

# Knowledge and Attitude Regarding Sexual Harassment among Students at a Government School of Dhading, Nepal

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*Sexual harassment is a serious and common public health problem which has direct effects on dignity as well as physical and mental health among victims. Many victims of Sexual harassment are unaware of various form of harassment due to lack of knowledge and awareness. There is very low rate of reporting the incident of harassment because of lengthy justice process, fear of being humiliation. This study aimed to assess the knowledge and attitude regarding sexual harassment among students at a government school of dhading, Nepal.*

*A descriptive, cross-sectional study was conducted among 160 female students at Mahakaleshwari Secondary School of Dhading. Non-probability, total enumerative sampling was used to select 160 sample. Data was collected by using structured self-administered questionnaire. Obtained data were analysed by using descriptive and inferential statistics.*

*The findings of this study revealed all most all of respondents (93.8%) had good knowledge regarding sexual harassment. More than half (56.9%) had positive attitude and 43.1% had negative attitude towards sexual harassment. There was significant statistical association between level of knowledge and mothers' occupation ( $p=0.014$ ). Further, there was significant association between level of attitude and place of residence ( $p=0.003$ ) and level of attitude and mothers' occupation of respondents ( $p=0.010$ ).*

*In conclusion, all most all respondents has good knowledge regarding sexual harassment. More than 1/3rd of respondents has negative attitude towards sexual harassment. So, it could be recommended that various behavioural change communication advocacy program at school level should be focused on increasing positive attitude.*

**Key words:** Attitude, Knowledge, Sexual Harassment

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## I. Introduction

Sexual harassment is a form of gender based violence, common phenomena inflicting harm and stress on its victims and limiting their career or education opportunities. It is also connected to other forms of gender based violence such as rape and domestic violence. It is increasing in an alarming way as so many girls in south Asia faced harassment in daily lives. Sexual harassment is unwelcome sexual conduct which makes a person feel offended, humiliated and intimidated where that reaction is reasonable in the circumstances. It can take various forms like unwelcome touching, hugging, kissing, suggestive comments or jokes, unwanted invitation to go out or request for sex, sexually explicit pictures or messages etc. It mostly occurs when there is lack of law enforcement and its implementation, poverty, provocative dressing, discriminations against people and other factors. Harassment can result in negative effects like psychological, physical, moral, cultural effects among victims. Proper implementation of policy, using dress code at organizations, inspection by inspectorate, penalties and fines for perpetrators are recommended measures for its prevention.<sup>1</sup>

School going girls about 43% of participants had experienced any type of harassment. The result revealed that gendered harassments experienced by 35%, unwanted sexual attentions by 34%. The higher the girl's education and household economic status heightened the risk of being harassed. The common perpetrators were young male, students, youth of neighbor.<sup>2</sup>

The high prevalence 79.6% of sexual harassment among female students. The most prominent type of harassment was physical harassment (67.1%), verbal harassment (61.2%) and non-verbal harassment (34.6%). The 44.6% of the respondent scolded the harasser, 29.1% kept silent, 17.3% dropped at nearest bus station after being harassed, 69.2% considered overcrowding is the main reason for harassment, 36.8% said it was due to female students did not use any precautionary methods. There is statistically significant association between types of vehicles used and experience of sexual harassment ( $p=0.0024$ ) and average hours spends in vehicles

with prevalence of harassment (p=0.011). The study conclude that prompt and appropriate interventions should be taken by government, public to address this emerging issue.<sup>3</sup>

Mostly female students are being harassed by teachers, male peers, relatives, neighbors and strangers frequently. The common locations for harassment were public transportations (56%) public places (55%). Due to poor complaints rates, lengthy justice process, lack of confidentiality, trust and closeness accelerates the harassment in Nepal. Simple and victim friendly judiciary process can reduce case of harassment .The prevalence of sexual harassment is very high but the review of literature and studies show that the incidents is very low .This is mainly due to lack of knowledge and information, lack of awareness regarding laws, low rate of reporting .Harassment can create unfriendly and hazardous environment for victims which affects their learning capacity, result in other physical and emotional consequences.<sup>4</sup> The objective of this study was to find out the knowledge and attitude regarding sexual harassment among students at a government school of dhading, Nepal.

## II. Methods

A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted to find out the knowledge and attitude regarding sexual harassment among students at a government school of dhading, Nepal. The study setting of the research was conducted on students who were studying in grade 9, 10, 11 and 12 of Shree Mahakaleshwari Secondary School of Dhading. Female students from grade 9 -12 were included in the study. Shree Mahakaleshwari Secondary School is government school situated in Thakre Rural Municipality, province 3. Those who were absent at the time of data collection were excluded

Ethical approval was obtained from CMC, Institutional Review Committee (CMC-IRC).Administrative permission for data collection was obtained from Shree Mahakaleshwari Secondary School.Each respondent were allowed to have a voluntary choice for participation. Respondent’s dignity was maintained by giving right to reject or discontinue from the research. The confidentiality of respondents was maintained by coding number . Respondents were kept by maintaining distance to maintain their privacy while collecting data. Freedom was provided to each respondents for the participation in the research study. The informed consent was taken from each respondents prior to data collection. Data were collected by using self-administered questionnaire, each respondents were given 20– 25 minutes for fulfill the questionnaire. During data collection ten students were absent so total sample was 160.

Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 20 and Microsoft Excel were used for data analysis. Point estimate at 95% Confidence Interval and collected data were analyzed by using descriptive and inferential statistics.

## III. Results

Out of 160 respondents studied, the median age of the respondent Median=16 Min=14, Max=20,( IQR= Q3-Q1=17.75-16), 86.9% were Hinduism, 92.5% were from rural municipality, regarding education level of respondents 21.2% ,23.8%, 25.6 % and 29.4% were from grade 9, 10,11 and 12 respectively, 98.8% of respondents were unmarried, Regarding education status of father 69.4% of studied bachelor whereas 56.3 % of mother were illiterate, regarding occupation 50% of father and 67.5% of mother were engaged in agriculture.

**Table-1  
Respondents’ Socio-Demographic Characteristicsn=160**

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Age (in year)</b>		
<16	37	23.1
≥16	123	76.9
<i>Median= 16 Min=14, Max=20, IQR= Q3-Q1=17.75-16</i>		
<b>Religion</b>		
Hindu	139	86.9
Buddhist	17	10.6
Christianity	4	2.5
<b>Place of residence</b>		
Municipality	12	7.5
Rural Municipality	148	92.5
<b>Educational grade</b>		
Grade 9	34	21.2
Grade 10	38	23.8
Grade 11	41	25.6
Grade 12	47	29.4
<b>Education status of father</b>		

Illiterate	27	16.9
Basic Level	111	69.4
Secondary level and above	22	13.7
<b>Education status of mother</b>		
Illiterate	90	56.3
Basic Level	64	40.0
Secondary level and above	6	3.7
<b>Occupation of Father</b>		
Agriculture	80	50.0
Others than agriculture	80	50.0
<b>Occupation of Mother</b>		
Agriculture	108	67.5
Others than agriculture	52	32.5

Table 2: Respondents ' level of Knowledge regarding sexual harassment n=160

Level of Knowledge	Frequency	Percentage
Good (>66%)	150	93.8
Average (33- 66%)	10	6.2
Total	160	100.0

Possible score=1-41, Min=24, Max=41

Table 3: Respondents' level of Attitude regarding sexual harassment n=160

Level of Attitude	Frequency	Percentage
Positive(Median $\geq$ 74)	91	56.9
Negative (Median < 74)	69	43.1
Total	160	100.0

Median= 74, IQR= Q3-Q1=77-70= possible score= 18- 90, max. =89, min =52,

There was statistically significant association between level of knowledge regarding sexual harassment and mother's occupation of respondents with  $p= 0.014$ (Table 4)

Table 4 Association between Level of Knowledge and Selected Variables= 160

Variables	Level of Knowledge		$\chi^2$	p- value
	Good No. (%)	Average No. (%)		
<b>Respondent's age</b>				
< 16	33 (89.2)	4 (10.8)	-	0.242*
$\geq$ 16	117 (95.1)	6 (4.9)		
<b>Religion of respondent's</b>				
Hinduism	131 (94.2)	8 (5.8)	-	0.622*
Non Hinduism	19 (90.5)	2 (9.5)		
<b>Place of residence of respondent's</b>				
Municipality	10 (83.3)	2 (16.7)	-	0.166*
Rural Municipality	140 (94.6)	8 (5.4)		
<b>Respondent's Type of family</b>				
Nuclear Family	89 (93.7)	6(6.3)	-	1.000*
Joint Family	61 (93.8)	4(6.2)		
<b>Educational grade of respondent's</b>				
School level	67 (93.1)	5(6.9)	-	0.755*
College level	83 (94.3)	5(5.7)		
<b>Education status of father of respondent's</b>				
Literate	125(94.0)	8(6.0)	-	0.677*
Illiterate	25 (92.6)	2(7.4)		
<b>Education status of Mothers of respondent's</b>				
Literate	64 (91.4)	6(8.6)	-	0.335*
Illiterate	86 (95.6)	4(4.4)		

Father's occupation of respondent's				
Agriculture	75 (93.8)	5(6.2)	-	1.00
Other than agriculture	75 (93.8)	5(6.2)		
Mother's occupation of respondent's				
Agriculture	105(97.2)	3(2.8)	-	<b>0.014*</b>
Other than agriculture	45(86.5)	7(13.5)		

Significance level at  $p < 0.05$ , \* = Fishers exact test

Table 5 shows that there is statistically significant association between place of residence and level of attitude ( $p=0.003$ ), and there is significant association between mothers' occupation and level of attitude regarding sexual harassment ( $p=0.010$ ).

**Table: 5**  
**Association between Level of Attitude and Selected Variables** **n=160**

Variables	Level of Attitude		$\chi^2$	P- value
	Positive No. (%)	Negative No. (%)		
<b>Respondent's age</b>				
< 16	19(51.4)	18 (48.6)	0.599	0.439
≥16	72 (58.5)	51 (41.5)		
<b>Religion of respondent's</b>				
Hinduism	83 (59.7)	56 (40.3)	3.476	0.062
Non Hinduism	8 (38.1)	13 (61.9)		
<b>Place of residence of respondent's</b>				
Municipality	2 (16.7)	10 (83.3)	8.551	<b>0.003</b>
Rural Municipality	89 (60.1)	59 (39.9)		
<b>Respondent's Type of family</b>				
Nuclear family	57 (60.0)	38 (40)	0.931	0.335
Joint Family	34 (52.3)	31 (47.7)		
<b>Educational grade of respondent's</b>				
School level	40 (55.6)	32 (44.4)	0.093	0.76
College level	51 (58)	37 (42)		
<b>Education status of father of respondent's</b>				
Literate	76 (57.1)	57 (42.9)	0.023	0.879
Illiterate	15 (55.6)	12 (44.4)		
<b>Education status of Mothers of respondent's</b>				
Literate	38 (54.3)	32 (45.7)	0.34	0.56
Illiterate	53 (58.9)	37 (41.1)		
<b>Father's occupation of respondent's</b>				
Agriculture	42 (52.5)	38 (47.5)	1.249	0.264
Other than Agriculture	49 (61.2)	31 (38.8)		
<b>Mother's occupation of respondent's</b>				
Agriculture	69 (63.9)	39 (36.1)	6.665	<b>0.010</b>
Others	22 (42.3)	30 (57.7)		

Significance level at  $p < 0.05$ . \* Fishers exact test

Table 5 shows that there is statistically significant association between place of residence and level of attitude ( $p=0.003$ ), and there is significant association between mothers' occupation and level of attitude regarding sexual harassment ( $p=0.010$ ).

#### IV. Discussion:

The descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted to find out the knowledge and attitude regarding sexual harassment among students. The study population consisted of grade 9, 10, 11 and 12 of Shree Mahakaleshwari Secondary School of Dhading. The present study revealed that 6.2% had average knowledge that 93.8% had good knowledge regarding sexual harassment. This findings are supported by the study conducted by <sup>5</sup>, which shows that 95.6% had good knowledge and very few (4.4%) had poor knowledge.

In this present study, there is association between occupation of mothers and level of knowledge regarding sexual harassment ( $p=0.014$ ). On contrary with this current study, shows that there is association between occupation of fathers and level of knowledge regarding sexual harassment ( $p= 0.001$ ). <sup>6</sup>This difference

might be due to mothers involving in agriculture at current setting can spend more time with her children and can provide information about sexual harassment.

In this current study, 56.9% had positive attitude and 43.1% had negative attitude towards sexual harassment. This findings are consistent with a study which showed that 64% had accepting attitudes, and 46% had non accepting attitude regarding sexual violence and sexual abuse.<sup>7</sup> This findings are similar to the present study which might be due to high level of knowledge among students in present study. The current study shows that, there is significant association between level of attitude with place of residence ( $p=0.003$ ). In line with the current study, a study) revealed that there is association between attitude regarding sexual harassment and permanent residency (0.001).<sup>8</sup> This study shows the association between attitude and occupation of mother ( $p=0.01$ ). But there is no association between level of attitude and occupation of the mother.<sup>7</sup> This might be due to less in sample size, difference in setting and population.

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