to the experiences that were reported in seven universities that were part of this process. In addition, the normative definitions of sexual harassment were presented so the experts could be in charge of the necessary conceptual bases.

Subsequently, an inventory of sexual harassment in the IHE was developed, inspired by the work carried out by Bustos *et al.* (2011). Then, situations were added based on other instruments (Bosch *et al.*, 2012; Preciado and Franco, 2013). This inventory was presented to the participants in the form of a guide to measure the relevance and specificity of the contents of items. The item selection was based on the agreement percentage — level of interrater agreement — (Grant and Davis, 1996).

Then, a second guide to the selection of practices associated with sexual harassment was presented, to identify the correspondence between the described practice and sexual harassment, and see how relevant and representative each behavior was.

Socio-demographic variables were included as well as presence and absence variables worked by Arístides Vara-Horn *et al.* (2016), frequency, circumstances in which harassment occurred and actions carried out after the harassment.

Finally a first version of the construct was presented to the Panel of experts who made



modifications in the writing style of each item. Then, it was presented to external experts to analyze the understanding level of each item.

In reference to the ethical precautions in this part of the process, the participants were explained: the purpose of the investigation; they were told that participation was voluntary and that they could stop participating in any part of the process and that their participation would not imply any risk. They were sent a formal written invitation to participate in the process. It was also defined that the authorship of the instrument and the results of the process would be collective.

### **3. Analysis and results**

#### **3.1. First phase**

The first phase of the instrument construction was based on the systematization of the experiences of sexual harassment that are known within the IHE. It was evidenced that in one of the universities sexual harassment had been presented in a different way by area: administrative (37%), student (27%), professor (25%) and hired professor (14%) (Larrea, 2018). It was also noted that, based on the quantitative research conducted at another university, students do not know clearly what sexual harassment is and what is not (Álvarez, 2018).

The following cases were presented: students of a public university called by their professors in their offices, who at that time took advantage of the situations to insinuate them; a professor who under the pretext of academic outings took his students to swimming pools to observe them in a morbid way; lecturers receiving in their cell phones messages with sexual innuendo from the Chair professor, and since the students did not show reciprocity they were required to meet more activities in less time; students spied in the bathroom; students intimidated by performing an exhibition in class because the boys whispered "a lot of clothes" or whistled when they passed to the

front of the class. The case of a professor harassed by a student was also known.

Only two public universities have a protocol to respond to cases of sexual harassment. In others they are handled by codes of ethics. The cases are attended from the disciplinary regime, that is, commissions of ethics, student welfare and even the career councils whose members lack training on the subject. There is usually no evidence and, therefore, the defendants are not punished, not even by the prosecutor's office even though the Higher Education Act contemplates the responsibility of the institution in this field. A public university achieved a sentence through the joint action of students, teachers and the media; unfortunately, the sentence was appealed and the aggressor returned to his chair.

#### **3.2. Second phase**

At this stage, the panel of experts discussed about the subjects of harassment, that is, who exercises it and who receives it and the hierarchical relationships that permeate this relationship. It was taken into account the various sex-generic positions: men, women, intersex and transgender, in order to have more possibilities of analysis on the incidence and the cases. This was included in the instrument in the socio demographic context section.

As for the hierarchy, the development of the instrument was chosen to work with two key questions: the hierarchies that are activated in the daily relations from the intersectional of class, gender, ethnicity among others and; the various relationships that are given in the IHE, in the work and educative aspect. In some cases it refers to educational relationships, while others are of a working nature. The rank and prestige of the university professor play an important role, especially in the Ecuadorian context, in which the class component in higher education is an accentuated element of differentiation. In that sense, administrative staff, professors, authorities and students were included. The various types



of working contracts were also added, including those in non-dependent working situations, such as those providing professional services or miscellaneous services. According to Pérez Guardó (2012), when the concept of sexual harassment in the workplace is delimited, it is usually seen to those within the institutional workforce, which causes informal labor relations to be left out.

In reference to the behaviors and perceptions, the concept of sexual harassment was delimited considering simultaneously the content, the effect, the frequency, the end, the context and the mode. The content alludes to verbal, physical and symbolic practices that have a sexual content. The effect concerns the discomfort it causes. The frequency has to do with the assiduousness and persistence. The context implies a siege or encircling situation that is closed around the victim. And the key to differentiating the question is how it operates, because harassment implies that the person who has been attacked has not given any sign of consent, has neither wished nor accepted such conduct; rather it has suffered by sending signals of non-acceptance, of rejection or elusive.

Another important issue at the time of defining the problem was the place where it occurs. The revised bibliography refers to this issue. Here lies the key to differentiating sexual harassment at the university level from other contexts, such as street sexual harassment. The idea is that this harassment happens both within university campuses and in other spaces where the prevailing relationship is the university. That is, spaces like the offices of the professors, bars or other places where people from the same university interact. The place where the situation occurred was included in the instrument.

### 3.3. Third phase

This phase involved the validation of the contents of each item, through the expert's judgment on the specificity and relevance of the elements and behaviors that define and identify sexual harassment. The 27 indicators were presented (Table 1). Thus, 70% of the 15 experts consulted agreed on a list of 15 relevant and specific items to measure sexual harassment.

Table 1. Specificity and Relevance agreement percentage table\*

Nº	Item	Percentage according to the specificity	Pertinence percentage
1	Verbal behavior with unwanted sexual content.	62.9%	81%
2	Non-verbal behavior with unwanted sexual content.	65.4%	77%
3	Physical contact with unwanted sexual content.	88.5%	100%
4	Discrimination act by gender.	0.0%	23%
5	Abuse of power experienced with the aim of obtaining sexual favors.	84.6%	100%
6	Insinuations, unwanted sexual remarks.	76.9%	88%
7	Demand or exigencies of sexual favors.	88.5%	100%
8	Unwanted and offensive sexual behavior for the person who suffers it.	15.4%	58%
9	Sexual behavior that negatively affects the possibilities of normal development of the person who suffers it.	11.5%	15%



Nº	Ítem	Porcentaje de Acuerdo de Especificidad	Porcentaje de pertinencia
10	Request of an act of sexual nature for oneself or for a third party.	15.4%	31%
11	To prevail the situation of authority or power to achieve sexual favors. Implicit or explicit hierarchy.	76,9	100%
12	Unwelcome, repeated and non-reciprocal sexual insinuation.	53.8%	92%
13	Non-asked sexual attention.	19.2%	81%
14	Pornography exhibition that offends.	15.4%	69%
15	Sexual abuse.	11.5%	42%
16	Unwanted sexual behavior performed in different spaces of the University.	15.4%	77%
17	Non-consensual sexual behaviors that have negative effects on people who have been attacked.	19.2%	85%
18	Signs or messages with sexual content that offend.	15.4%	69%
19	Unwanted symbolic actions with sexual content.	61.5%	85%
20	Offending acts with sexual nature carried out by any person in the university field to students, professors, administrative staff and service personnel.	53.8%	85%
21	Symbolic ways of sexual attack.	61.5%	15%
22	Images or offensive sexual messages published on the social networks.	12.0%	28%
23	Emotional or physical sexual abuse by the couple or another important member of the family.	12.0%	8%
24	Being beaten or received another way of physical violence.	0.0%	8%
25	Being forced to have sexual relationships.	16.0%	28%
26	Generate permanent fear of sexual abuse.	61.5%	38%
27	Devaluing, belittling or not taking into account the ideas, proposals, projects of women or people of sexual diversity in the academic or employment field of IHE.	0.0%	12%

\* Some items were adapted from the questionnaire HOSEL of Preciado and Franco (2013).

Elaboration: Larrea (2018).

According to Grant and Davis (1996) from 70 % to 80 % imply high level of acceptability of the indicator, so those that had between 0-69 % of responses were excluded.

Having decided that the instrument should measure the prevalence of sexual harassment practices before directly consulting the potential sexual harassment experience, it was necessary to identify which behaviors would be

investigated. Thirty indicators (Table 2) of various practices were presented in order to indicate whether it was sexual harassment, rude or incorrect behavior or normal behavior. Through the validation of the experts, 18 sexual harassment practices were selected, on which there were agreements of at least 70% of the experts that were consulted.



Table 2. Identification of practices related to sexual harassment\*

Nº	Practices/Behaviors	Porcentaje de correspondencia con acoso sexual
1	To make frequent obscene jokes in public.	0%
2	Correspondence percentage with sexual harassment	53,8%
3	To ask for a date several times.	76,9%
4	To make gestures and suggestive or provocative looks.	53,8%
5	To ask about the sexual life of the other person.	57.7%
6	To ask explicitly and repeatedly to have sexual intercourse when the other party does not want to.	88.5%
7	To do an excessive and unwanted contact.	87.7%
8	To receive hugs and kisses when are not wanted.	100%
9	To be touched, to pinches or others.	100%
10	To be pressure to have sex in exchange of any favor.	100%
11	To be forced to do sexual favors in exchange of a grade or something similar.	100%
12	To suffer a sexual assault.	100%
13	To take advantage of academic situations (visits to the office, seminars, advisories, etc) to get more intimacy.	100%
14	To schedule a volunteer appointment.	3.8%
15	Offensive comments about a specific part of the human body.	57.7%
16	Send of messages, letters or anything similar asking for sexual encounters.	76.9%
17	Touches in non-genital areas of a supposedly fortuitous nature.	88%
18	As a third person to be a mediator of personal interest.	60.0%
19	Explicit petition to show specific parts of the body.	100%
20	Negative or offensive comments about the physical aspect of other people.	0%
21	Insistent phone calls to the house of the person who does not want the relationship.	100%
22	Send of notes, messages, letters or any written discourse asking for intimacy.	100%
23	Explicit request to maintain sexual intercourse by referring to the benefits/harms that this might report to the other person.	100%
24	To feed feelings of guilt by referring to possible sexual problems of the person who does not want to: sexual repression, lack of physical attractiveness, etc.	80%
25	To grant the other person the obscene desires.	76%
26	Comments about the sexual life of the other person.	26.1%
27	To have provoking behaviors in front of the other person.	48%
28	Public and reiterative comments about the private life of the other person.	25.0%
29	To coincide in a social meeting to establish a relationship.	8.3%
30	Insistent glances, in public and in private, to a particular part of the anatomy of the other person	70,8%

\* Adapted from the questionnaire of Sexual harassment perception (Bosch *et al.*, 2012).

Elaboration: Larrea, 2018.



Table 2 presents the answer percentages of the experts referring to the relationship between the practice presented in the delimitation of the concept of sexual harassment.

### 3.4. Fourth phase

The 21 questions of the final scale were formulated in concordance with the construct and with the validated contents, grouped in five types of behaviors:

- Verbal behavior of sexual content not consented.
- Non-verbal behavior of sexual content not consented.
- Physical contact of sexual content not consented.
- Sexual contact not welcome, repeated and non-reciprocal.
- Acts of abuse of power exercised in order to obtain sexual favors.

To respond to the agreed construct, the instrument also collected through contextualized and detailed information, the frequency, details of the experiences identified and their impacts on the academic, work and personal life; and investigated on the existing support mechanisms in the educational institution and its recognition by the university population.

The instrument went through several validation moments. First of all, it was judged by experts who did not participate in the workshops to independently assess aspects such as language and comprehension. At the same time, a cognitive pre-test was carried out with several people of the university population, which allowed evaluating the average time of application and the comprehensibility of the instrument. Finally, the instrument was again subjected to the validation of the panel of experts, who approved the clarity and relevance of each of the specific questions and the structure of the questionnaire, contributing to its final form.

## 4. Discussion and conclusion

The validation process of contents by experts in the development of measuring instruments for the prevalence of psychosocial phenomena is fundamental, since the psychometric tests, questionnaires and surveys are commonly developed out of the Ecuadorian context or adapted without rigorous validation processes. In reference to the validation process of contents, the main difficulty pointed out in the literature is the incongruence between the conceptualization and the content of the construct (Grant and Davis, 1996). The case of sexual harassment is not exempt from this difficulty; on the contrary, it tends to be a phenomenon with a variety of definitions.

According to Pérez Guardó (2012), the concept delimitation of sexual harassment is related to the following elements: subjects (sex, hierarchy and relationship with the activity), the behaviors and the perception of the harassed person. Each of these elements required deep reflections in the content validation process presented. For this author, there are different ways of understanding the subjects and women are normally associated with victims and men as perpetrators, and in other investigations both sexes are contemplated as potential people assaulted and aggressors. The contribution of the expert panel to this field has been to broaden the notion of subjects towards the various sex-generic positions.

Regarding the hierarchy, the national legal definition explicitly establishes the authority in the employment or teaching relationship COIP, 2014). However, it is necessary to include the relations of power, without losing sight that these relations are crossed by various social interpeals marked by the patriarchal domination. In other words, intersectional must be considered, that is, the “diversity and dispersion of the cross-linking paths of the different domination modalities” (Viveros Vigoya, 2016). The intersectional reading of the current research is distanced from an



essentialist, universalist or a simple summation of categories, therefore, the condensation of meanings and practices around gender, ethnicity and class mark the relationships in the day to day, and universities are not far from this. Likewise, it was chosen to work with the various relationships that are given in the IHE, both in the work and educational order, without losing sight of the rank.

The sexual harassment approach is multiple. In some cases it has a broader character, and is associated with the American feminist perspectives, which were those that for the first time referred to this type of harassment as practices that imply negative consequences for women (Pérez Guardó, 2012). Other definitions link it with three aspects: gender harassment (degrading attitudes towards women based on stereotypes that allude to female skills and abilities), unwanted sexual attention (touching, sexual questions, or repeated requests for appointments) and sexual coercion or blackmail (Morgan and Gruber, 2001). In addition, several authors allude to two types of harassment: sexual blackmail or *quid pro quo* or exchange harassment, and environmental sexual harassment (Bosch *et al.*, 2012; Pérez Guardó, 2012). The panel of experts contributed to the construction of the items considering simultaneously: the content, the effect, the frequency, the end, the context and the type.

In the validation process of content was emphasized what Pérez Guardó has called the perception of the harassed person.

In all definitions of sexual harassment is addressed the issue of what constitutes sexual behavior for the harassed person and how it is received or positioned to them. The qualifiers are numerous and different: unwanted, offensive, unreasonable, unacceptable or unsought. Although these are qualifiers for behaviors, these are considered to be in a different section, because they are the result of the perception of the harassed person. That is, a certain behavior is not inherently offensive it is to the

extent that it generates annoyance for the one who receives it. This may be one of the most important criteria for delimiting the phenomenon (Pérez Guardó, 2012, p. 10).

Another key issue at the time of defining the problem was the place where it occurs. The revised bibliography refers to this issue. The place where the situation occurred was included in the instrument.

The experiences lived in IHE favored the work of delimitation of the phenomenon, attributing to the concept of sexual harassment categories that characterize it in order to elaborate an operational and measurable construct. It was possible to delimit the phenomenon thanks to the debates and studies carried out in other contexts, but adapting it in measurable practices according to the specificities of each university.

The variety of conceptual approaches to sexual harassment makes difficult the possibility of recognizing, detecting, measuring and establishing policies for eradication. This investigation raffled this difficulty by specifying its confines, since the elements that were selected by means of the discussion and through consensus among the experts (more than 70%) were pointed out as pertinent, relevant, representative and specific. Similarly, harassment of other behaviors was differentiated. The existence of a common approach among the experts favored the indicators for the measurement, allowing the obtaining of figures that are not disparate and to compare the results.

It is essential to delimit the approach from a feminist point of view, which implies the understanding of sexual harassment as an expression of the relations of power in which are involved configurations linked to the gender, the ethnic, the social class, the sexual orientations, etc. This is a contribution to the field for other countries.

It is concluded that the elaboration of instruments through the panels of experts allows elaborating the contents of the instruments



according to the local, national and regional realities. It is considered that the articulation between experts from different universities was enriching for the topic of this research, and that validation processes through conceptual coherence and methodological rigor parameters require a social and institutional commitment of the participants.

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## Notas

1 The use of the personal pronoun “we” responds to our epistemological, methodological and political position.

