Executive summary: Correlates of Peer Sexual Harassment in 2018 College Student Health Survey

NOVEMBER 2020

PURPOSE
To identify variables associated with higher rates of sexual harassment (SH) from peers in the 2018 College Student Health Survey

PARTICIPANTS
9,805 Students
18 2-year and 4-year schools

FOCUS
The analyses focused on SH from peers because it was much more common than SH from faculty or staff.

46% reported SH from peers
8% reported SH from faculty/staff

Analyses were conducted separately for

7,932 undergraduate students
1,132 graduate students

RESULTS
Slightly less than half of undergraduate and graduate students reported having experienced at least one sexually-harassing behavior from a peer on campus

Undergraduate students who reported the most SH behaviors were
- younger than 24
- consumed alcohol more than once a month
- either cisgender women or transgender, genderqueer, or had a self-identified gender identify (TGQ+)
- attended a four-year school
- and had experienced some or frequent bullying in their lifetime (see Figure 1)

This group reported 4.40 SH behaviors on average (compared to 1.8 in the undergraduate sample as a whole).

Graduate students who reported the most SH behaviors were
- younger than 31
- had been bullied sometimes or frequently in their lifetimes
- and were involved in a social Greek organization (see Figure 2)

These students reported 5.60 SH behaviors on average (compared to 1.6 in the graduate student sample as a whole).
Figure 1: Risk factors for undergraduate students

- Undergraduate student (1.80) n = 7932
  - 24 years old or older (0.48) n = 1835
  - Less than 24 years old (2.10) n = 6097
  - Drinks less than once a month (1.60) n = 3741
  - 2-year college (0.79) n = 782
  - 4-year college (1.80) n = 2959
  - Never or hardly bullied (1.30) n = 1393
  - Sometimes or frequently bullied (2.20) n = 1565

- Drinks more than once a month (3.00) n = 2349
- Cisgender man (2.00) n = 862
- Cisgender woman or TGQ+ (3.50) n = 1494
- 2-year college (1.20) n = 128
- 4-year college (3.80) n = 1366
- Never or hardly bullied (3.00) n = 630
- Sometimes or frequently bullied (4.40) n = 736

This group reported 4.40 SH behaviors on average (compared to 1.8 in the undergraduate sample as a whole).

Figure 2: Risk factors for graduate students

- Graduate student (1.60) n = 1132
  - 31 years old or older (0.83) n = 303
  - Less than 31 years old (1.90) n = 829
  - Never or hardly bullied (1.40) n = 418
  - Sometimes or frequently bullied (2.50) n = 411
  - Involved in Greek society (5.6) n = 19
  - Not in Greek life or academic Greek society (2.40) n = 392

These students reported 5.60 SH behaviors on average (compared to 1.6 in the graduate student sample as a whole).
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IMPLICATIONS

• Prevention efforts are particularly needed at 4-year schools, where rates of peer sexual harassment are higher

• Younger age is a key risk factor for experiencing peer sexual harassment
  • Prevention efforts could focus on educating first-year students about the nature of peer sexual harassment and what they can do if they experience it
  • Counseling services should be advertised in places at-risk younger students are more likely to frequent (e.g., first-year dorms)

• For undergraduates, peer sexual harassment may be more likely to occur in situations involving drinking
  • Information about peer sexual harassment could be included in alcohol education programming

• Transgender, genderqueer, and students with self-identified gender identities report particularly high rates of peer sexual harassment
  • Prevention programming should address issues related to factors other than sexism such as cissexism

• Inservice training for mental health providers could include information on the prevalence of peer sexual harassment and risk factors for peer harassment

• An important future research direction is understanding why these factors are related to SH risk and to understand risk factors for perpetrating peer sexual harassment
Executive summary: Sexual Harassment from Faculty or Staff in 2018 College Student Health Survey Questionnaire

NOVEMBER 2020

PURPOSE
To identify factors related to experiencing sexual harassment from faculty or staff in the 2018 College Student Health Survey.

PARTICIPANTS
9,805 Students
8% reported having experienced sexual harassment from faculty or staff at the college or university they attended

RESULTS
Students who were more likely to report being sexually harassed by faculty or staff were:
- Women and those who identify as transgender or gender non-conforming
- In committed, but non-marital relationships
- Members of fraternities and sororities
- Living on or near campus
- Advanced undergraduate or graduate students
- Full-time rather than part-time students

Physical and mental health factors are associated with likelihood of experiencing harassment from faculty or staff:
- There is a linear relationship between health, wellness, and stress and experiencing harassment.
- Higher likelihood of experiencing sexual harassment from faculty or staff was found in those who:
  - reported more days feeling poorly
  - had higher reported stressful life events
  - reported mental health diagnoses, especially anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder
  - experienced other forms of discrimination

*It is unclear whether the above represent risk factors or outcomes from their harassment experiences. It is likely that they reflect both.

Additional Findings
Those reporting less likelihood of experiencing sexual harassment from faculty and staff:
- reported coping skills they believe are adequate to cope with their current stress level
- reported higher coping skills

Unrelated to likelihood of experiencing sexual harassment from faculty or staff include:
- Race and ethnicity
- Binge drinking and marijuana use
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IMPLICATIONS

• **Availability** appears an important factor in the likelihood of experiencing sexual harassment.

• **Women** and **gender non-conforming individuals** are more likely to experience sexual harassment than cisgender men.

• Unlike with sexual harassment from peers, **older students, especially graduate students**, are more likely to experience sexual harassment from faculty or staff.

• **A focus on the unique relationship** between graduate students and their faculty may be important for effective prevention programs.

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