



## UTTERANCES EXPERIENCED BY *SERVIDORAS* IN A SHANTY BAR

by: Lourdes A. Bela-o



### HIGHLIGHTS



A total of 100% “servidoras” experienced negative utterances in their workplace along: 1) language biases and 2) different forms of abuses.

The negative utterances experienced by the “servidoras” are language biases expressed through different forms of abuses: a) verbal abuse, b) psychological abuse, c) emotional abuse, d) physical abuse and e) sexual abuse.

The common theme of the utterances experienced by the “servidoras” is “psychological violence”, which refers to act or omissions causing or likely to cause mental or emotional suffering of the victim such as but not limited to intimidation, harassment, stalking, damage to property, public ridicule or humiliation, repeated verbal abuse and marital infidelity.

The study updated the current knowledge about different forms of abuses and language biases among the “servidoras” emphasizing the importance of understanding how utterances affect “servidoras” and empathizing with their conditions.



### INTRODUCTION

Verbal abuses and sexual harassment are human rights violations and forms of violence against women. Operating at local levels, it is an inhumane practice through which young women are abused verbally, psychologically, sexually and emotionally. Preying on society’s marginalized, it exploits their vulnerability, and it denies them their human dignity. The nature of “servidoras” (waitresses) and their stories revealed a lifetime of gendered oppression and marginalization that included: family violence; economic deprivation; educational limitations; and the influences on them of class, culture and socio-economic status.

Their stories need to be heard to enable a more comprehensive understanding of the different forms of abuses and language biases they have experienced. If we fail to hear these accounts of systemic abuse, which begins in childhood and blight life trajectories, and do not appreciate the importance of the insights into the nature of abuses and language biases, then attempts to address and eradicate social slavery may continue to fall short of the mark. The research questions of this study were, 1) What are the utterances and its contextualized meaning experienced by “servidoras” in a shanty bar in Baguio City, La Union and Pampanga?; 2) What are the implications if these utterances into the lives of servidoras?; 3) What are the different types and effects of abuses?



### DATA AND SOURCE

The informants of this study were five (5) female “servidoras” in a shanty bar located in La Union and Baguio City, ages 14 to 27 years old and migrants from Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao.

The research design comprised of six months of field work, during which the author conducted personal interviews and focus group discussions with the informants and a series of three in-depth interviews. Informants were invited to share circumstances, memories and events that they could recall about the abuses and sexual harassment they experienced.



## ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

This study approached the analysis of the raw information gathered from the in-depth interviews considering the notions of constructionism and critical feminist epistemology.

Constructionism rejects the notion that knowledge is objective and stresses that it is created through interactions. In line with this, critical feminist epistemology questions traditional understanding of knowledge and concerns itself with whose knowledge is being considered. Critical feminist epistemology also considers the context and situation as crucial in

understanding knowledge construction.

It is with such notions and sense that the author analyzed the results of the interviews with the informants. While the informants were being interviewed, new knowledge and insights emerge revealing and uncovering the complexity of the different forms of abuses experienced. Insights into sexual harassment and different forms of abuses from a third way feminist account were then explored through juxtaposition of the accounts of their experience and the meanings they make of it.



## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Major themes from the women's narratives



Lily



Sherdella



Mira

The major themes that emerged after listening to the women's narratives about sexual harassment and different forms of abuses experienced were: deception, captivity, violence, corruption, and loss of identity and resilience.

### Childhood circumstances and relationships, and vulnerability to sexual harassment

Harsh living environments, coupled with abuse and series of strained relationships within the family exacerbated the vulnerability the young women faced in childhood.

Many participants experienced fractured relationships as children, and found themselves in living environments where they were not emotionally connected to anyone. Often mothers were absent and children were left in the care of extended family who resented their presence because of the financial burdens they carried. Many of them grieved the absence of their mothers whom they felt should have been there to protect them and care for them in their early years.

Some became rebellious in school and became abusive towards family members and others. Many children, after struggling to survive in such adverse conditions, finally decided to seek alternative to their

environment, choosing to run away and seek a safer place and greater opportunity. Sadly, for many, this resulted in further abuse and marginalization and made them extremely vulnerable to being sexually harassed. For most participants, the experience of being sexually harassed was yet another experience of marginalization and abuse.

In other words, sexual harassment was not so much a discrete event but another abusive experience in a series of such experiences. They describe a life of systematic abuse in which they are marginalized, objectified and stigmatized, beginning in early childhood. That some participants questioned their own

place in the world, highlights just how oppressive the environment was. They were clearly overwhelmed by their deprivation and abuse. With low self-esteem, feelings of shame and a belief that one is somehow deserving of the abuse inflicted, it is evident that these children and young adolescents then became the easy prey of sexual harassment and abuses.

**“For most participants, the experience of being sexually harassed was yet another experience of marginalization and abuse.”**

## Servidora = Pokpok

Constructionist utterances quoted from the servidora, the sexual objectification of women based on their occupational status.

A

Gusto mo bang sipingan na kita ngayon din! Lily.. leche ka talaga, hanep ka,tigas-tigasan ka pa ha!.. 'me ipinagmamalaki ka ba? 'tang'na mo!!!



Customer 1



Customer 2

(biglang hinablot si Lily) Ito ba ang babaeng gusto mong makasiping p're.. Ikaw lamang ba o tayong dalawa sisiping sa kanya, mas masarap di ba?

B

C

Ako muna bago ikaw p're, magkano ba ang kaya mo, 1-2-3-daang piso, limang daang piso!!! Isang libo piso!!! tatablahen mo o dodoblehen ang presyo ko? Sino sa inyo gustong bumili sa babaeng ito, higit sa isang libo, meron ba?



Customer 1



Lily

Hindi ako bayaran, tagapag 'serve' lang alak at pulutan. Kahit magkano ay hindi ko tatanggapin dahil walang presyo ari at pagkababae ko...

D

E

Aba nag-drama pa' hoy bilasa ng isda mo, kame lang mga lasenggo ang magpulutan sa'yo... di ba mga kasama?



Customer 2



Customer 3

Apurado...'mamaya bibigay din yan,' kunwaring aayaw-ayaw, pakipot ha', pantasya mo rin kame, di ba??'

F

G

May ina, kapatid rin kayong mga babae , di ba, kung gawin yan sa kanila, tiyak ayaw nyo silang mabastos, 'di ba', gawin 'ashtray' ang 'cleavage ko' at 'presyuan' ang ari ko , 'masaya ba kayong mang-api ng servidorang tulad ko, 'yan ba ang sukatan ng pagka-lalake nyo, ang apihin mga kababaihan? 'mga duwag!!!



Lily

### Abuses from the incident:

- 1. Physical violence** refers to act that include bodily or physical harm.
- 2. Sexual violence** an act which is sexual in nature committed against a woman which in this case, emanate
- 3. Sexual harassment** an act of lasciviousness, treating woman as sex object, making demeaning and sexually suggestive remarks as evidenced in her customers remarks.

### Effects of these abuses:

The negative utterances experienced by Lily are physical abuse when her cleavage was thrown with cigarette ashes; a sexual violence, in this case, "sexual harassment", as evidence by statements **C**, **E**, and **F**.

But the victim, waitress Lily despite these sexual harassment and psychological violence experienced still manage to retaliate back uttering her agency as shown in her utterances **D** and **G**.

## The Wife and the “Mistress”

Constructionist utterances quoted from one servidora in one instance when the wife of a customer came to the bar to see the alleged mistress of her husband. Mira, the servidora was accused as the mistress of the husband who was a regular customer at the bar, the wife also showed her evidences .



Legal Wife

**A** Ito ang pabango sa polo asawa ko ..(wife smells the shirt of Mira, the servidora) ka amoy nga, ito na nga!! lipstick mo kulay pareho, ikaw nga!! Makati ka ano? Bastos pa...maniakis...alam mo nanaginip siya, pangalan mo nga “Mira” di ba? Hayop ka talaga, babaeng matakaw, maniakis ka talaga.

**A**

**B**

Aba, aba... dahan dahan ka, may pruwera ka!! Ipapakulong kita, tsismosa, ang baho ng bunganga mo, walang modo...



Mira



Legal Wife

**C** Sige, subukan mo lang, at isasama kita sa kulungan. Heto mga “text” mo sa asawa ko, haliparot, satanista, ari ng asawa ko, kinukuwan mo...maniak ka ha!! (wife shows the exchange of messages between the servidora and the husband).

**C**

### Abuses from the incident:

#### 1. Psychological violence

It refers to acts or omissions causing or likely to cause mental or emotional suffering of the victim but not limited to intimidation, harassment, stalking, damage to property, public ridicule or humiliation, repeated verbal abuse and marital infidelity.

#### 2. Emotional and psychological abuse

The sudden spanking, cursing, and threatening “I’m going to get you” with a very loud voice (you’re really really rude!! husband stealer, flesh grabber!!) these are abusive utterances and character defamation.

#### Effects of these abuses:

The psychological effects of verbal abuse include: fears and worries, problems, depression, stress and post-traumatic stress disorder, talking too much about the event, memory gap problems, sleeping or eating problems, over-guarding and excessive response, anger issues, drug and drug abuse, suicide, murder, and abnormal behavior and more.

### Policy Basis for claims of abuse:

#### “The Anti-Violence Against Women and Their Children Act of 2004, Sec. 3, Definition of Terms

It refers to any act or a series of acts committed by any person against a woman who is his wife, former wife, or against a woman with whom the person has or had a sexual or dating relationship, or with whom he has a common child, or against her child whether legitimate or illegitimate, within or without the family abode, which result in or is likely to result in physical, sexual, psychological harm or suffering, or economic abuse including threats of such acts, battery, assault, coercion, harassment or arbitrary deprivation of liberty.

## Servidora as a Server

Constructionist utterances quoted from Sherdella, the servidora in an instance when drunk customers accused her of stealing the amount of PhP 1, 400.00 which they said they handed to her. Because of the accusation, the Boss/Owner of the bar called for the Patrolmen to check if the payment was really stolen by Sherdella.



Boss / Owner of the Bar

**A** Sabi nyo, binigay nyo ke Sherdella PhP 1, 400.00 bayad ng "bill" nyo, cge tanungin natin siya, tawag ako pulis ng sabihin niyo totoo.

**A**

**B**

Oo boss ng maleksyunan "waitress" mo!! Ito nga ipakulong na kasi magnanakaw, sinungalang tanggalin sa trabaho, diba mga kasama?



Drunk Customers



Bouncer / Security

**C** Boss, dito na mga pulis sabihin mo sa pulis Sherdella binulsa mo PhP 1,400.00.

**C**

**D**

Sinungaling kayo, sir sinungaling sila!! Sila talaga ayaw bayaran PhP 1,400.00 kinain nilang fried chicken at isang case beer, mga pulis , kahit ipakulong ako, wala talaga sila ibinayad. "Hindi ko aaminin kailanman ang hindi ko ginawa"...



Sherdella

### Anti-Sexual Harassment Act of 1995, Sec. 2, Declaration of Policy

The State shall value the dignity of every individual, enhance the development of its human resources, guarantee full respect for human rights, and uphold the dignity of workers, employees, applicants for employment, students or those undergoing training, instruction or education. Towards this end, all forms of sexual harassment in the employment, education or training environment are hereby declared unlawful.

#### Abuses from the incident:

##### 1. Psychological violence

The waitress Sherdella suffered psychological violence causing mental or emotional suffering, she was intimidated, humiliated by his customers uttering such as seen in statement **B**.

In this situation, Sherdella was able to explain to the policemen the actual scene , she was very firm and strong enough to face whatever consequences as seen in statement **D**.

#### Effects of these abuses:

Verbal abuse is one of the most common and most overlooked forms of abuse, but the waitress Sherdella, the victim, has the right to be heard and to be treated with respect and dignity.

# UTTERANCES EXPERIENCED BY *SERVIDORAS* IN A SHANTY BAR



## CALL TO ACTION

- ✓ LGU's through DSWD and other service providers can consider conducting more seminars for bar, restaurant, and restobar owners and workers on the following Republic Acts: a) RA 9262 - (Anti-Violence Against Women and their Children of 2004); b) RA 7877 - (Anti-Sexual Harassment Act of 1995); and c) RA 9710 - (Magna Carta of Women).
- ✓ Not only the *servidoras*, but all individuals must acquire broader knowledge of the different laws and Republic Acts in order to safeguard their human rights and promote gender equality.
- ✓ Barangay officials, barangay tanods, policemen and other law-enforcement personnel are encouraged to increase their knowledge regarding a) Human rights law b) Libel and punishments c) Anti-Sexual Harassment Act of 1995 (RA 7877) d) Anti-Violence Against Women and Children (RA 9262) to safeguard and respect human rights of the *servidoras*.
- ✓ Increase citizen awareness of the above highlighted laws and the roles and responsibilities of government and private establishments.
- ✓ LGUs, NGOs, and cooperatives can collaborate in providing more livelihood programs for the marginalized sector in the society.



## REFERENCES

BELA-O, Lourdes A. 2018. Mga pahayag na dinaranas ng mga servidora sa maliliit na bar. Proceedings of Regional Symposium on November 20, 2018.

UNGOS, Paulino D. Jr. UNGOS, Paulino Q. 2013. Agrarian Law and Social Legislation. ISBN 978-971-23-6510-2. Rex Printing Company Inc., Paranaque, Quezon City. Chapter 11: Anti-Violence against Women and their Children Act of 2004 (page 280-298) Chapter 12: Anti-Trafficking of Person Act of 2003 (page 299-305) Chapter 13: The Anti-Sexual Harassment Act of 1995 (page 306-313).



## ABOUT THE MATERIAL

Informing Policy and Practice is published quarterly by the Institute of Social Research and Development of the Benguet State University. It synthesizes findings from researches and development activities, or presents results of quick survey and opinion poll on social, economic and policy issues and concerns affecting the Cordillera region. It also distills key messages and provides recommendations for the information and consideration of decision and policy-makers.

This issue discusses the experiences of *servidoras* in shanty bars particularly on verbal abuse and sexual harassment. The study highlights the different Republic Acts. This is also a move to promoting gender equality in the society.

Institute of Social Research and Development  
Benguet State University  
2601 La Trinidad, Benguet, Philippines  
em@il Address: [isrd@bsu.edu.ph](mailto:isrd@bsu.edu.ph)  
Telephone/Fax: +63 (074) 422-1877



Editors: Cheryll C. Launio, Gretchen Shagami C. Hudson | Design and Lay-out: Mary Cris B. Sotelo, Fran Jim P. Dilla | Cartoonist: Aizel B. Lazo | Editorial Adviser: Carlito P. Laurean