

Assessment of sexual harassment and associated factors among grade 9-12 female students at schools in ambo district, Oromia national regional state, Ethiopia

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To cite this article:

Ejeta Eshetu. Assessment of Sexual Harassment and Associated Factors among Grade 9-12 Female Students at Schools in Ambo District, Oromia National Regional State, Ethiopia. *Science Journal of Public Health*. Vol. 3, No. 1, 2015, pp. 97-100.

doi: 10.11648/j.sjph.20150301.27

Abstract: Research question: What is the prevalence of the sexual harassment and various factors influencing it in school? Setting: Secondary and preparatory school of Ambo district. Study Design: Institutional based cross-sectional study design with qualitative study design. Participant: All female students from grade nine to twelve found in Ambo Secondary and Preparatory School (n=414). Methodology: out of 1631 regular female students in the Schools, 414 were selected by stratified sampling technique. Data were collected using structured pre tested questionnaires with Focus group discussion guide and entered into EPI Info then exported to SPSS for analysis. Result: Prevalence of sexual harassment among female students in school through their school life and past twelve months were 147(35.5%) and 138(33.3%), respectively. Having peer relationship problem, parents not living together and had ever chewed khat were statistically significant with last twelve months sexual harassment in school. Therefore, ongoing awareness creation, preventive measure, and law enact are essential.

Keywords: Sexual Harassment, Students in School, Female, Ambo

1. Introduction

Sexual harassment is typically defined as a form of unwanted or unwelcome sexual attention and is considered as a form of gender-based violence. If it is among youth encompasses acts that are sufficiently severe, persistent, or pervasive to limit a student's ability to participate in or benefit from an education program or activity, or to create a hostile or abusive educational environment.

Harassment and discrimination to female in school are often unnoticed types of violence that frequently makes it difficult for affected individuals and groups to realize their full capacity (1).

According to study conducted in Jimma zone on violence against school girl the major harasser and other unwelcome sexual advances and hostile environments against the school girls were 50.7% of street wanderers, followed by 31.29% of school boys and 17.4% of teachers (2).

The objectives of this study to assess the prevalence and factors associated with sexual harassment at school among grade nine to twelve female students in Ambo Secondary and Preparatory Schools in Ambo District.

2. Methods and Materials

School based cross-sectional study design supplemented with qualitative research method was conducted in Ambo district in 2012/13.

A stratified sampling technique with simple random sampling was employed for the selection of the sampling units. A structured pre-tested questionnaire was used to collect the data. The data were entered into EPI Info version 3.5 and exported to SPSS version 16 for analysis.

Two Focus Group Discussions were conducted using FGD guide questions during discussion. Members of FGD were selected using purposive sampling technique.

3. Observations

A total of 414 female students were included in the study from which 329 (79.5%) were from urban. The mean age of respondents was (17.17 +1.67 years) with an age range of 14-25 years.

Table 1. Socio-demographic characteristics of Ambo Secondary and Preparatory School female Students, Ethiopia, April, 2012, (n = 414).

| Variables | Number | Percentage (%) |
|----------------------------|--------|----------------|
| Age | | |
| <15 | 61 | 14.7 |
| 15-19 | 311 | 75.1 |
| >19 | 42 | 10.1 |
| Residence | | |
| Urban | 329 | 79.5 |
| Rural | 85 | 20.5 |
| Religion | | |
| Orthodox | 208 | 50 |
| Protestant | 193 | 46.4 |
| Muslim | 13 | 2.7 |
| Marital status | | |
| Unmarried | 375 | 90.6 |
| Married | 39 | 9.4 |
| Current living arrangement | | |
| With both parents | 209 | 50.5 |
| With relative | 84 | 20.3 |
| Alone | 59 | 14.3 |
| With Mother or Father only | 39 | 9.4 |
| With Husband/partner | 23 | 5.6 |
| Total | 414 | 100% |

3.1. Parental Socio-Economic Characteristics

Two hundred and ninety one participants (70.3%) reported that their parents are living together whereas 123 (29.7%) reported that they are separated.

3.2. History of Respondents' Substances Use

Drinking alcohol, chewing khat and smoking cigarette/tobacco ever in their life were reported by 79 (19.1%), 43 (10.4%) and 8 (1.9%) respondents, respectively. Regarding to the frequency of substances use 28 (35%) and 27 (62.8%) of respondents were using alcohol and khat frequently, respectively.

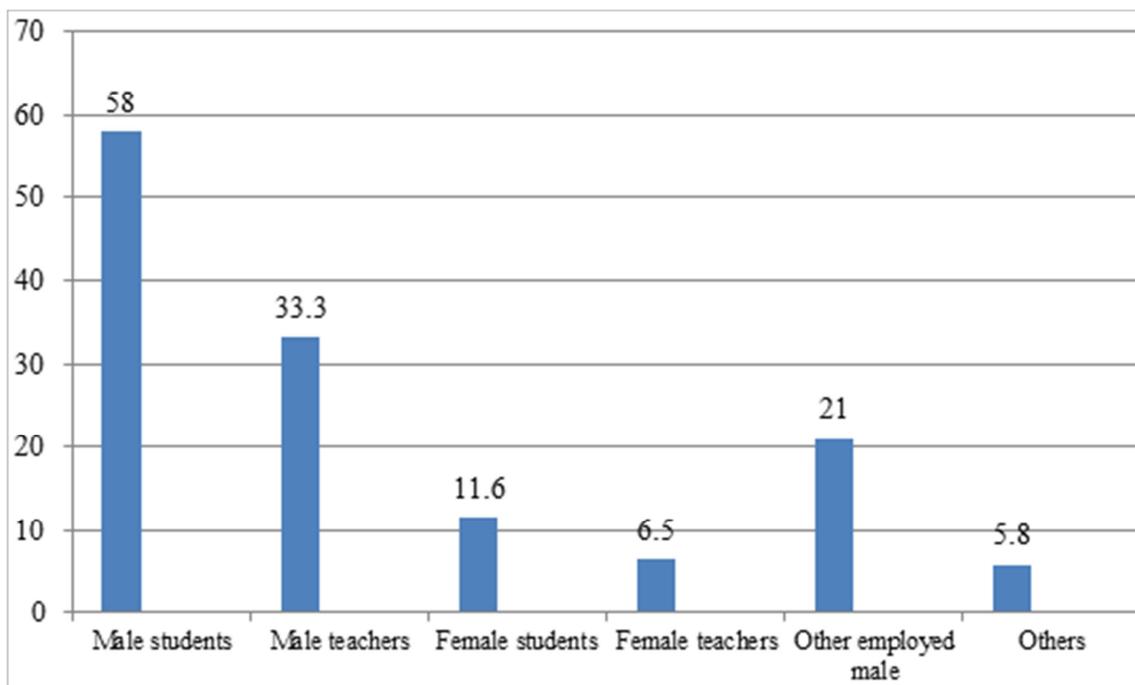
3.3. Prevalence of Sexual Harassment

Among the total 414 female students 147 (35.5%) and 138 (33.3%) of them experienced sexual harassment throughout school life and in the last twelve months in the schools, respectively.

Out of 138 (33.3%) who reported sexual harassment in the last twelve months, 66 (47.8%) were verbal and 49 (35.5%) were physical sexual harassments. Among female students who experienced sexual harassment in the last twelve months, 84 (60.9%) feared harassment in the school and 54 (39.1%) never feared being sexual harassed in the school.

3.4. Perpetrator of Sexual Harassment

The main perpetrators of twelve months sexual harassment in school were male students 80 (58%) (Figure 1).



Note-Percentage do not add up together because multiple response possible

Figure 1. Distribution of sexual harasser on female students in Schools, April, 2012.

3.5. Reported Place of Sexual Harassment in School

Sexual harassment mostly occurred in the schools compound 68 (49.3%), followed by in classroom 57 (41.3%), and in the office 27 (19.7%). Similar place mentioned during focus group discussion.

3.6. Experiences of Unwanted Sexual Behaviour in the School

The most common unwanted sexual behaviors that were experienced by sexual harassed female students in the schools were repeatedly told sexual stories or jokes 70

(50.7%), attempts to comment on sexual life 65 (47%), ask for date, drink or dinner though the answer “no” 64 (46.4%), attempt to established romantic relationship despite efforts of discourage 63 (45.7%) and made offensive remarks about appearance or body 61 (44.2%) (Table 2)

Table 2. Unwanted sexual behaviours female students experienced in Schools in the last twelve months, April, 2012(N=138).

| Experiences of unwanted sexual behaviour | No | Percentage |
|--|----|------------|
| Repeatedly told sexual stories or jokes that were offensive | 70 | 50.7 |
| Made unwanted attempts to draw into discussion/comment of sexual matter and life | 65 | 47.0 |
| Made offensive remarks about the appearance the body | 61 | 44.2 |
| Made gestures of sexual way that embarrassed | 33 | 24.0 |
| Continued to ask for date, drink or dinner though the answer “no” | 64 | 46.4 |
| Made unwanted attempt to established romantic relationship despite efforts of discouragement | 63 | 45.7 |

Table 3. Multivariate logistic regression analysis for potential factors associated with twelve months sexual harassment among female students grade 9-12 in School in Ambo District, April, 2012(n=414).

| Variables | sexual harassment | | Crude OR (95% CI) | Adjusted OR (95% CI) |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|-------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| | Yes(n) | No(n) | | |
| Residence | | | | |
| Urban | 101 | 228 | 0.575(0.353, 0.937)* | 0.577(0.343,0.971)* |
| Rural | 37 | 48 | 1 | 1 |
| Marital status | | | | |
| Unmarried | 131 | 244 | 2.454(1.054, 5.713)* | 2.855(1.175, 6.94)* |
| Married | 7 | 32 | 1 | 1 |
| Having boy friend in school | | | | |
| Yes | 33 | 37 | 2.03(1.204, 3.423)** | 0.642(0.356, 1.156) |
| No | 105 | 239 | 1 | 1 |
| Peer relationship problem | | | | |
| Yes | 43 | 34 | 3.222(1.937, 5.357)*** | 2.839(1.668, 4.834)*** |
| No | 95 | 242 | 1 | 1 |
| Parents living together | | | | |
| Yes | 88 | 205 | 1 | 1 |
| No | 50 | 71 | 2.027(1.309,3.138)** | 1.662(1.041, 2.654)* |
| Currently living with | | | | |
| Alone | 33 | 26 | 1 | 1 |
| Both parents | 57 | 152 | 0.295(0.16, 0.56)*** | 0.53(0.267, 1.052) |
| Husband/partner | 4 | 19 | 0.166(0.05, 0.548)** | 0.37(0.073, 1.883) |
| Mother/Father only | 12 | 27 | 0.35(0.149, 0.821)* | 0.498(0.199, 1.249) |
| Relative | 32 | 52 | 0.485(0.248, 0.954)* | 0.718(0.342, 1.508) |
| Khat chewing | | | | |
| Yes | 25 | 18 | 3.171(1.664, 6.044)*** | 2.729(1.347, 5.53)** |
| No | 113 | 258 | 1 | 1 |
| Ever alcohol consumption | | | | |
| Yes | 35 | 44 | 1.792(1.086, 2.957)* | 1.294(0.639, 2.619) |
| No | 103 | 232 | 1 | 1 |

*Significant at $p < 0.05$, ** Significant at $p < 0.01$, *** Significant at $p < 0.001$

During focus group discussion members of discussant were mention being assertive (confident) female students, being academically outstanding female students, being cosmetic and immodest dressing style is some of the factors associated with harassment.

4. Discussion

The prevalence of sexual harassment among female students was 35.5% throughout their schools life and 33.3%

| Experiences of unwanted sexual behaviour | No | Percentage |
|--|----|------------|
| Touch in a way that made feel uncomfortable | 40 | 29.0 |
| Made unwanted attempt to fondle or kiss | 30 | 21.7 |
| Implied faster better treatment if sexually cooperative | 46 | 33.3 |
| Made feel bride with sort of reward to engage in sexual behavior | 40 | 29.0 |
| Treated badly for refusing to have sex | 38 | 27.5 |
| Made feel threatened with sort of retaliation for not being sexually cooperative | 36 | 26.0 |

Note: Percentage does not add up to 100% because multiple responses were possible.

3.7. Factors Associated with Sexual Harassment

In multivariate logistic regression analysis, sexual harassment was associated significantly and independently with residence, marital status, having peer relationship problem in school, parents living together and ever khat chewing only (Table 3).

in the last twelve months at the schools. The prevalence of twelve months sexual harassment in the schools was higher than the findings of study conducted in Canada where the prevalence rate was 23% (5). However, it is lower than the studies conducted in 2005 in Sweden(3).

A study conducted in Kenya on school girls revealed that prevalence of sexual harassment in school was 60% which is inconsistent with the corresponding values of this findings (6). The twelve months sexual harassment prevalence of the study was not in line with the studies conducted in 2008 in

Addis Ababa school, in 2003 in Dabat, and in Jimma Zone high school female students where the prevalence revealed that 74%, 44% and 73.4%, respectively (2, 4-5). One of the main possible reasons causing the different number of sexual harassment cases could be similar unwelcome sexual advance considered differently in different setting and in different researches.

In this study, the common types of sexual harassment in the schools were verbal sexual harassment and which were comparable with 49.8% and 31.1% from the study conducted in Jimma zone on high school female students (2).

Our study identified being unmarried, having a parents not living together, Khat chewing

Living in urban and having unfriendly relationship with peer to be significant associated with sexual harassment.

5. Conclusions

The study identified high prevalence of sexual harassment at school among female students and factors such as not have parents living together, khat chewing, unmarried, peer relationship problem and living in urban showed statistical significant association with sexual harassment at school. Therefore, for improvement school environment ongoing awareness creation, preventive measure, participatory intervention, counselling, and awareness program for female students.

Acknowledgement

We would like to thank University of Gondar for funding this study.

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