

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Description of Sexual Harassment Among University Students

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Many female students experience sexual harassment while in university. This can have an impact on mental well-being and affect student academic performance. This study aims to determine the incidence of sexual harassment among female students while studying at a university, West Java, Indonesia. **Method:** This research was conducted in March-April 2021 in one of the universities in West Java, Indonesia. The research design used descriptive quantitative methods involving 398 female students from 16 faculties. Samples are selected with inclusion criteria student (female) of the 2017-2019 undergraduate program and is the result of randomization of researchers through the technique Disproportionate Stratified Random Sampling. Data were collected using 16 items Sexual Experiences Questionnaire (SEQ) with validity (0.86) and reliability Cronbach's Alpha (0.922) which were analyzed univariately. **Results:** The results showed that 68.1% of female students had experienced sexual harassment, with some of them have experienced \geq it three times (23.4%). About > 50% of female students cause discomfort response; ignore; and perpetrators come from students, while < 50% of female students cause feelings of anger and perpetrators to come from lecturers and others. Almost all victims (95.1%) did not report the incident because they thought it was not a big problem (51.7%). The victim's attitude and decision-making factors became one of the drivers of the development of the incident. **Conclusion:** More than half of the female students had experienced sexual harassment. It is recommended to maximize the prevention and treatment strategies regarding sexual harassment that apply in the institution.

Keywords: Sexual assault, Sexual harassment, Sexual violence, University

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INTRODUCTION

Related problems to sexual crimes are still a global problem. Sexual harassment is one of the most common forms of sexual violence. Sexual harassment is behavior characterized by making inappropriate comments about sexually or sexually oriented physical approaches that are not desired. Sexual harassment is divided into three dimensions, including gender harassment; unwanted sexual attention; and sexual coercion (1).

Sexual harassment can occur in various areas, such as public transportation; social gatherings; home; or even formal places, such as offices; schools; and campus (2,3). Based on several studies, more victims of sexual harassment experienced women than men (2,4,5). The attractiveness factor and the level of strength in women are driving forces for perpetrators to commit acts of sexual harassment against women (6).

According to the American Psychological Association (2018), sexual harassment occurs in 150,000 female students on campus. The same is true in several countries, such as Norway, China, South Africa, and the United States which have a percentage incidence of sexual harassment were 21.6%, 43.1%, 60%, and 33%, respectively. Most of the perpetrators came from the students, lecturers, and staff of the college (7–10).

The same thing also happened in Indonesia, the Center for the Study of Indonesian Law and Policy (2019) stated that sexual harassment in the campus environment occupies the highest case compared to the level of education below it. This statement is supported by Statistics Indonesia with MoWECP (2017) that sexual violence is more vulnerable to women aged 15-64 years with higher education. Masruchah as Commissioner of National Commission on Violence Against Women stated that there were 1,011 cases of sexual harassment from 16 Islamic universities in Indonesia.

One of them happened at a university in West Java, Indonesia. The BEM of the Faculty of Law (Student Executive Board of the Faculty of Law) institution the

college (2020) revealed that in 2019, students reported having heard (74.1%), seeing firsthand (12.8%), and experiencing (22.15%) sexual harassment. Around 219 female students of whom admitted to experiencing sexual harassment verbally (45.7%), physically (15.5%), and in other forms (38.8%).

The lack of reports given by victims of sexual harassment on the cases they experienced makes this case like an iceberg phenomenon. This means that sexual harassment cases that appear on the surface do not guarantee the number of issues. The number of victims who choose to remain silent on matters of sexual harassment they experience is because they think that a complaint or report, if given, will only make them feel ashamed and afraid of the stigma that might arise (7).

These attitudes and assumptions certainly cannot be tolerated. Given that sexual harassment can affect a person's mental health condition, including female students. Sexual harassment can increase the risk, such as anxiety, depression; to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), to indirectly interfere with the performance to the academic achievement (14).

Similar studies related to sexual harassment in universities have been carried out both abroad and in Indonesia. However, most of the studies only reveal the number of incidents or prevalence which if there are additional variables only include frequency and perpetrator (7,9,10,14). Thus, this study will describe incidents of sexual harassment more comprehensively, including number of incidents; frequency; response; perpetrator; to reporting efforts.

As a first step in preventing the development of incidents of sexual harassment in university environment, it is necessary to conduct screening or identification related to these problems. This study aims to describe incidents of sexual harassment among female students while studying at a university in West Java, Indonesia. This research is expected to contribute to the prevention and treatment of sexual harassment in institutions.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study design

This research used a quantitative descriptive design with a survey approach (15).

Participants and Setting

This research was conducted in March-April 2021 at one of the public universities in Indonesia West Java, Indonesia. This study involved 398 female students from 16 faculties, with the criteria for female students (female) for the 2017-2019 undergraduate program and are the results of randomization of researchers through the technique Disproportionate Stratified Random Sampling.

Ethical considerations

This research has obtained approval from the Research Ethics Commission of a university (196/UN6.KEP/EC/2021), and this research has been approved by the higher education institution as the research location (1209/UN6.1.3/KM .04.02/2021).

Research instrument

This study uses 16 items of the instrument Sexual Experience Questionnaire (SEQ). Which is the result of adaptation and translation from Afifah, Widiyanti, and Sriati (2019) to the instrument developed by Fitzgerald, Gelfand, & Drasgow (1995). This instrument has been tested for its validity and reliability, with each value of (0.86) and (0.922).

Data collection

Researchers conducted randomization to determine prospective participants, then the researcher contact each potential participant online for approval. For Participants who are willing to be involved in the study, are welcome to fill out the questionnaire via google form that has been provided by the researcher.

Data analysis

The data was analyzed univariately, which resulted in a frequency distribution through the help of Microsoft Excel dan SPSS 22.

RESULTS

Characteristics of respondents

This study involved 398 female students from various faculties dominated by the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences as 12.3% and the Class of 2018 as many as 39.4% (Table I).

Incidents of sexual harassment

Based on 398 female students involved in the study, more

Table I: Frequency distribution of demographic characteristics (n = 398)

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Faculty		
Dentistry	14	3.5
Medicine	24	6
Nursing	22	5.5
Psychology	15	3.8
Mathematics and Natural Science	40	10.1
Agriculture	24	6
Animal Husbandry	17	4.3
Technology and Agricultural Industry	18	4.5
Geological Engineering	6	1.5
Fisheries and Marine Science	14	3.5
Pharmacy	13	3.3
Social and Political Sciences	49	12.3
Cultural Studies	48	12.1
Economics and Business	26	6.5
Communication Studies	44	11.1
Law	24	6
Classes		
2017	125	31.4
2018	157	39.4
2019	116	29.1

than half (68.1%) categorized as having experienced sexual harassment. As for the 271 female students who categorized as having experienced sexual harassment, the most common form of sexual harassment received comes from the dimension of unwanted sexual attention in the form of "invitation" building a romantic relationship" as much as 47.4% (Table II).

A total of 184 out of 271 female students categorized as having experienced sexual harassment provide follow-up responses including frequency, response, actors, and reporting efforts. The frequency is dominated by the 1-time category as much as 60.3%, the response is dominated by feelings uncomfortable as much as 82.1%, the perpetrators were dominated by students as much as 79.3%, and almost all victims never gave a report as much as 95.1%, with most of the reasons considered not a big problem (51.7%) (Table III).

DISCUSSION

Incidents of Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment has been experienced by 68.1% of female students at a university in West Java, Indonesia. This figure can be relatively high, considering that more than half of the female students were involved in the study. This is in line with Huang et al. (2019) that 72.8% of female students experienced at least one sexual harassment situation. In contrast to the research of Sivertsen et al. (2019) and Mellins et al. (2017) that sexual harassment that occurs in the university environment is below 50%, respectively.

However, the results of research studies have proven consistent that sexual harassment can occur in a college environment. Mellins et al. (2017) revealed that the high and low incidence rates could be caused by gender discrimination, lack of communication; the influence of alcohol use; lack of existing prevention programs in institutions; and the victim's physical strength and verbal ability to resist or avoid the situation. In addition, there are other factors such as clothing, exposure to sexual content, and off-campus activities that allow the perpetrator to commit acts of sexual harassment.

When viewed specifically, the results of the researchers' studies are based on the three dimensions acts of sexual harassment it was found that the dimensions of sexual attention that did not unwanted or unwanted sexual attention occupies the highest percentage compared to other dimensions. However, from the average percentage obtained, the gender harassment dimension or gender harassment also has a fairly high percentage after unwanted sexuality attention. The high percentage of occurrence of both, in accordance with the theory of Fitzgerald and Gelfand (2010) which states that unwanted sexual attention and gender harassment is the most common form of sexual harassment. As for forms of Unwanted sexual attention led to verbal and non-verbal behaviors that offensive and unwanted, and gender harassment leads to derogatory, hostile, and demeaning behavior of one of the genders. Based on the theory, revealed that the two dimensions are a single entity together found in a less familiar or friendly environment, which is different from sexual coercion

Table II. Frequency distribution of incidents of sexual harassment based on accepted forms of sexual harassment (n = 398)

Sexual Harassment Component	Frequency	Percentage
Unwanted Sexual Attention		
Someone repeatedly asks you for a date, such as eating or drinking together, even though you have refused	140	35.1
Someone trying to build a romantic relationship	189	47.4
Someone is trying to caress, fondle, or kiss you	82	20.6
Someone touches you in a way that makes you feel uncomfortable	127	31.9
Sexual Hostility (Gender)/Gender Harassment		
Someone insulted or demeaned you because of your sex (gender)?	89	22.3
Someone treats you differently because of your sex (gender)?	140	35.1
Did someone make offensive sex (gender) comments?	122	30.6
Sexual Hostility/Gender Harassment		
Is someone trying to get you or get you into a discussion about sexual issues?	151	37.9
Does someone tell a sexually offensive story or joke?	158	39.6
Did someone make a gesture or gesture of a sexual nature that offended you?	131	32.9
Did someone make an offensive remark about appearance, bodily or sexual activity?	164	41.2
Someone shows, uses, or distributes sex-related and indecent items or content?	88	22.1
Sexual Coercion		
Someone gives or promises some kind of reward (material or non-material) to engage in sexual behavior?	23	5.7
Did someone threaten you for not being sexually cooperative in sexual behavior?	28	7
Did someone mistreat you for refusing to have sex?	25	6.2
Someone treats you better if you are sexually cooperative in sexual behavior?	37	9.2

Table III: Frequency distribution of how often (frequency), responses, perpetrators, and reporting effort

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Frequency		
1 Time	111	60.3
2 Times	30	16.3
≥ 3 Times	43	23.4
Responses		
Ignoring	99	53.8
Doing nothing	46	25
Trying to find help	26	14.1
Feel uncomfortable	151	82.1
Feeling humiliated	59	32.1
Afraid	86	46.7
Angry	91	49.5
Confused	50	27.2
Trauma	27	14.7
Depression	3	1.6
Deviation towards studies: not wanted to continue the studies	2	1.1
Perpetrators		
Fellow Students	146	79.3
Institutional Leader	0	0
Lecturer	8	4.3
SBA/Campus Academic Subsection	0	0
PLP/Education Laboratory Institution	0	0
Etc	30	16.3
Reporting Effort		
Never	175	95.1
Ever	9	4.9
Reason if Never		
I don't think it's a big problem	90	51.7
Don't know whom to report to	60	34.5
Assuming it has nothing to do with campus	66	37.9
Feeling afraid and embarrassed to report	47	27
Protect the perpetrator	2	1.1

that leads to the quid pro quo that can be found in the familiar environment, such as from superiors (high-ranking officials) to the students themselves.

Frequency of sexual harassment

Based on 184 female students who gave responses related to frequency, most female students experienced sexual harassment in the once category (60.3%). This is not in line with the research of Jussen et al. (2019) and Sivertsen et al. (2019) that most of the sexual harassment experienced by female students is in the category of frequent or more than one time. However, there is a similar finding in the research of D'Abreu and Krahi (2016) that sexual harassment experienced by female students is dominated by frequency as much as one time in the last six months. Differences in frequency or how often sexual harassment is experienced can be due to cultural and individual attitudes (19). This is evidenced by research on Asian and American female students that student who stay longer in Canada tend to be more supportive of acceptance or tolerance of sexual harassment. In contrast, those with an Asian cultural orientation will report less experience and acceptance of acts of sexual harassment.

Sexual harassment response

Based on 184 female students who gave responses related to the reaction, it is known that the dominant response to female students who experienced sexual harassment was feeling uncomfortable (82.1%). This

is in line with the research of Asgola and Kaur (2017) that the proportion of responses in the form of feelings of discomfort is in the reasonably high category, at 72.3%. Other reactions, such as ignoring reactions to depression, were also found in the research of Thapalia, Dhungana, Adhikari, and Pandey (2020).

Herrera dan Expysito (2018) stated that sexual harassment is closely related to psychological responses, such as emotional stress, depression; worry; difficulty concentrating; anger; feelings of insecurity, to suicidal ideation. The factors that influence the psychological pressure include the type of sexual harassment received; the type of response (confrontation) of the victim, each individual's ideology; and social reactions received for the disclosures made (21,22).

Perpetrators of sexual harassment

Based on 184 female students who gave responses regarding perpetrators, it is known that perpetrators of sexual harassment are dominated by students (79.3%). This is in line with the research of Sivertsen et al. (2019) and Wood et al. (2018) that students are often involved and dominate the perpetrators of sexual harassment in the university environment. In general, students are in the age range of 18-25 years, where a person is at the stage of psychosocial development that leads to establishing relationships or relationships in a more intimate setting. Thus, there is often an urge for someone to have a partner who can channel their personal or

sexual needs (Erickson, in Orenstein & Lewis, 2021).

Suppose it is reviewed that the perpetrators of sexual harassment are male. In that case, this is related to the Natural Theory that sexual harassment can be formed due to natural sexual attraction between humans. In addition, it is said that men tend to have a stronger sexual drive, so they are often motivated to engage in sexual activity. Sometimes they assume that the action is not intended to be harassing but is merely a biological impulse.

Reporting efforts

Based on 184 female students who gave responses related to reporting efforts, it was found that almost all of them had never submitted a report on their experience of sexual harassment (95.1%). This was acknowledged by most of the female students who thought that the sexual harassment they experienced was not a big problem (51.7%).

This finding is in line with the research of Ostridge and D.O' Connor (2020) and Eisenberg et al. (2017) that most cases of sexual harassment that occur among female students are not officially reported to any party. Patel and Roesch (2018) also stated that it was often found that the incidence rates found in surveys did not match the official reports provided.

Another reason stated by Holland dan Cortina (2017) that often the reason victims do not report acts of sexual harassment is the characteristics of the assault itself; assume the services provided will not help and will only deepen the trauma; as well as feelings of shame, fear, and worry about social reactions and confidentiality from the party or institution itself.

Apart from the factors of each victim itself, Perkins dan Warner (2017) mention that the unclear definition of sexual violence or harassment, which varies greatly as well as policies and procedures for reporting on sexual harassment, which is often problematic, are also the drivers of the reluctance of victims to provide reports.

CONCLUSION

The results showed that more than half of the female students involved in the study experienced sexual harassment incidents. Most of them were experienced once, causing discomfort, and the perpetrators came from among students. Almost all female students who were victims of sexual harassment never reported it to the institution, arguing that the incident was not a big problem.

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- ORIGINAL RESEARCH QUALITY OF LIFE OF FAMILY CAREGIVERS OF CHILDREN WITH LEUKEMIA : A. 2020;6(2):52–8.
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