

Original Article

A Study on Sexual Harassment Occurring among Students

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Abstract: Women who attend universities are frequently targets of sexual assault. The purpose of this review of the research is to evaluate the importance, frequency, risk factors, interventions, long- and short-term consequences, and implications of sexual assault on young women who were enrolled in university programs. Every segment will go deeper into specific facets of the problem and the progress made thus far to either completely eradicate or significantly reduce incidents of sexual assault on college campuses. A few of the policies that were recently put into place include bystander education initiatives, improved university resources for victims of sexual assault, and the creation of new and improved legislation. While further study is needed to address both the avoidance and treatment of victims of sexual harassment, this overview of the literature aims to inform and explore the general state of sexual assault among female populations in institutions. In order to eradicate sexual harassment on college campuses, we must push for reform, workable solutions, and victim justice. The sexual assault of young adults attending college is a significant societal concern in today's society. A recurring topic in the body of prior research on sexual assault is the definition of nonconsensual sexual acts, such as penetration, touching, and fondling. This study highlights the significance of the problem for people who are more likely to experience sexual harassment and who are also more likely to suffer from inadequate support or care after a sexual assault.

Keywords: Sexual Harassment, Women, Students, Universities.

I. INTRODUCTION

Sexual harassment remains a pervasive and deeply concerning issue, with college campuses proving to be no exception to its insidious presence. The sexual assault of young adults attending college is a significant societal concern in today's society. A recurring feature in the body of prior research has been the definition of sexual assault as any nonconsensual sexual conduct, including caressing, penetrating, and touching. Women were sexually raped 28% of the time, whereas men were sexually assaulted 12% of the time, according to Mellins et al. (2017). This indicates that women were sexually abused more frequently than men.

University sexual harassment is a serious issue that requires future attention and development. The widespread and pervasive problem of sexual assault on college campuses impacts all generations of women. Women's mental, physical, and social health are all impacted by this problem (Ekore, 2012; Klein & Martin, 2021). Major depressive illnesses and post-traumatic stress disorder are common in women who experienced sexual harassment (Farahi & McEachern, 2021). Women who experience sexual assault in universities may also perform worse academically because they drop out of college at a far higher rate than those who do not. (Potter et al., 2018).

Sexual harassment may be of the following types (Paludi et al., 2006):

- Unwelcomed sexual advances;
- Sexual suggestions, any comments, and any specific sexual remarks;
- Suggestive indecent or insulting sounds;
- Expressed threat of revenge for refusal to comply with a sexual request;
- Patting, pinching, brushing up against another's body;
- Sexually suggestive objects, books, magazines, posters, photographs, cartoons, e-mails, or pictures displayed in the school/work area;
- Denial of any academic benefit for refusal to accept sexual requests remains a pervasive and deeply concerning issue, with college campuses proving to be no exception to its insidious presence.

This research delves into the multifaceted aspects of sexual harassment within the realm of higher education, aiming to shed light on the prevalence, impact, and underlying factors that contribute to this alarming phenomenon. As the research navigates through the complexities of this issue, the goal is to foster awareness, promote dialogue, and advocate for a safer and more inclusive college environment for all students. Sexual harassment has been witnessed among college students across the



country (Williams, Lam, & Shively, 1992). A majority of students studying in colleges experience sexual harassment (Klein & Martin, 2021). This study emphasizes the significance of addressing young adults' dangers of sexually harassing and assaulting others via policy, research, and criminal justice systems outside of college and university institutions. (Hardt, et al., 2023). Sexual assault and sexual harassment are closely related. Victimization of young adults emphasizes how critical it is to identify and address early behavioral infractions in all phases, i.e., Tamil Nadu (Chennai), Andhra Pradesh (Madanapalle, Vishakhapatnam), Karnataka (Bangalore). The present article aims to discover the potential reasons and behavior of students in educational institutions. The different sections of the article follow the TAILMARDCR model (Kumar,2023).

II. MATERIALS AND METHOD

A) Study Area:

The study focused on college/university students across almost all South Indian states, i.e., Tamil Nadu (Chennai), Andhra Pradesh (Madanapalle, Vishakhapatnam), and Karnataka (Bangalore). This study exposes us to many truths unrevealed in our society. The primary data was collected from select institutions in different locations.

B) Method:

The study has adopted a survey method using a questionnaire consisting of 19 questions, including demographic information. This questionnaire was distributed among the college students and universities. Google Forms was used to circulate the questionnaire (Which was passed to many colleges mentioned as follows):

1. What type(s) of sexual harassment have you experienced?
2. Sexual harassment is only a problem between two people.
3. When was the most recent time you had a sexually harassing or abusive experience/s?
4. Who did this to you?
5. What is the feeling you have after the incident?
6. Do you feel you have been pushed or forced to do anything differently because of your experience of sexual harassment? (e.g. not walking a certain route, change of dress etc.)
7. Have you ever experienced sexual harassment while at college?
8. Have you ever witnessed sexual harassment while at college?
9. If yes, did you report the issue?
10. Are you aware of the college's policies and procedures for preventing and addressing sexual harassment?
11. Were you satisfied with the college's response to the reported incident(s)?
12. Have you received any education or training about sexual harassment at this college?
13. Did you feel you needed support or help with this?
14. Who supported you?
15. Sexual harassment can be avoided if there is CCTV surveillance?
16. Would you contact the helpline if you would like support in the future?

The study focused on college/university students across almost all South Indian states, i.e., Tamil Nadu (Chennai), Andhra Pradesh (Madanapalle, Vishakhapatnam), and Karnataka (Bangalore). The Google forms were distributed to the institutions Garden City University, Madanapalle Institute of Technology and Science (MITS), SRM University, Anna University, Presidency University, Jain University, Vel Tech University, Gitam University, CMR University, and St. Joseph's College.

C) Digitalization Metrics and Indicators:

Percentage analysis that was conducted using Microsoft Excel allowed for easy calculation of percentages. Charts were created using Microsoft Excel to represent the findings visually and make them more accessible to read.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The demographic question helps us to comprehend the maximum inputs from which part of adolescence we have received the utmost who we have focused upon. The demographic analysis in Fig: 1 shows that the sample consisted of the age group of 20-22 years, mostly followed by the age group of 22-24.

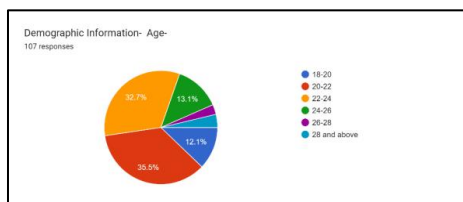


Figure 1: Demographic Analysis of Age

The second most important factor was to understand the sex ratio. Though the methods and reactions to harassment vary, harassment of men and women is equally likely to occur. Sexual jokes, remarks, gestures, and looks are more likely to be directed against female pupils. Male students are addressed as gay or a homophobic name.

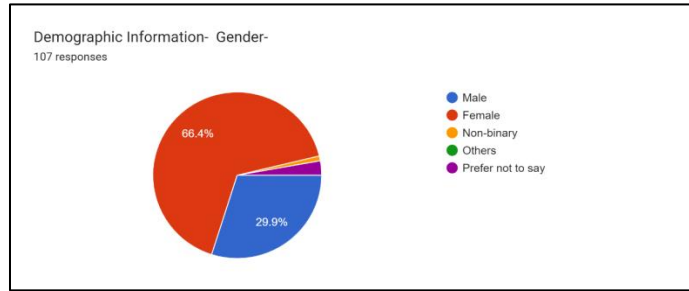


Figure 2: Demographic Analysis of Gender Ratio

Sexual harassment can cause emotional distress in female students, including feelings of embarrassment, anger, lowered confidence, fear, uncertainty about their ability to have a good relationship, confusion or conflict about their identity, and disappointment with their college experience. The encounter can compel female pupils to alter their conduct in a certain manner. For instance, almost 50% of female victims steer clear of the harasser and/or a certain campus building or location. Sexual harassment victims who are female are more inclined to experience difficulty sleeping or difficulty focusing in class.

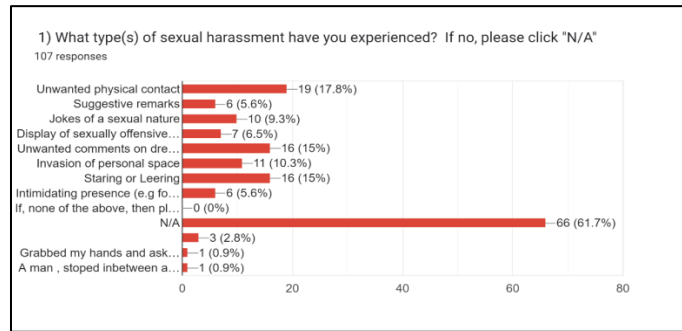


Figure 3: Types of Sexual Harassment

Figure 3 exhibits that more than one-third of college students do not tell anyone about their experiences with sexual harassment. Those who do confide in someone usually tell a friend. Female students intend to talk to someone about their experiences than are male students. The second major reason for the trauma is unwanted physical contact (17.9%), as per our analysis. It is found that many students have not responded openly but reported as N/A. Unwanted physical contact led students to undergo the fear of facing society again. There are several other reasons for trauma, like Staring and leering (15.1%), unwanted comments on dresses and appearance (14.2%), jokes of a sexual nature (9.4%) and so on.

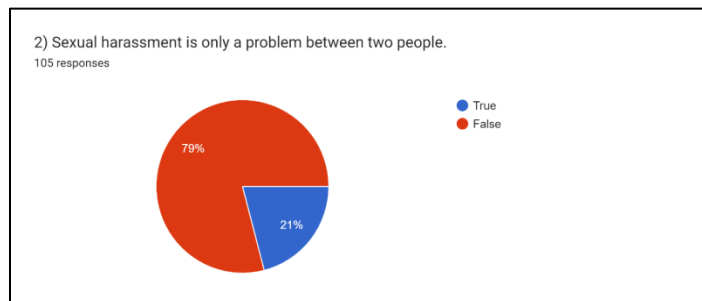


Figure 4: Sexual Harassment Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation

Figure 4 shows that Sexual harassment is when someone is subjected to verbal or physical abuse that is akin to discrimination based on their sexual orientation. In cases when harassment occurs between individuals of the same sex, the victim of the harassment must demonstrate that the harassment was motivated by their sexual orientation rather than just the harasser's possible sexual interest. Additionally, the victim of harassment must have received different treatment than someone of the other sex. The general public understands that it is not a problem between the two; instead, it is a society's problem.

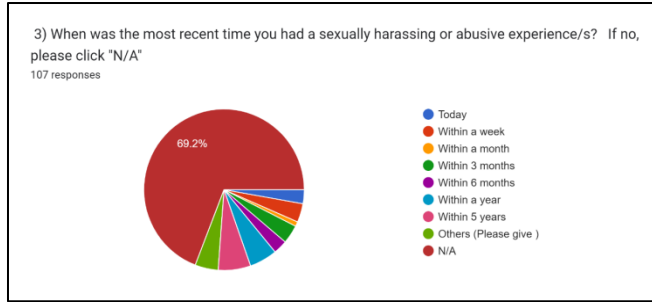


Figure 5: Cases of Harassment

Figure 5 shows that cases of harassment occur often. It is evident from the results that the sample respondents have witnessed either type of harassment at some point of time in recent months.

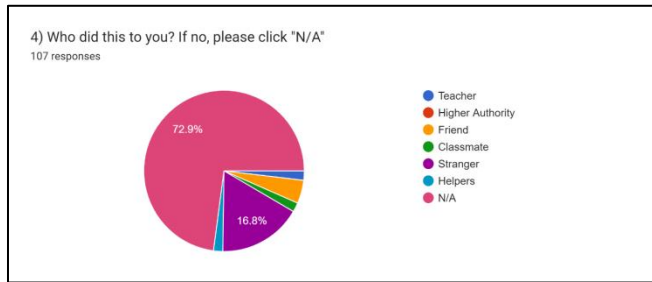


Figure 6: Stranger who are the Reason for Harassment

Figure 6 states that it is the strangers who are the reason for harassment (16.8%), followed by friends, classmates, teachers, and helpers. It shows that the source of harassment can be anyone around us.

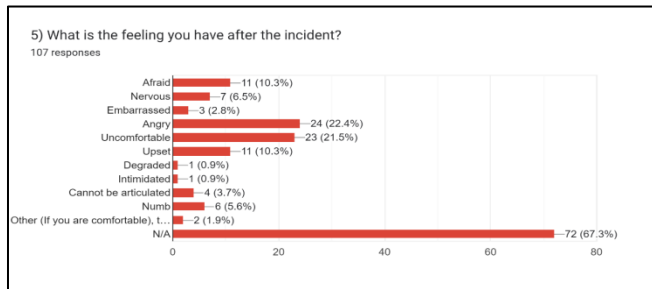


Figure 7: Ratio of Feeling after the Harassment

Figure 7 states that most of the time, the students feel angry and uncomfortable after they suffer from such incidents. They also feel afraid, nervous, upset, numb, and degraded, which may lower down their morale and self-confidence.

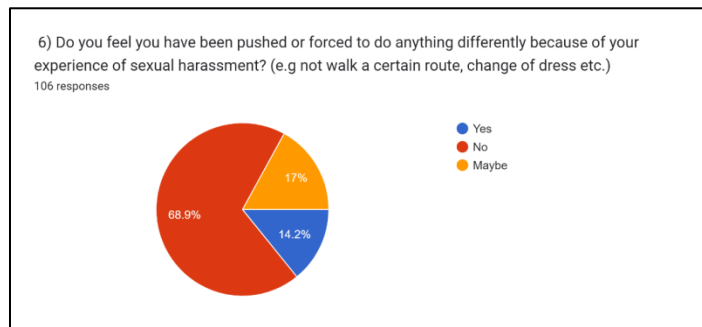


Figure 8: Special Instructions by the Authorities to Address the Issue

The respondents also reported that they had been directed with special instructions by the authorities to address the issue. It may include suggestions like not walking on a route, dressing, talking to someone and others.

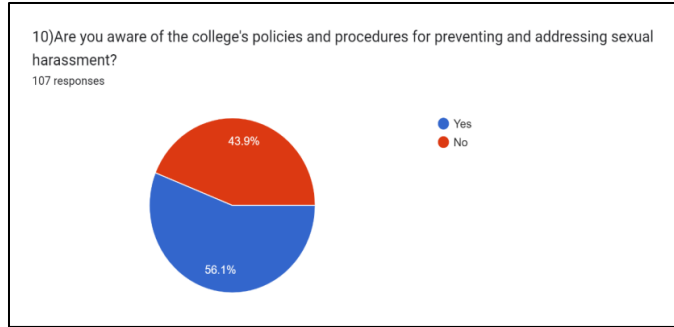


Figure 9: Awareness of College Policy Regarding Harassment

When the respondents were asked about their awareness of college policy regarding harassment, most of them were aware of it. However, a major group was unaware of such policies at institutions. Hence, it is highly required that they should know about the institution's policies and guidelines.

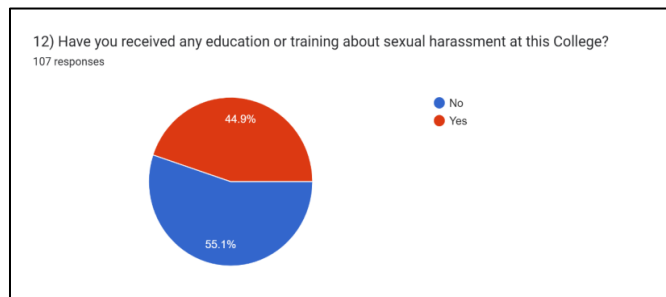


Figure 10: Majority of the Students are not aware of Deal with Harassment

Figure 10 reflects that the majority of students are not aware of any training to deal with sexual harassment in their institutions. It makes a great difference if they are trained and educated to handle the situation or file a complaint against such incidents. They will also be aware of their rights given under such circumstances.

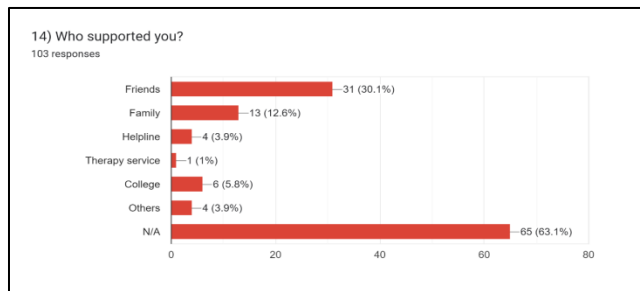


Figure 11: Supports during the Harassment

Figure 11 illustrates that during the incidents of harassment, friends and family come first in support of them. It also suggests that in the majority of cases, students do not get help, or they do not seek it. The data also argues that the role of college in supporting the victims is less than that of family and friends.

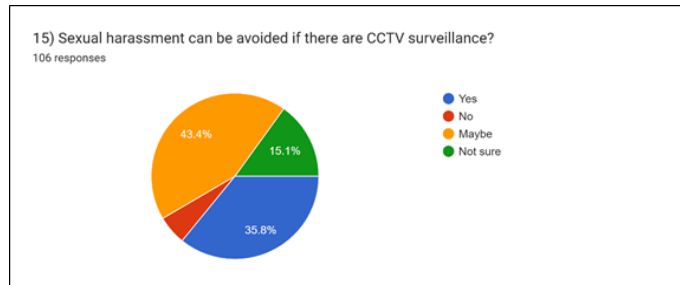


Figure 12: Installation of CCTV Cameras in Institutions

More than one third of the respondents think that the IOT applications can help address the harassment issues at various places. Installation of CCTV cameras in institutions, public places, and open areas can be taken as a precautionary measure to address the situation.

IV. CONCLUSION

In summary, sexual assault is a severe and complex issue that requires study and attention in order to abolish or significantly reduce its frequency either totally. There are a number of immediate and long-term consequences of sexual assault that unavoidably affect women's wellness in higher education. Even though there has been considerable progress in addressing and resolving this problem, further adjustments and successful interventions are still required. Raising awareness of sexual harassment is crucial since it has a significant impact on women, minorities, the LGBTQIA+ community, and those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Any institution should want to improve this condition on an institutional level. It is a challenge to prevent and address the sexual harassment of women in colleges and universities. However, academic institutions can address that challenge by demonstrating their preparation to do so (Johnson et al., 2018). Institutions can form stringent rules and regulations and an independent body to address them. Institutions can focus on policy frameworks and guidelines to be followed and measures to be taken to stop harassment on their campuses.

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