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Sexual harassment training effectiveness: An interdisciplinary review and call for research

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Summary

Although sexual harassment (SH) training is widespread, has many important consequences for individuals and organizations, and is of demonstrated interest to researchers across a wide range of disciplines, there has never been a comprehensive, interdisciplinary attempt to identify and systematically evaluate relevant research findings. This article addresses that need in the literature. It discusses the legal context of SH training and its relevance to research issues, provides an organizing framework for understanding the primary factors influencing SH training effectiveness, critically reviews empirical research providing evidence of the effectiveness of SH training, and sets forth a research agenda.

KEYWORDS

hostile environment, quid pro quo, sexual harassment training, training effectiveness, transfer of training

1 | INTRODUCTION

Employer-provided sexual harassment (SH) training is ubiquitous in the American workplace (Perry, Kulik, Bustamante, & Golom, 2010) and is becoming increasing common in many other countries as a result of international regulatory developments (e.g., Ali & Kramer, 2015). It is estimated that U.S. employers alone spend over 10 billion dollars annually on SH training (Goldberg, 2011). If effective, that money is well spent, helping to avoid the significant costs to individuals (e.g., stress and other health concerns, and negative career consequences) and organizations (e.g., lost productivity, absenteeism, turnover, and litigation costs) that are associated with SH (O'Leary-Kelly, Bowes-Sperry, Bates, & Leans, 2009). Although SH training is widespread and has many important consequences, significant questions remain regarding its effectiveness. Some researchers and legal scholars characterize SH training as largely a symbolic effort by employers to insulate themselves from legal liability, arguing that there is little or no evidence of its effectiveness, and often warning of a potential "backlash" among employees (e.g., Bisom-Rapp, 2001; Tinkler, 2012). Others unquestioningly accept that such training is effective, advocating regular SH training for all employees (e.g., Ilies, Hauserman, Schwochau, & Stibal, 2003; Monroe, Choi, Howell, Lampros-Monroe, & Trejo, 2014).

To what extent is there evidence of the effectiveness of SH training? Does the answer to this question depend on specific design features of the training, characteristics of the trainees, the environment in which they work, or the criteria for effectiveness being applied? What is the relationship between effectiveness from a legal perspective and effectiveness assessed by more traditional training evaluation criteria (e.g., knowledge acquisition, skill development, and behavior change)? There is a growing body of research across diverse literatures addressing these questions. Yet to date, no in-depth review of relevant research has been published.

Several articles and book chapters provide valuable summaries or discussions of SH training research (e.g., Buckner, Hindman, Huelsman, & Bergman, 2014; Goldberg, 2011; Kath & Magley, 2014; Perry, Kulik, & Bustamante, 2012). However, existing summaries or discussions have at least three significant limitations. First, they focus on relatively few disciplines, primarily those published in management or psychology journals. As a result, relatively few of the available relevant studies are identified and discussed. Second, extant work does not attempt an in-depth analysis of a wide range of issues that have important relevance to researchers and practitioners. Third, only limited attempts are made to integrate legal and behavioral science perspectives to explicate the impact of legal considerations on the effectiveness of SH training and to identify research needs that have important practical relevance for individuals, employers, and policy makers.

This article examines the extent to which the existing literature provides answers to the questions posed above. Our broad goals are to advance the literature by increasing awareness of the need for additional research investigating the effectiveness of SH training, and to

facilitate both new and more rigorous research investigating the many important questions that have received little or no attention to date. After a discussion of definitional issues, the remainder of the paper is organized into four main sections. The first section provides readers with foundational knowledge of the legal context of SH training. The second section introduces an organizing framework for understanding the primary factors that may interact to influence the effectiveness of SH training, providing a structure for our review of the literature. The third section provides a critical review of research investigating the effectiveness of SH training, and the final section summarizes research findings and identifies future research needs.

2 | DEFINITIONS: SH AND SH TRAINING EFFECTIVENESS

2.1 | Definitions of sexual harassment: Primary categories

Any review of research related to SH is complicated by the fact there are many definitions of SH, and researchers often either fail to identify the definition they have adopted or provide relatively vague definitions that leave important issues unaddressed. There are four general categories of SH definitions that researchers should be aware of because each has potential relevance to SH training objectives, design, or the evaluation of training effectiveness: legal, social science, organizational, and individual or personal definitions.

In general, *legal* definitions include a description of SH as involving unwanted or unwelcome conduct that has the purpose or effect of intimidating, degrading, humiliating, offending, or violating individuals' dignity (McDonald, 2012). However, across countries, legal definitions of SH vary in the range of conduct covered (e.g., whether conduct must be "sexual" in nature), the degree of objectivity implied, and the conditions necessary to establish employer liability (Markert, 2005). The legal definition of SH in the United States, the country whose law first recognized SH and has influenced the law of many other countries (Markert, 2005), will be discussed in greater detail, below.

O'Leary-Kelly et al.'s (2009) review of the SH literature identifies three types of *social science* definitions of SH: psychological, sex based, and behavioral. *Psychological* definitions focus on the individual's appraisal of the situation and whether he or she feels harassed (Fitzgerald, Swan, & Magley, 1997). *Sex-based* definitions describe SH as "behavior that derogates, demeans, or humiliates an individual based on that individual's sex," and includes behaviors that are seemingly "sex-neutral acts" in the sense that the behaviors do not appear to be driven by sexual desire (Berdahl, 2007, p. 644). *Behavioral* definitions focus on taxonomies of behaviors that, depending on the specific behavioral definition that is adopted, are considered either SH behavior per se (e.g., Newman, Jackson, & Baker, 2003) or offensive sex-related behaviors that *could be construed* as SH (e.g., Stockdale, Gandolfo, Schneider, & Cao, 2004). Previous research has found that SH behaviors generally fit a three-factor model of the data (Fitzgerald, Drasgow, Hulin, Gelfand, & Magley, 1997; see Nye, Brummel, & Drasgow, 2014, for a notable exception to this general finding). These factors include (a) *gender harassment* (e.g., sexist behavior, crude jokes

or comments of a sexual nature, and other behaviors that disparage the sex of the target or convey hostility toward his or her sex), (b) *unwanted sexual attention* (e.g., unwanted touching, hugging, repeated unwanted requests or pressure for dates, or other verbal and nonverbal sexual behavior intended to attract sexual attention, and (c) *sexual coercion* (e.g., implicit or explicit demands for sexual favors through the threat of negative job-related consequences or the promise of job-related rewards). In general, social science definitions are considerably broader in scope than are legal definitions of SH.

Organizations are encouraged by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Guidance (EEOC, 1999) and SH researchers to clearly communicate to their employees what behavior is considered SH in their organization (e.g., Bell, Quick, & Cycyota, 2002; McDonald, Charlesworth, & Graham, 2015), and with very few exceptions, organizational policies addressing SH include *organizational* definitions of SH (Reese & Lindenberg, 2002). Because of the ambiguity associated with legal definitions of SH and concerns about liability, the definitions adopted in organizational policies are often broader than the legal definition of SH, defining some behaviors as involving SH that do not meet legal definitions (Schultz, 2003).

Individual or personal definitions may be influenced by legal or organizational definitions but are also influenced by a range of personal characteristics (e.g., sex, race, and citizenship; Tinkler, 2008). Due to the multiple factors influencing personal definitions of SH, an individual's personal definition may or may not correspond with legal, organizational, or social science definitions of SH (Gutek, Murphy, & Douma, 2004; Marshall, 2005).

2.2 | Training effectiveness

Sitzmann and Weinhardt (2015, p. 2) define training effectiveness as "the extent to which training produced the intended results." They elaborate on that general definition by identifying a wide range of training outcomes that have been used to assess effectiveness, including trainee reactions, increased motivation, learning outcomes, the transfer of knowledge and skills to the workplace, return on the investment (ROI) in training, and its impact on organizational performance. We adopt this general definition of training effectiveness. However, because for many employers the intended results include desired legal outcomes, in a later section ("The Legal Context of SH"), we further elaborate on Sitzmann and Weinhardt's (2015) definition by identifying specific criteria for evaluating SH training effectiveness from a legal perspective.

2.3 | The importance of attention to definitions in objectives, design, and evaluation

A goal of all employer-provided SH training is to promote a shared understanding of what conduct is considered SH by bringing employees' personal definitions of SH in line with the organization's definition, which may be based on the legal definition of SH but often is a broader definition of SH (Schultz, 2003). In some circumstances, trainees may be expected to know and be able to apply both a broader organizational definition of SH and the legal definition (e.g., training for human resource [HR] professionals or managers). The definition(s) of

SH that are reflected in the training objectives, addressed in the content of training, and included in training evaluation measures should be aligned. For example, if it is an objective that trainees should clearly understand the law of SH, the training content should address the legal definition, and the measure(s) used to evaluate learning should reflect a law-based definition of what constitutes SH. Or if the training is intended to increase both trainees' understanding of what legally constitutes SH and a broader definition of prohibited SH according to the organization's SH policy, then the training content should address both legal and organizational definitions, and evaluation measures should assess learning related to each (see Bingham & Scherer, 2001).

A lack of alignment of the definitions reflected in the training objectives, content of the training, and evaluation measures can result in difficult to interpret, if not misleading findings. This could occur, for example, if after receiving instruction based on a broad social science or organizational definition of SH the trainees are asked to judge whether various factual scenarios involve SH, then the accuracy of their judgments is assessed using an evaluation measure that reflects a narrower legal definition of SH. In that event, responses characterized as "false positives" (on the basis of the legal definition of SH reflected in the evaluation measure) might actually involve the correct application of the knowledge acquired in training (i.e., the broader social science or organizational definition of SH addressed in training).

Unfortunately, more often than not, the definition(s) of SH that trainees were expected to learn cannot be determined in reports of research investigating SH training effectiveness. There is also often a lack of detail in describing training content and, sometimes, a lack of detail in describing the evaluation measures. As a result, it is not always possible to determine the extent to which the definitions of SH reflected in objectives, training content, and evaluation measures are aligned. In a later section of this article, specific studies involving the *potential* misalignment of SH definitions addressed in training with those reflected in the evaluation measures used by researchers will be identified, and the resulting inability to interpret the studies' findings with a high degree of certainty will illustrated.

3 | THE LEGAL CONTEXT OF SH TRAINING

Our discussion of the legal context of SH focuses on the United States, the country in which SH training first came to prominence, and the country in which the vast majority of the studies investigating the effectiveness of SH training were conducted. Many countries, and particularly those in the European Union, have largely followed the U.S. SH law model (Markert, 2005). There are several reasons why an understanding of the legal context of SH training is important to researchers. First, SH is a widely discussed legal construct that significantly influences how both lay people and researchers view what constitutes sexually harassing behavior. Second, the protection SH training provides against legal liability is a primary criterion used by employers in evaluating the effectiveness of SH training, and therefore, researchers should have an understanding of how legal effectiveness is assessed and related to more traditional measures of training effectiveness. Third, because SH training often addresses the law of SH, a basic understanding of the law will help researchers assess the

appropriateness of evaluation measures. Fourth, greater awareness of the legal context of SH training should help researchers identify interesting and practically relevant research questions.

3.1 | Legal definitions of SH in the United States

The U.S. law recognizes two broad forms of SH. Quid pro quo (QPQ) SH involves unwelcome sexual conduct by a manager or supervisor that results in a tangible employment action, such as discipline, firing, or denial of a promotion. This form of SH corresponds generally with the sexual coercion factor of behavioral measures of SH (Fitzgerald, Drasgow, et al., 1997). Hostile environment SH involves unwelcome verbal and/or physical sexual conduct, which creates a subjectively and objectively abusive or hostile work environment; the victim must actually (i.e., subjectively) perceive the harassment as severe and pervasive, and the harassment must also meet a "reasonable person" (i.e.., objective) standard for what is severe and pervasive (*Harris v. Forklift Systems*, 1993; O'Leary-Kelly et al., 2009). Whereas QPQ SH is relatively objective, there is often a great deal of subjectivity and ambiguity in determinations of whether conduct is sufficient to create a hostile environment. Gender harassment and unwanted sexual attention behaviors included in SH measures are based on behavioral definitions of SH may or *may not* amount to illegal hostile environment SH. Even when unwelcome by the target, whether behaviors such as crude jokes, sexual comments, and unwanted sexual attention that does not involve coercion by a supervisor meet the legal definition of hostile environment SH depends on many factors, including who engages in the behavior (the number of harassers and their status as supervisor or coworkers), how they occur and in what combination with other behaviors (verbal, physical, or both), and whether more than one person was harassed.

3.2 | The role of law in promoting and shaping employer SH training practices

Four legal developments contributed to an explosion in employer-provided SH training in the United States in the late 1990s and 2000s and continue to have relevance to SH training in the United States. First, the U.S. Supreme Court's companion landmark decisions in *Faragher v. City of Boca Raton* (1998) and *Burlington Industries, Inc. v. Ellerth* (1998) recognized an employer defense to certain types of SH claims that effectively required SH training for all employees with supervisory status if the employer wants to successfully assert the defense. This development has the greatest implications for SH training, and it is the most complicated to describe. Therefore, we address it further in a separate section ("The *Ellerth-Faragher* Affirmative Defense").

Second, another landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision, *Kolstad v. American Dental Association* (1999), established an affirmative defense in harassment and other types of employment discrimination cases that allows the employer to immunize itself from punitive damages, if the employer can establish that it acted in good faith to comply with the relevant laws. The *Kolstad* case indicated that implementing an effective antidiscrimination (including antiharassment) policy and conducting training on the relevant laws for employees would be

two ways an employer could demonstrate it acted in good faith to prevent SH and discrimination.

Third, in determining whether an employer acted reasonably and, therefore, is entitled to avoid liability on the basis of the *Ellerth* and *Faragher* defense, the EEOC has placed great weight on employers' SH training efforts. In cases brought by the EEOC, it has taken the position that it is not enough for an employer to merely provide SH training to establish the *Ellerth–Faragher* defense; the employer must prove that it provided *effective* SH training (e.g., *EEOC v. Management Hospitality of Racine, Inc.*, 2012). In addition, the EEOC's (1999) formal policy guidance recommends that employers provide training to all employees, not just supervisory employees.

The fourth legal development contributing to an explosion of SH training in the United States is the enactment of laws in some states that mandate SH training for at least some employee groups (California, Connecticut, and Maine), or explicitly encourage employers to adopt SH training (e.g., Massachusetts and Vermont). California's law, for example, requires employers with at least 50 employees to provide at least 2 hr of SH training to all new supervisors, and it imposes other requirements regarding the design and content of the required training (e.g., training must be interactive and cover legal definitions of SH; California Government Code, 2012).

3.3 | The *Ellerth–Faragher* affirmative defense

The *Ellerth* and *Faragher* decisions established that in cases involving harassment by a supervisor that do not result in a tangible employment action, even if the plaintiff-employee meets her or his burden of establishing a prima facie case of SH, the employer can still avoid liability by showing that (a) it exercised reasonable care to prevent and promptly correct the harassment and (b) the plaintiff-employee unreasonably failed to take advantage of the preventive or corrective opportunities that the employer provided. These two conditions are referred to as the two prongs of the *Ellerth-Faragher* (*E-F*) affirmative defense.

Several types of SH training are relevant to the question of whether a defendant employer has met the first prong of the *E-F* affirmative defense. Preventive SH training for managers and supervisors is offered as evidence by the employer that it exercised reasonable care to prevent harassment (e.g., *Kramer v. Wasatch County Sheriff's Office*, 2014), and the failure to provide adequate preventive training is offered by plaintiffs as evidence of the employer's failure to exercise reasonable care (e.g., *Ladner v. Woodland Village Nursing Center*, 2013; *Redmond v. Gonnella Baking Company*, 2013). Training for supervisors or others involved in handling reports of SH on how to respond to SH, including how to conduct investigations, is offered as evidence that the employer exercised reasonable care in correcting SH, and the failure to provide adequate training in these areas is offered as evidence that the employer did not exercise reasonable care (e.g., *Randler v. Kountry Kraft, Inc.*, 2012). Remedial training for identified harassers is also offered as evidence of reasonable care in correcting SH, and failure to provide adequate training for identified harassers is treated as evidence of lack of reasonable care to promptly correct reported harassment (e.g., *Wimbush v. Kaiser Foundation Health Plan of the Mid Atl. States, Inc.*, 2016).

SH training is also relevant to the second prong of *E-F* defense. Employers seeking to establish that an employee unreasonably failed to take advantage of preventive or corrective opportunities frequently point to the fact that they provided employees appropriate training (e.g., *Ellzey v. Gusman*, 2012). Employees seeking to defeat the defense, on the other hand, point to the lack of adequate employer-provided training regarding the employer's SH policy as a justification for why they failed to take advantage of preventive or corrective opportunities.

3.4 | Effectiveness of SH training from a legal perspective

On the basis of the legal implications of SH training and employers' concerns about SH litigation, SH training is effective from a legal perspective to the extent that (a) it meets minimum legal requirements for employer-provided SH training, in those limited jurisdictions and circumstances where employers are required to provide some form of SH training; (b) it reduces the number of external SH legal claims filed against the employer (e.g., litigation): (c) it increases employers' ability to successfully defeat such claims if filed; and (d) if a successful claim of SH against the employer is established, it mitigates the damages the employer is required to pay. The question of whether minimum legal requirements are met is relevant only in a limited number of jurisdictions and, where relevant, can be addressed in a relatively objective manner. The limited evidence addressing the impact of SH training on the filing of external legal claims against employers is reviewed in a later section ("Results"). The following section includes a discussion of the third and fourth legal effectiveness criteria.

3.5 | The relationship between effectiveness from legal and traditional training perspectives

The effectiveness of SH training based on traditional training evaluation outcomes (e.g., desired change in knowledge, skills, and workplace behaviors) is directly and strongly related to the effectiveness of SH from a legal perspective. Training that is effective in decreasing the incidence of SH (behaviors) in the workplace addresses the primary antecedents of SH legal claims, the individual's perception that they have been the victim of SH. In addition, to successfully assert the *E-F* defense, it is not enough for the employer to merely show it had an antiharassment policy that appears "effective on paper" (i.e., in theory); it must also be reasonably effective in practice (*EEOC v. Management Hospitality of Racine, Inc.*, 2012, p. 434). And effectiveness of the policy in practice "depends upon the effectiveness of those who are designated to implement it" (*EEOC v. Management Hospitality of Racine, Inc.*, 2012, p. 25). Even if an employer provides supervisors training on how to identify, respond to, or investigate SH, if the training is not effective, and as a result, a supervisor fails to identify or promptly correct the harassment that he or she knew or should have been aware of, the employer will be unable to establish the first prong of the *E-F* defense (*EEOC v. Boh Brothers Construction Co.*, 2013; *Smart vs. City of Miami Beach*, 2011). Thus, although it is not necessary for training to eliminate SH in an employer's workplace to provide the employer legal benefits, the ability of SH training to be effective in helping defeat litigation claims once they are filed is directly connected to its

effectiveness in providing supervisors' and other employee's relevant knowledge and skills that transfer to the workplace.

Finally, to avoid punitive damages by successfully asserting the *Kolstad* affirmative defense, it is not enough to simply provide employees training regarding the organization's antidiscrimination (including antiharassment) policy. The training must reflect a good faith effort to educate employees. Although clear, universally applied standards for what constitutes "a good faith effort to educate employees" do not exist, case law provides some guidance. For example, it has been held that an off-the-shelf SH training video did not constitute a good faith effort to educate employees (*EEOC v. Management Hospitality of Racine, Inc.*, 2012). In addition to requiring a good-faith effort to educate employees regarding the organization's antidiscrimination policy, the *Kolstad* affirmative also requires employers to make a good faith effort to enforce its antidiscrimination policy when the employer is made aware of violations of the policy. Consequently, even if an employer makes a good faith effort to educate its employees through training, if the training is ineffective, and as a result a supervisor fails to take adequate steps to address a violation of the law that the supervisor is aware of, the employer will not be able to avoid punitive damages by establishing the *Kolstad* defense (*Cadena v. The Pacesetter Corporation*, 2000). Thus, the ability of SH training to insulate employers from punitive damages is directly related to its effectiveness in providing supervisors knowledge and skills that transfer to the workplace.

4 | ORGANIZING FRAMEWORK

Figure 1 provides a conceptual framework for organizing and understanding SH training effectiveness and the primary factors that interact to influence it. Drawing on theory and empirical findings from the SH literature, our organizing framework adapts well-supported models of training effectiveness (e.g., Colquitt, LePine, & Noe, 2000; Kraiger, Ford, & Salas, 1993) to more specifically address the issues and challenges judged to be of particular importance to SH training effectiveness. This section provides a basic description of the organizing framework; subsequent sections will further discuss theoretical support, and the extent to which there is empirical support, for variables and relationships identified in Figure 1.

Training objectives and three general categories of variables ("training design and delivery," "trainee characteristics," and "organizational context") are represented as interacting to influence the impact of training on SH training outcomes. Training objectives are the intended outcomes, or the goals, of the training program (Goldstein & Ford, 2002). Prescriptive models of how training should be conducted depict training objectives as a key input into the design of training programs (Goldstein & Ford, 2002). However, our organizing framework is descriptive in nature. We represent training objectives as interacting with training design variables, and other categories of variables, because training theory and research suggest that is not merely the existence of training objectives, but their degree of alignment with these variables that may significantly impact training effectiveness (Sitzmann & Weinhardt, 2015).

The other three categories of variables impacting training outcomes identified in Figure 1 are found in all models of training effectiveness (although the categories may be labeled somewhat differently) because their potential impact on training effectiveness is well established and, therefore, accepted in the training literature. "Trainee characteristics" are individual characteristics or factors that trainees bring to the situation. These include knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes, personality traits, demographics, experiences, and expectations. "Organizational context" variables includes work environment and situational characteristics that have been shown to impact training
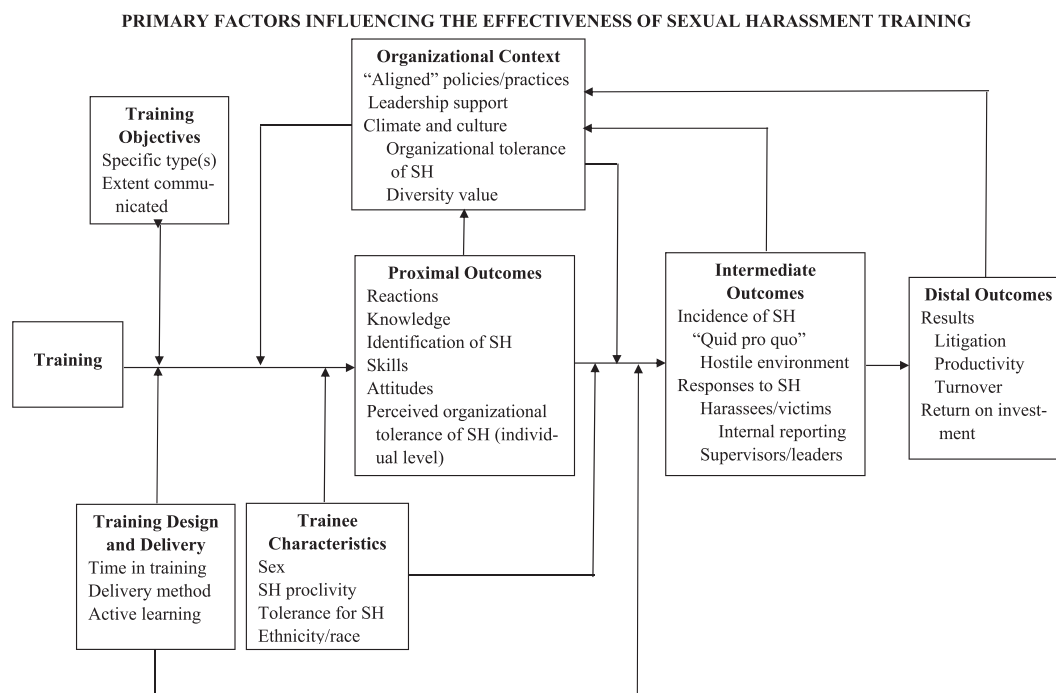

FIGURE 1 Primary factors influencing the effectiveness of sexual harassment training. SH = sexual harassment

effectiveness before or after training takes place (e.g., climate variables related to learning or transfer of training). The "training design and delivery" category includes both variables related to the process of planning events to facilitate learning, and variables addressing the execution of those plans (Brown & Sitzmann, 2011).

Figure 1 distinguishes among the "proximal," "intermediate," and "distal" outcomes of SH training for several reasons. Distinguishing among the three categories of outcomes highlights the critical transfer of training issue, and the key factors affecting transfer differently across outcomes (Blume, Ford, Baldwin, & Huang, 2010; Huang, Blume, Ford, & Baldwin, 2015). It also helps reflect the temporal aspect of training by illustrating the typical sequence of outcomes over time, and the reciprocal influences that unfold over time. Finally, distinguishing among the proximal, intermediate, and distal outcomes of SH training underscores the multiple stages at which some variables may impact the effectiveness of SH training. For instance, perceived organizational tolerance of SH (POTSH; organizational level) is represented as affecting both trainees' motivation to participate in training and the extent to which learning in training transfers to workplace behaviors.

In addition to distinguishing among three primary categories of outcome variables, our organizing framework focuses greater attention on SH training outcome variables than on previous discussions of SH training effectiveness in other ways. For example, although researchers in the SH literature have focused on POTSH as an organizational climate variable, the "proximal outcomes" category also includes POTSH as an individual-level perception that may be directly impacted by the message that employers sends about their tolerance for SH through the way the organization provides SH training (the "symbolic" impact of training). Individual perceptions of organizational tolerance, in turn, may impact both training transfer and the organization's climate. The greater attention to SH training outcomes is also reflected in the identification of more specific behaviors targeted by SH training than prior models of SH training effectiveness (e.g., Kath & Magley, 2014). For example, the "intermediate outcomes" category makes a distinction between QPQ SH and hostile environment SH behaviors on the basis of the legal relevance of the two categories and research findings indicating that SH training may differentially affect QPQ behaviors versus hostile environment behaviors (e.g., Gruber, 1998).

The organizing framework in Figure 1 does not purport to provide a comprehensive representation of all variables that may play a role in the effectiveness of SH training. Our intent is to provide a parsimonious framework that highlights the key variables and relationships at this relatively early stage in the development of the SH training effectiveness literature. Finally, we emphasize that the framework is to help organize and communicate our review; we do not purport to test the relationships among variables depicted in Figure 1.

5 | REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Our review focuses on published empirical research investigating the effectiveness of SH training using adult samples, including studies providing data that are relevant to the question of SH training

effectiveness, although the primary focus of the study was not assessing effectiveness. We include reports in refereed and nonrefereed journals, book chapters, and three U.S. government publications. We did not include studies focusing on sexual assault training.

To identify published studies, we conducted searches using a wide range of relevant databases (e.g., ABI/INFORM, ProQuest, LexisNexis Academic, and Medline) and the term sexual harassment combined with training-related terms ("training," "train," "workshop," "education," "interventions," and "programs"). Next, as we read articles and book chapters, we followed up references that identified previously undiscovered relevant research. In all, we identified 60 relevant studies from a wide range of disciplines and subspecialty areas, including management, industrial-organizational psychology, social psychology, organizational communication, occupational health, employee relations, labor relations, public administration, health care management, women studies, and law. The entire list of identified studies is available from the first author.

5.1 | Characteristics of the studies

5.1.1 | Samples

With six exceptions, the studies were conducted using U.S. samples. The exceptions include the following: de Haas, Timmerman, Höing, Zaagsma, and Vanwesenbeeck (2010), Netherlands; Diehl, Glaser, and Bohner (2014), Germany; Gruber and Smith (1995) and Gruber (1998), Canada; Meloni and Austin (2011), Australia; and Sabitha (2008), Malaysia. Twenty-eight percent of all studies, and 53% of the experimental or quasi-experimental studies, employ undergraduate student samples. Among the studies not using undergraduate student samples, public sector organizations are disproportionately represented (e.g., U.S. military, U.S. government civilian employees, and university employees).

5.1.2 | Study methodology

Fifty-three percent of the studies use experimental or quasi-experimental designs to assess the effect of one or more training interventions on one or more training outcomes (e.g., knowledge, attitude, and incidence of SH in the workplace). The training interventions vary greatly, from 11.2 hr of training involving multiple methods and extensive feedback (Blaxall, Parsonson, & Robertson, 1993) to simply having trainees read a copy of the Illinois Human Rights Act (Birdeau, Somers, & Lenham, 2005).

The remaining studies all include some type of survey data. The most common type of survey study involves cross-sectional data from individuals either in a single large organization with multiple units with different SH training practices (e.g., Anectol & Cobb-Clark, 2003) or from many different organizations (Gruber, 1998). The second most common type of survey study involves repeated surveys assessing the reported experience of incidents of SH in a single organization, using unmatched samples (Pickerill, Jackson, & Newman, 2006). Finally, several studies that include survey data are best characterized as case studies because they focus on a single organization, include nonsurvey forms of data, address the organizational context in significant detail, and, in addition to reporting survey findings, offer qualitative assessments of the effectiveness of the organization's training

and other inventions aimed at reducing SH (Best, Smith, Raymond, Greenberg, & Crouch, 2010; Fried, Vermillion, & Parker, 2012; Jacobs, Bergen, & Korn, 2000; Meloni & Austin, 2011).

5.2 | Training objectives

Although it is often possible to reasonably infer general training objectives for many of the experiment and quasi-experimental studies the study, and several studies provide general statements of the training's purposes, with only a few exceptions (e.g., Tan, Morris, & Romero, 1996), the reviewed studies do not explicitly state the specific objectives of the training. In many instances, the lack of clear training objectives limits the ability to assess the appropriateness of study's evaluation effort, or to determine whether the training achieved desired results.

5.3 | Trainee characteristics

Findings regarding the sex of the trainees, by far the most frequently investigated trainee characteristic, present a mixed picture, with results varying by the specific training outcome. Although several studies fail to find a Sex × Training interaction (e.g., Magley, Fitzgerald, Salisbury, Drasgow, & Zickar, 2013; Moyer & Nath, 1998, Study 1), most studies investigating the effect of trainee sex find that training had a greater effect on male trainees' propensity to label conduct as involving SH (Anectol & Cobb-Clark, 2003; Beauvais, 1986; Blakely, Blakely, & Moorman, 1998; Bonate & Jessell, 1996; Diehl et al., 2014, Study 2; Pickerill et al., 2006), or their accuracy in making such judgments (Moyer & Nath, 1998, Study 2). Typically, the interaction is due to the equalizing effect of training. Females demonstrate greater sensitivity or expertise in assessing SH behavior before training, but there are no sex differences after training.

Two studies investigating whether SH training differentially affects individuals who score high on the Likelihood to sexually harass scale (LSH) support opposing conclusions. Perry, Kulik, and Schmidtke (1998) found that a 20-min training video had a greater positive impact on high LSH participants' knowledge of SH and a behavioral outcome, bringing high LSH participants in line with low LSH participants after training. In contrast, Robb and Doverspike (2001) found that a 1-hr SH training video had no effect on low LSH participants' SH-related attitude, but high LSH participants reported significantly more negative attitudes. Only one study has investigated whether trainee ethnicity or race interacts with training to affect training outcomes. Magley et al.'s (2013, Study 2) evaluation of the impact of a 3-hr training program conducted in a single organization found a significant increase in non-Hispanic trainees' knowledge of the organization's SH-related policies and practices but no impact on Hispanic trainees' knowledge.

5.4 | Training design and delivery

The 12 studies that investigate the effect of training design features on one or more training outcomes are summarized in Table 1. Of the nine experimental studies, four purport to test the effect of different instructional media (Birdeau et al., 2005; Bonate & Jessell, 1996; Pilgram & Keyton, 2009; Preusser, Bartels, & Nordstrom, 2011). However, all four appear to confound the effect of instructional media with the effect of instructional content or methods. For example, although Preusser et al. (2011) purport to test differences in the effectiveness of instructional media (online vs. classroom), there appear to be significant differences in the methods used (e.g., the opportunity to ask questions or engage in discussion, and feedback provided) in the two training conditions. These studies do not provide a basis for conclusions regarding the most effective means for conveying SH training.

The three experimental studies testing the impact of training intended to promote empathy all found that it had a significant impact on SH attitudes, whereas the other training interventions tested in the same three studies did not have an effect (Diehl et al., 2014, Study 1 and Study 2; Schewe & O'Donohue, 1993). The remaining two experimental studies both manipulated the number of methods used in the training conditions, and both found that the use of more methods resulted in a stronger effect (Moyer & Nath, 1998; York, Barclay, & Zajack, 1997). Two studies using cross-sectional survey data to examine relationships between respondents' self-reported prior training experiences and SH-related knowledge and skill outcomes produced mixed findings (Buckner et al., 2014; Magley & Shupe, 2005). A third study using cross-sectional survey data failed to find a relationship between widely recommended SH training practices and respondents' perceptions of SH training effectiveness (Perry et al., 2010).

The relatively small number of studies investigating the effectiveness of training design features, and the significant limitations associated with many of the available studies, preclude firm conclusions. However, two emerging patterns in the findings are worthy of note. First, training intended to promote empathy toward targets of SH has consistently improved SH attitudes. Second, the findings of the experimental studies and survey studies converge to suggest that more extensive exposure to SH training (e.g., number of methods exposed to, and time in training) tends to have a positive impact on desired training outcomes.

5.5 | Organizational context

As reflected in Figure 1, the training literature demonstrates that organizational context variables may influence trainee motivation or readiness for training (Colquitt et al., 2000), and after training, organizational context variables may influence the extent to which knowledge, skills, and abilities acquired in training transfer to and are sustained in the workplace (Huang et al., 2015). Only one study focusing on the before training effect of organizational context was identified. Walsh, Bauerle, and Magley's (2013) survey of 119 individuals employed in different organizations found that POTSH interacted with trainees' attitudes (SH myth endorsement) to affect respondents' motivation to learn in SH training. The study did not investigate whether motivation to learn mediates the impact of POTSH on training effectiveness.

The well-established role of organizational context variables in moderating whether the knowledge, skills, and abilities acquired in training transfer to the workplace is frequently acknowledged in the SH training literature (e.g., Kath & Magley, 2014; Perry et al., 2012). Researchers have also offered their qualitative assessments that an organization's climate, culture, and/or leadership had a significant impact on the effectiveness (Best et al., 2010) or ineffectiveness (Fried

TABLE 1 Summary of studies investigating the effect of training design features on training outcomes

Authors	Sample	Study design	Training design feature(s) investigated	Principal findings
Birdeau, Somers, and Lenham (2005)	203 students	Posttest only, control group.	Condition 1: Viewed 20-min "educative video that addressed SH." Condition 2: Read Illinois Human Rights Act	Both training conditions resulted in trainees evaluating scenarios as more harassing. No significant difference between video and reading conditions.
Bonate and Jessell (1996)	96 students	Pretest/posttest, control group.	Condition 1: Viewed video providing example of SH and non-SH situations. Condition 2: Read educational literature addressing history of SH, definition, examples of SH, prevalence data.	Educational literature increased sensitivity to SH, but the video did not (compared to the control group). Significant difference in sensitivity between male and female before training, but not after training.
Buckner et al. (2014)	209 mgrs. different organizations	Survey, cross-sectional	Self-reported prior SH training: Cumulative hours, number of methods, time since last training.	Hours and recency of training related to increased sensitivity to SH. Training variables not related to accuracy of SH judgments in path model.
Diehl et al. (2014), Study 1	101 students, German	Pretest/posttest, no control group.	Condition 1: Read materials emphasizing the consequence of SH. Condition 2: Read materials downplaying SH as a problem.	Emphasizing (vs. downplaying) the consequences of SH increased empathy and led to lower SH myth acceptance.
Diehl et al. (2014), Study 2	119 students, German	Pretest/posttest, control group.	Condition 1: Read a report of a SH case written from the target/victim perspective. Condition 2: Read a report of a SH case written from the perpetrator perspective.	Learning about a case from the target/victim perspective resulted in lower SH myth acceptance. For males only, learning about a case from the target/victim perspective lowered the likelihood to harass score.
Magley and Shupe (2005)	15,966 armed forces	Survey, cross-sectional	Self-reported length of training, 1 item that asked respondents to indicate how much SH training they had in past 12 months.	Length of training not related to labeling an experience involving sexual behavior as "SH." A large positive correlation ($r = .67$) between length of training and self-reported "knowledge acquired from training."
Moyer and Nath (1998), main study	84 students	Posttest only, control group	Condition 0: No SH material. Condition 1: One exposure to poster addressing SH + College policy regarding SH. Condition 2: Three exposures to same written material + 2 written tests regarding the material with immediate feedback.	The 3 exposure conditions did better than 1 exposure condition; 1 exposure condition did better than the control group. Significant Training × Gender interaction on perceptions of SH (expertise). Women without training more expert, but no gender difference in perception expertise after training.
Perry et al. (2010)	288 employees in different organizations	Survey completed by key informants	Number (#) of needs assessment activities (1 to 7), # active training methods, # passive training methods, # posttraining activities reason for training (legal vs. strategic)	No main effects of "best training practices" on perceptions of the SH training effectiveness. Some evidence that the effects of "best training practices" on perceived effectiveness are stronger when SH training adopted for strategic versus legal reasons.
Pilgram and Keyton (2009)	323 students	Pretest/posttest, no control group	Condition 1: Asynchronous online (text and presentation of facts and behavioral cues regarding SH). Condition 2: Face-to-face. Condition 3: Read a pamphlet about SH. Conditions described as "content equivalent."	Combined knowledge *decreased* in all conditions. However, the subscores based on case-type questions were higher in the face-to-face and reading conditions than in online. Those in face-to-face condition correctly identified more nonverbal SH cues than did those in other conditions.
Preusser et al. (2011)	70 public university employees	Pretest/posttest, no control group	Condition 1: Commercially available online course, 1.5 to 2 hr; 2 quiz questions per subsection with feedback; did not allow for questions. Condition 2: Classroom training, 1.5 to 2 hr, same content, allowed for questions.	Knowledge and skill outcomes increased in both conditions, but no change in the affective outcomes in either condition. No difference in reactions (both received favorable reactions).

(Continues)

TABLE 1 (Continued)

Authors	Sample	Study design	Training design feature(s) investigated	Principal findings
Schewe and O'Donohue (1993)	55 students	Pretest/posttest, control group	Condition 1: 45-min video designed to promote empathy toward victims of sexual abuse/Condition 2: 45-min video presenting facts regarding sexual abuse (including SH).	Empathy treatment resulted in change in likelihood of sexually harassing (lower). Facts-based treatment did not impact likelihood of sexually harassing.
York et al. (1997)	98 students	Posttest only; control group	Condition 0: Watched video addressing SH. Condition 1: Read "weak" SH harassment case then watched video addressing SH. Condition 2: Read "strong" SH case then watched same video.	Participants who read either case (i.e., both conditions) then viewed the SH video were more sensitive to SH than were participants in "control group" (who only watched the SH video),

Note. (a) All student samples were undergraduate student samples. (b) U.S. sample unless indicated otherwise. (c) Posttraining measures completed at the end of training unless indicated otherwise. SH = sexual harassment.

et al., 2012) of employer-provided SH training. However, on the basis of our review, only one published study provides a quantitative assessment of whether organizational context variables interact with SH training to influence SH training outcomes. Williams, Fitzgerald, and Drasgow's (1999) survey of U.S. military personnel from many different units found that respondents' perception of their unit's SH enforcement practices (e.g., "Were penalties enforced against harassers?") was related to lower reported levels of SH in the unit, but respondents' receipt of SH training in the past 12 months was not. Further, the interaction of the perceived enforcement and receipt of training was not significant. Although the study fails to provide support for the belief that organizational context variables (e.g., perceived enforcement practices) moderate the effectiveness of SH training, caution should be exercised in generalizing its findings given several acknowledged significant limitations of the study (e.g., self-report cross-sectional data and restricted range on the receipt of SH training measure).

5.6 | Proximal training outcomes

The proximal training outcomes identified in Figure 1 include trainee reactions; assessments of whether objectives relating to the acquisition of knowledge, skills, attitudes, or other characteristics are achieved; and assessments of the extent to which individuals can generalize knowledge and skills acquired in a learning context to a performance context *if the performance context does not involve actual on the job behavior* (e.g., assessments requiring trainees to consider hypothetical scenarios and demonstrate their ability to identify SH).

5.6.1 | Reactions

Reaction outcomes refer to participants' subjective evaluations, including the extent to which they enjoyed their training experience and/or their immediate perceptions of its usefulness (Alliger, Tannenbaum, Bennett, Traver, Shotland, 1997). With one exception (Magley et al., 2013), studies reporting reaction findings all conclude that the trainees' collective reaction to the SH training was generally positive (e.g., Tan et al., 1996; Thomann, Strickland, & Gibbons, 1989). Several studies report that although reactions were generally positive, a small segment of the trainees had strong negative reactions (e.g., Anectol

& Cobb-Clark, 2003; U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, 1988). In general, SH trainings are viewed positively and perceived as being helpful by trainees.

5.6.2 | Knowledge

A total of 14 studies that assess the impact of SH training on a cognitive outcomes were identified; in all cases, the cognitive outcomes in question assess knowledge relating to SH. The trainee knowledge measures employ a variety of response formats (true/false, multiple choice, Likert scale), from five to 40 items, and all address one or more of the following topics: SH definitions, law, the organization's policies and practices, and the causes and consequences of SH. Across studies employing a variety of measures, instructional methods (e.g., lecture, discussion, and case study), and instructional media (e.g., online, video, and "live"), SH training has consistently shown to have a significant positive impact on trainees' acquisition of knowledge related to SH (e.g., Bingham & Scherer, 2001; Campbell et al., 2013; Estrada & Laurence, 2009). There are some exceptions to this clear pattern (Magley et al., 2013, Study 1; Pilgram & Keyton, 2009), and, as our discussion of trainee characteristics indicates, there are some moderators of the impact of training on knowledge (e.g., Magley et al., 2013, Study 2, only knowledge of non-Hispanics increased; Perry et al., 1998, training increased the knowledge of high LSH but not low LSH individuals). However, it appears that SH training generally is effective in increasing knowledge related to SH.

5.6.3 | Skills

Skill-based outcomes include indicators of behavioral proficiency. The range of SH-related skills that have been investigated is narrow. Blaxall et al. (1993) were able to increase SH contact persons' listening and helping skills though training that involved role-playing. Barak (1994) found that SH training significantly increased trainees' coping skills (when confronted with harassment) almost a year after the initial training. Jacobs et al.'s (2000) case study found that reports of SH were reduced following training on strategies and skills to reduce SH, although the influence of other actions undertaken to reduce SH could not be ruled out.

5.6.4 | Identifying behavior as involving SH: Sensitivity versus accuracy

Proficiency in recognizing what conduct constitutes SH is fundamental to individuals' ability to effectively monitor their own behavior and respond appropriately when SH occurs (Birdeau et al., 2005). Two distinct identification objectives are reflected in SH training research: increasing sensitivity and increasing accuracy of judgments. Most define training effectiveness in terms of trainees' increased propensity to identify conduct as involving SH, or their sensitivity to SH. With one exception (Magley & Shupe, 2005), survey studies have found that SH training is associated with a greater likelihood of identifying at least some types of behaviors as involving SH, although that association sometimes varies by the type of behavior being considered (e.g., training affected the labeling of sexual jokes or remarks as harassment but had no effect on the labeling of other types of behavior; Tinkler, 2008), or the sex of the respondent (e.g., increased likelihood of labeling conduct as SH was greater among male respondents; Antecol & Cobb-Clark's, 2003).

The results of studies using experimental or quasi-experimental designs to examine the effect of training on sensitivity are mixed. Although most such studies find that training increases the likelihood of labeling conduct SH (e.g., Birdeau et al., 2005; Kearney, Rochlen, & King, 2004), one study found a training effect on only the most severe forms of sexually oriented work behaviors (Blakely et al., 1998), two studies found an effect in only one of two training conditions (Bonate & Jessell, 1996; Wilkerson, 1999), and three studies failed to find any training effect (Magley et al., 2013, Study 1 and Study 2; Beauvais, 1986). Finally, Bingham and Scherer (2001) found that men who received training were *less likely* to view the coercion of a subordinate or student as SH than did men who did not receive training.

Several studies examining the impact of training on the identification of SH define effectiveness in terms of the accuracy of trainees' assessments of whether specific conduct involves SH. Accuracy is determined by comparing trainees' assessment of various scenarios with the judgments of a group of experts or some other prescription of "right" and "wrong" assessments. Moyer and Nath (1998) conducted two trainings and evaluated the effectiveness of each using an evaluation measure that was based on the judgments of five legal experts. They found that participants in the first study who viewed a 13-min general SH training video perceived SH more often than do the control group (i.e., training increases sensitivity to SH). However, there was no increase in accuracy; training increased "hits" and false positives in almost equal proportion. The second training, which emphasized the law and was delivered via written material, increased sensitivity for both men and women and had a positive effect on accuracy of men, but not women. After starting with less expertise, males improved more as a result of the law-focused training (fewer false positives) and became equal to women. Because the content of the video training was not described, it cannot be determined whether the increase in false positives after the video training was due to a misalignment of the content of the training and the evaluation measures (i.e., training content that covered a broader social science definition of SH and the use of a law-based evaluation measure). However, it can be observed that the content of the second training was law focused, that accuracy was assessed using a law-based evaluation measure (i.e., training content and the evaluation measure were aligned), and that training resulted in fewer, not more, false-positive judgments of SH.

Buckner et al.'s (2014) cross-sectional survey study examined the relationship between prior SH training experiences and both sensitivity and accuracy outcomes by asking 209 managers from different companies (solicited by 209 students in management and psychology classes) to indicate the extent to which they considered scenarios as involving SH. Accurate answers were based on the judgments of nine compliance officers. They found that although prior training experiences were associated with greater respondent sensitivity, it failed to improve the accuracy of their judgments. On the contrary, prior training increased false positives and thus decreased managers' accuracy identifying SH. This study also suggests the importance of ensuring that the definitions of SH addressed in training and used in evaluation are aligned. If the prior training that the managers received focused on a definition of SH that is broader than the legal definition, as is often the case (Schultz, 2003), responses characterized as false positives on the basis of the judgment of compliance officers (who are well versed in the law) may actually involve the correct application of the definition of SH learned by respondents in prior training.

A third study that did not directly discuss the distinction between sensitivity and accuracy measures, nonetheless, provides additional evidence of the potential differential effect of training on the two outcomes. Birdeau, Somers, and Lenham (2005) asked participants in two training conditions, reading the law versus video, to review scenarios involving social-sexual behavior at work and indicate the extent to which they involved SH. The scenarios were placed in three categories: "definitely harassing," "ambiguous," and "definitely not harassing." Training in both conditions resulted in increased labeling of conduct as involving SH in the first two categories. Participants in the video training condition were also more likely to evaluate the definitely not harassing scenarios as involving SH. Thus, although both reading the law and the video training increased participants' sensitivity, only the video training resulted in more false positives.

The Birdeau et al. (2005) study further highlights the ambiguity that results when research reports fail to provide details regarding the content of SH training and the evaluation measures used. If the content of the video instructed trainees on the broader social science definition of SH, but the evaluation measure was based on the narrower legal definition, evaluations that were characterized as false positives may have actually involved the correct application of knowledge acquired in the video training. To be clear, we have posited a hypothetical scenario; whether or not Birdeau et al. (2005) aligned the training content and evaluation measure, and appropriately characterized responses as false positives, cannot be ascertained on the basis of the report of the study.

5.6.5 | Attitudes

The most frequently employed attitudinal measures to assess SH training effectiveness are Lott, Reilly, and Howard's (1982) Tolerance for SH Inventory; Pryor's (1987) LSH scale; the SH Myth Acceptance developed by Lonsway, Cortina, and Magley (2008); and study-specific measures assessing SH target blameworthiness. Although most studies

provide at least some evidence of a change in attitude (Blaxall et al., 1993; Magley et al., 2013; Maurizio & Rogers, 1992; Thomann et al., 1989), the findings of studies investigating the effect of SH training on attitudes are still "mixed." The same attitudes assessed using the same measures are associated with different results in studies conducted by the same researchers (Magley et al., 2013, finding a significant effect of training on tolerance for SH in Study 1 but not in Study 2); researchers assessing multiple attitudes in the same study find that training impacted some attitudes but not others (e.g., Bingham & Scherer, 2001); and when a change in attitude is found, it is not always in the desired direction (e.g., Robb & Doverspike, 2001). In addition, several studies found no change in attitude (Kearney et al., 2004; Magley et al., 2013, Study 2; Preusser et al., 2011).

The most consistent finding with regard to the effect of SH training on attitudes was identified earlier: Training intended to promote empathy toward targets of SH consistently changed trainees' SH attitudes in the desired direction (Diehl et al., 2014, Study 1 and 2; Schewe & O'Donohue, 1993). Interestingly, all studies failing to find an effect of training on trainees' attitude found a significant effect of training on one or more knowledge acquisition or skill outcomes, providing further evidence that significant attitude change is relatively difficult to accomplish.

5.6.6 | Perceived organizational tolerance of SH (individual level)

Our organizing framework distinguishes between individual-level POTSH and group- or organizational-level POTSH. Only two studies assess the effect of training on individual-level POTSH. Using cross-sectional survey data from members of all branches of the U.S. military, Estrada and Laurence (2009) found that men and women who received training on the military's "don't ask, don't tell" policy reported lower levels of POTSH in their units. Magley et al. (2013), Study 2, employed a quasi-experimental design that measured POTSH prior to training and 6 months after training in a private sector organization and found that SH training did not impact POTSH. Given that research has shown POTSH to be a consistent driver of SH in organizations (Fitzgerald, Drasgow, et al., 1997; Willness, Steel, & Lee, 2007), the lack of research investigating how SH training might significantly impact POTSH represents a surprising and important gap in the literature.

5.7 | Intermediate training outcomes

5.7.1 | The incidence of SH

Researchers seeking to assess the effect of training on the incidence of SH face many challenges. Getting access to such data is difficult because employers fear it may be used in litigation, or otherwise disseminated outside the organization. It may be difficult to isolate the impact of training because it is seldom the only action taken by an employer that may affect the incidence of SH. Also, training may result in trainees applying a different standard in their evaluation of posttraining experiences or observations of SH (e.g., greater sensitivity). Finally, although significant changes in the frequency of SH are unlikely in the short term (Magley et al., 2013), little is known about the appropriate period to evaluate the effect of training on the incidence of SH.

Of 14 identified studies investigating the relationship between SH training and perceived incidence of SH, eight report that at least some types of SH training are associated with lower levels of SH (Antecol & Cobb-Clark, 2003; Barak, 1994; Coker et al., 2016; Gruber, 1998; Jacobs et al., 2000; Meloni & Austin, 2011; Reese & Lindenberg, 2003; Williams, Lam, & Shively, 1992), and six studies did not find a relationship between SH training and the incidence of SH (de Haas et al., 2010; Estrada & Laurence, 2009; Fried et al., 2012; Magley et al., 2013, Studies 1 and 2; Williams et al., 1999). The following observations are based on a review and comparison of the studies in those two groups. First, only Magley et al. (2013) provides a detailed description of the training provided, and most simply assess whether or not training was provided or received. As a result, it is not possible to assess the extent to which quality or other characteristics of training account for the reported findings. Second, of the 12 studies that examine the incidence of SH in a single organization, 10 involve public employers (e.g., governmental agencies, military, and universities). The exceptions are employers that had already been exposed to the legal system and public scrutiny due to documented SH (Magley et al., 2013, Studies 1 and 2). The disproportionate representation of public employers in published studies investigating the effect of SH training on the incidence of SH points to the need for researchers to consider how differences in the public versus private sector might affect the generalizability of the studies' findings.

Third, all studies finding that training is associated with reduced SH have design limitations that preclude them from ruling out potential alternative explanations for their findings. The most notable alternative explanations are other, nontraining employer actions aimed at reducing SH that are unaccounted for in a study's design (e.g., the adoption of a new SH policy, or a change in enforcement practices).

Fourth, all studies not finding a relationship between training and reduced SH have limitations that either pose a significant threat to the internal validity of the findings or preclude making widely generalizable statements regarding the effectiveness of SH on the basis of the study's findings. A primary threat to the internal validity of findings is the use of evaluation periods that may be insufficient to capture changes that occur due to training. Of the eight studies finding a relationship between training and a reduced incidence of SH, only Barak (1994) had an evaluation period that was 12 months or less ("10 to 12" months after training). In contrast, three of the six studies finding no reduction of SH following training SH had evaluation periods of 12 months or less (Magley et al., 2013, Studies 1 and 2; Williams et al., 1999). This pattern of findings suggests that the length of the evaluation period may affect results.

5.7.2 | Internal reporting of SH

Internal reporting includes employee reports to a supervisor, manager, the HR department, or other agents of the organization, and external reporting involves claims made with governmental agencies, the police, or taking legal action (Terpstra & Baker, 1989). The distinction between the two forms of reporting is critical for two reasons. First, there are many reasons why internal reporting of SH is encouraged (Clarke, 2014), and as a result, an increase in the willingness of employees to report SH internally following training is typically viewed

as an indicator of effectiveness. On the other hand, avoiding SH lawsuits and other external reporting is typically a factor motivating employer-provided SH training. As a result, an increase in the filing of external claims would always be viewed as ineffective training. Second, logic and available empirical evidence indicates that employees who experience SH view internal versus external reporting as very different actions (Terpstra & Baker, 1989).

Unfortunately, a surprising number of studies either fail to recognize the distinction between internal versus external reporting or do not clearly distinguish between the two in their research reports. For example, Wilkerson (1999) investigates the impact of training on "formal complaints," but his measure of formal complaints includes internal grievances, reports to HR, and "external/EEOC complaints" (p. 1613). Other studies simply ask about "formal complaints," and respondents are left to apply personal definitions of "formal complaints" that may include both formal internal complaints and filing a formal complaint with an external agency or the courts (e.g., Hertzog, Wright, & Beat, 2008). Studies investigating internal reporting behavior (vs. the willingness or intention to report SH) have consistently found that SH training is associated with increased internal reporting (Magley et al., 2013, Study 2; Reese & Lindenberg, 2003; U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, 1995; Vijayasiri, 2008), although in two studies, the association was limited to specific types of internal reporting (Fried et al., 2012; Meloni & Austin, 2011).

The findings of studies examining the effect of training on the willingness or propensity to report SH, measured at the end of training, are somewhat less consistent. Three studies report an increase in trainee's likelihood of reporting SH (Estrada & Laurence, 2009; Gruber & Smith, 1995; Meloni & Austin, 2011). However, two studies found that training interacted with trainee characteristics resulting in at least some trainees expressing less willingness to report harassment after training (trained males were less willing to report SH than nonparticipating males were, Bingham & Scherer, 2001; high avoidance individuals were less likely to engage in formal reporting after training, Goldberg, 2007). In summary, the available empirical evidence indicates that SH training is typically, but not always, effective in increasing the internal reporting of SH.

5.8 | Distal training outcomes

5.8.1 | Results

Outcomes in the results category assess the effectiveness of the training in terms of its impact on the organization, *beyond* trainee reactions, learning, or changes in behavior (Kirkpatrick, 1987; Kraiger et al., 1993). Common examples from the broader training literature include productivity gains, customer satisfaction, cost savings, employee morale, turnover, and employee safety. Our review identified only one published study reporting on the relationship between SH training and any of these commonly considered training results. Hill and Phillips' (1997) study found that SH resulted in a 4.3% decrease in turnover after 1 year.

From a legal perspective, additional important SH training results include employees' filing external SH claims, employers' success in defending external SH claims when filed, and employers' success in avoiding punitive damages (in those cases where liability has been

established). Two studies provide some evidence, albeit very limited, regarding the effect of SH training on employees filing of external legal claims. Hill and Phillips (1997) found that the number of SH complaints that went into litigation dropped 41% in the year following the implementation of SH training. Also, Goldberg's (2007) experimental study found that 2 hr of SH training did not increase trainees' intention to seek legal counsel if they experience SH. No studies were identified that investigate the effect of providing SH training on employers' success in defending external SH claims when filed, or employers' success in avoiding punitive damages in those cases where liability has been established. Although legal concerns are a primary driver of employer-provided SH training, in terms of empirical research, the connection between SH training and positive organizational results is an area largely unexplored.

5.8.2 | Return on the investment

There are numerous practitioner-oriented articles claiming that SH training provides employers a high ROI (e.g., Chapman, 2003). However, the only identified report of an ROI study involving SH training is the Hill and Phillips (1997). Using a variety of pretraining and posttraining data sources (e.g., employee surveys, management surveys, formal internal SH complaints, external charges filed with the EEOC, litigation costs, and turnover rates), and a 1-year evaluation period, Hill and Phillips (1997) concluded that the SH training program of a large health care organization provided an ROI of 1,052%. Although evaluating ROI in individual organizations may provide management very valuable information, until there are more reliable and precise estimates of the effectiveness of the various forms that SH training may take, generalizable estimates of ROI for SH training remain highly speculative.

6 | DISCUSSION

6.1 | Summary of findings

The inherent limitations of qualitative reviews, together with the significant limitations associated with many of the reviewed studies, prevent us from reaching a general conclusion regarding the effectiveness of SH training in reducing the incidence of SH. However, our interdisciplinary review does provide the basis for several well-founded observations regarding SH training effectiveness. First, an analysis of relevant legal cases and EEOC guidance indicates that although employers may realize some law-related benefits simply by providing SH training even if the training is not fully effective, when the full range of legal effectiveness criteria are taken into account, there is a significant relationship between the legal effectiveness of SH training and effectiveness assessed using traditional training evaluation outcomes. Thus, it appears that a key to receiving the full legal benefits of SH training is ensuring that SH training is effective in changing the SH-related knowledge, skills, and workplace behaviors of its employees.

Second, SH training is relatively consistent in increasing both SH-related knowledge measured at the end of training and the internal reporting of perceived SH. Although some important questions remain

unanswered (e.g., to what extent is knowledge acquired in training retained and applied in the workplace?), the pattern and consistency of the findings are encouraging. Third, the most pressing need in terms of theory is for researchers to give greater and more consistent attention to basic, well-supported theory in the training literature. In particular, theory and research addressing training transfer warrant greater consideration in the design and evaluation of SH training programs (Blume et al., 2010).

Finally, although the reviewed studies, considered in light of theory and research from the broader training and SH literatures, support the conclusion that training alone is very unlikely to significantly reduce SH in the workplace, they also support the conclusion that training can play an important role in contributing to the prevention or reduction of SH if (a) it is conducted in accordance with science-based training principles and (b) the organizational context is supportive of the SH training efforts. Most notably, the reviewed studies were relatively consistent in finding that training increased trainees' knowledge of and/or sensitivity to what constitutes SH, and although trainee knowledge of what constitutes SH does not guarantee that SH will be prevented, it can play an important role in facilitating trainees' ability to bring their behavior in line with legal and/or organizational standards in the area of SH.

6.2 | Future research

Table 2 lists research needs and opportunities identified on the basis of our review of research investigating the effectiveness of SH training. The discussion in this section focuses on the highest priority research needs, and those deemed likely to benefit most from further explanation. Although organizational context is believed to play a critical role in moderating the effectiveness of SH training (Blume et al., 2010), research investigating that role is woefully lacking. As a result, many important questions are unanswered. To what extent do the terms of an organization's SH policy interact with training affect desired training outcomes? For example, do aggressive "zero tolerance" for SH policies make SH training less (or more) necessary? Do organizations' enforcement practices (e.g., the consistent punishment of harassers) have the direct and dominant effect on preventing SH suggested by Williams et al.'s (1999) findings, arguably making SH training less relevant? Or do SH training and enforcement practices interact in ways that can increase the success of organizations' efforts to prevent SH? How important is it to adapt SH training content, methods, or media to different organizational contexts?

Research investigating the role of organizational context in SH training effectiveness in multiple organizations in a single study would have many potential advantages. However, there are also ways to examine the role of organizational context that do not require researchers to get access to multiple organizations. For example, SH may vary significantly among units or groups within a single organization (e.g., Rosen & Martin, 1997). Future research should take advantage of these kinds of organizations to investigate the influence of contextual factors across units within organizations. Researchers should also look for opportunities to conduct studies evaluating SH training effectiveness in partnership with vendors who provide the same, or very similar, SH training to multiple organizations. To what extent does the same program yield different results in different organizational settings?

The importance of matching training approaches and trainee characteristics has been demonstrated in the training literature (Brown & Sitzmann, 2011), and several studies suggest that such matching may be important when it comes to SH training (e.g., Magley et al., 2013; Perry et al., 1998). Investigating whether there is a need to adapt SH training to employees with different cultural backgrounds, and if so, what types of adaptations might be effective, is an important area of research given cultural differences in attitudes toward SH and the growth of multinational work teams. There is also a need for research investigating whether SH training can be effective for individuals who have received SH training and, nonetheless, engage in sexually harassing conduct that was clearly addressed by the training. A review of SH cases suggests that if the SH conduct does not involve QPQ SH, employers often simply require the harasser to attend the same SH training a second time, and courts often accept that course of action as a reasonable employer response (e.g., *Grisell v. Emerald Correctional Management*, 2012). Is it reasonable to expect that remedial SH training can be effective? If so, how should such training be designed and implemented to maximize its effectiveness? Answers to these questions have important implications for organizations and judicial policy makers.

In addition to affecting trainees' knowledge, skills, or other characteristics, training may have a symbolic effect, conveying messages to employees, and others (e.g., customers and juries), about what an organization values (Brown & Sitzmann, 2011). Williams et al. (1999) treat SH training as an activity that directly communicates the organization's intolerance of SH, and Perry et al. (2010) suggest that SH training serves a symbolic purpose that benefits employers facing SH legal claims. We agree that the symbolic effects of training are "interesting and important" (Brown & Sitzmann, 2011, p. 470) and encourage research investigating both the positive and negative symbolic effects of SH training. For example, some employers believe it is important to have face-to-face training because, compared to online training, it sends employees a stronger message about the employer's commitment to addressing SH (Best et al., 2010). To what extent do SH training methods or media, or hours devoted to training, signal to trainees that the organization takes SH seriously? Does the direct involvement of organizational leaders in the training send a message that impacts SH training effectiveness?

The mixed findings regarding the effect of SH training on attitudes is not surprising given that attitude change is relatively difficult to achieve, and many of the studies attempting to impact SH-related attitudes involve very modest training efforts. Given the difficulty of changing attitudes and the practical constraints often associated with employer-provided SH training (i.e., limited time and resources), we urge researchers to address the question of whether attempting to change attitudes through SH training is among the best ways for organizations to prevent or reduce SH. Multiple theories indicate that behavior change may occur without attitude change (the theory of planned behavior, Ajzen, 1991; theory related to behavioral modeling, Mayer & Russell, 1987). Consistent with these theories, Perry et al. (1998) found that although a training video did not significantly affect males trainees' attitude (LSH), it did have a significant effect on trainee's behavior (i.e., less likely to touch a female confederate).

TABLE 2 Priority research questions and research design issues warranting greater attention

Priority research questions	
Research question(s)	**Comment**
What training objectives are most critical to achieving the desired results of SH training (e.g., reduced incidence of SH and avoiding legal liability)?	Prescribed SH training objectives based on qualitative needs assessments abound. However, the relationship between the objectives driving SH and the desired training results has not been empirically investigated. Consequently, the extent to which current employer-provided SH training is focusing on the right things remains an open question.
In what ways, and to what extent, do organizational context variables impact the effectiveness of SH training? For example, can organizations' enforcement practices have a direct and dominant effect on preventing SH, making SH training unnecessary? Or does SH training interact with enforcement practices to significantly increase organizations' success in preventing SH?	Field research investigating the impact of organizational context variables (e.g., formal SH policies, enforcement practices, and POTSH) on the effectiveness of SH training is arguably the top research need in the SH training effectiveness. literature. Although getting access to organizations to conduct this research is a considerable challenge, there is reason to believe organizations may become more motivated to participate in studies that provide evidence of SH training effectiveness.
How important is it to adapt SH training content, methods, or delivery modes to different organizational contexts? Do the benefits outweigh the costs?	Adapting SH training to use organization specific language and examples should make the training more understandable and meaningful to trainees. Further, the organization context may indicate a need for more or less intensive SH training efforts, or training emphasizing specific issues. However, the magnitude of the assumed benefits of adapting SH training to different organizational contexts has not been investigated.
Is there a need to adapt SH training to employees with different cultural backgrounds, and if so, what types of adaptations might be effective?	Research in the SH literature demonstrates cultural differences in attitudes toward SH (O'Leary-Kelly et al., 2009), and research in the training literature suggests the potential benefit of adapting instructional strategies for learners with different cultural backgrounds (Lee & Li, 2008).
For what purposes, and under what circumstances, is online SH training effective? What is the relative effectiveness of online compared to face-to-face or "live" training in achieving different training objectives (e.g., knowledge acquisition, skill development, and reducing incidence of SH)? Is the EEOC's explicit strong preference for live SH training justified?	There is a general need for research investigating the most effective ways (content, methods, and delivery modes) of achieving different training objectives. The need for research investigating the effectiveness of online SH training is especially great given its widespread use and continued growth, competing claims regarding the relative effectiveness of online versus live SH training, and the current lack of research investigating online SH training effectiveness.
To what extent do training design features (e.g., delivery methods, hours of training, and involvement of top leaders) have a symbolic impact that can significantly impact SH training effectiveness, either positively or negatively?	Training may have a symbolic effect, conveying messages to employees and others, about what an organization values (Brown & Sitzmann, 2011). That message may affect employees' motivation in training, or the transfer of knowledge or skills acquired in training to the job. It may also send a message to judges or juries that impacts the legal effectiveness of an employer's SH training.
What types of remedial SH training are being required by employers (i.e., training for employees who engaged in sexually harassing conduct that was addressed in SH training the employees previously received)? Is there evidence of the effectiveness of remedial SH training?	Anecdotal employer accounts indicate that if the SH conduct does not involve QPQ SH, employers often simply require the harasser to attend the same SH training a second time. And reported SH legal cases indicate that courts often accept that course of action as a reasonable employer response. No published empirical study investigating the effectiveness of remedial SH training could be identified.
Does embedding SH training in broader training efforts to promote respect or civility in the workplace increase its effectiveness?	Training promoting respect or civility in the workplace has not been rigorously evaluated. However, it may complement more traditional SH focused training or have a positive framing effect that makes trainees more receptive to the SH content of training.
What is the effect of providing SH training on employers' SH litigation experiences? Does SH training reduce the filing of external SH claims against employers?	There are competing arguments regarding the effect of SH training on the filing of external SH claims, reports that some employers do not provide SH training because of concerns about increasing SH litigation (Dobbin & Kelly, 2007), and very little relevant empirical evidence.
Is there empirical support for the employer-provided SH training requirements mandated by some states, such as California?	State laws mandating employer-provided SH training specify requirements regarding the content, methods, and length of time in training. The effectiveness of mandated SH training has been questioned, but not directly tested in reported research.
Research design issues warranting greater attention from researchers	
The explicit identification of the objectives of training, and the alignment of training content and evaluation measures with the identified objectives (including, but not limited to, the identification of the definition or definitions of SH that trainees are expected to learn in training and use in guiding their workplace behavior).	
Avoiding designs that confound the effects of training content, instructional delivery, and instructional methods (to the extent possible).	
Distinguishing between internal and external reporting in measures of SH reporting behavior and intent to report SH.	
Considering whether, in light of the research questions being investigated, it may be important to distinguish between different categories of SH behavior (e.g., QPQ vs. HE) in measurement and analysis.	
The length of evaluation period needed to assess changes in the incidence of SH due to training.	
Avoiding manifestly unrealistic training interventions in laboratory studies purporting to assess the effectiveness of SH training (examples from reported studies include interventions lasting 5 min, or involving the reading of a one-page document).	
Taking into account the multiple stages in the training process at which "organizational context" variables may impact SH training effectiveness (see Figure 1).	

Note. EEOC = Equal Employment Opportunity Commission; HE = hostile environment; POTSH = perceived organizational tolerance of SH; QPQ = quid pro quo; SH = sexual harassment.

Attempting to change trainee attitudes appears to be a relatively common approach taken in SH training; more research is needed before it can be determined whether it is a wise approach.

At different points in this article, we suggested the need for researchers investigating the effectiveness of SH training to attend to a number of research design issues (see Table 2). Although there is considerable variation in the extent to which the reported studies have taken the research design issues identified in Table 2 into account, the issues need to receive much greater collective attention from researchers if there is to be significant progress in building a coherent cumulative body of knowledge regarding the effectiveness of SH training.

Although there is a role for laboratory studies and cross-sectional research to contribute to the understanding of the SH training effectiveness, significant contributions to answering the research questions identified in Table 2 are most likely to result from research conducted within organizational settings and employing longitudinal designs. Gaining access to organizations to conduct such studies will remain a significant challenge. The EEOC's and courts' increasing emphasis on requiring employers' to provide evidence of the effectiveness of their SH training in order to avoid legal liability should lead to an increase in the motivation of organizations to participate in empirical studies. However, researchers should not assume that organizational decision makers are aware of and appreciate the potential net legal benefits of conducting SH training effectiveness research. Rather, when seeking organizational access, researchers need to be prepared to articulate and explain both the various ways in which fully effective SH training can result in net legal benefits (e.g., reducing the incidence of SH, *E-F* defense, and *Kolstad* defense) and the important role that the proposed research can play in helping ensure that the organization's SH prevention efforts are effective from both legal and behavioral science perspectives.

Finally, the challenges associated with conducting research relating to SH, together with the separate challenges associated with conducting studies investigating the effectiveness of training, make it likely that any single study investigating the effectiveness of SH training will have one or more notable limitations. It will, therefore, be important for researchers to conduct meta-analytic investigations addressing the identified research questions as permitted by available studies.

7 | CONCLUDING COMMENT

Given the ubiquitous nature of SH training, and the potential benefits of effective SH training to individuals, organizations, and society, we were surprised to discover that the literature addressing SH training effectiveness was still at a relatively early stage of development. We hope that the present article increases awareness of the need for additional research investigating the effectiveness of SH training, and facilitates both new and more rigorous research investigating the many important questions that have not been adequately addressed to date.

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