



Sexual Harassment in Secondary Schools: A Field Study of Some Secondary Schools in Ain Defla Province

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Abstract ;

This study aims to understand the social and cultural factors that contributed to sexual harassment experienced by female secondary school students in various forms. The research revealed a lack of sufficient sexual education among the participants, which hindered their ability to protect themselves from perpetrators. Moreover, the inadequate disciplinary control in the school environment allowed for the adoption of behaviors that went against societal norms and expectations. Additionally, the presence of coeducation presented significant challenges for school administrators in effectively monitoring and identifying deviant behavior.

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1. Introduction

Sexual harassment within secondary schools constitutes a manifestation of school violence and a covert social deviance, obstructing the pivotal role schools play as vital agents of social development. Such harassment encompasses verbal, nonverbal, and written forms, with female students often bearing the brunt of victimization, while perpetrators commonly comprise teachers, staff members, or fellow students. A multitude of factors have contributed to the proliferation of this concerning phenomenon within our educational institutions. For instance, prevailing upbringing patterns impose a culture of silence, coercing victims to endure silently when confronted with distressing situations within the school environment. Regrettably, societal taboos surrounding sexual harassment perpetuate a climate of shame, dissuading students from reporting incidents and seeking recourse. Another influential factor is the school environment itself, which, due to inadequate supervision, has become a fertile ground for the cultivation of deviant behaviors that run counter to social expectations.

This research paper seeks to unveil the underlying factors that have rendered female secondary school students vulnerable to the heinous crime of sexual harassment. The focus is firmly placed on the pivotal significance of sexual education, which plays a vital role in endowing students with a sound and legitimate understanding of sexual culture. Moreover, the study emphasizes the critical

role of the school environment as a social sphere wherein students invest a substantial portion of their time in pursuit of knowledge and intellectual growth. It is imperative to scrutinize the issue of school-based sexual harassment, for it represents a pressing social dilemma that not only exposes a disconcerting moral imbalance but also poses a profound threat to the very fabric of the educational institution's societal mandate and broader social cohesion.

1.1 Research Problem

Sexual harassment is a complex societal issue, manifesting as a form of behavioral deviance intricately linked to sexual violence. Algerian society has encountered a multitude of challenges resulting from profound changes permeating its diverse facets, encompassing both structural transformations and shifts in interpersonal dynamics. These societal shifts have given rise to various deviant behaviors, among which sexual harassment has emerged as a particularly alarming concern, indicative of eroding values, ethics, and social order. No longer confined to workplaces or public spaces, sexual harassment has infiltrated educational institutions, most notably schools, seeping into the fabric of daily discourse within the school community.

In the United States, the Federal Bureau of Investigation has documented 17,000 cases of sexual harassment within the nation's schools. A study conducted in British secondary schools revealed that one in

every three underage female students experiences sexual harassment. News reports from Egypt shed light on over 50 incidents occurring in girls' schools across different educational stages. A Saudi study unveiled that 23% of Saudi school students have fallen victim to sexual harassment (Al-Aridi, 2021). The Tunisian Ministry of Education disclosed 87 cases of harassment in Tunisian schools between October and March 2019. In Algeria, the coordination committee of secondary schools reported that between 30% to 45% of students have experienced sexual harassment.

However, it is crucial to acknowledge that these statistics, while alarming, do not fully encapsulate the true extent of the issue within our schools due to its sensitive nature. The gravity of sexual harassment is intrinsically tied to societal taboos surrounding sexual matters, which inhibit open discussions and impede the exploration of sexual culture. Engaging in conversations regarding sexual culture is often deemed forbidden (taboo) as it touches upon the delicate honor of families. Consequently, many victims of sexual harassment in schools choose not to report their experiences out of fear of social stigma or the potential repercussions that may disrupt their education and deprive them of learning opportunities.

Moreover, the lack of robust supervision within the school environment exacerbates the situation, particularly during the formative and vulnerable phase of adolescence. This void in effective oversight creates an environment where students may adopt behaviors that deviate from societal expectations and norms.

In light of these profound concerns, it becomes imperative to address sexual harassment as an urgent matter that demands academic attention and rigorous action. By fostering an atmosphere of open dialogue, education, and enhanced supervision, we can work towards curbing the prevalence of sexual harassment and restoring the integrity of our educational institutions as vital spaces for social development.

Understanding the phenomenon of sexual harassment in secondary schools necessitates an examination of the school environment, which has unfortunately become a breeding ground for such forms of sexual violence. Consequently, this study seeks to delve into the factors contributing to the victimization of female secondary schools' students.

1.2 Research Questions

This study poses the following fundamental research question:

What factors contribute to secondary school students falling prey to sexual harassment?

Derived from this overarching question, we present the following sub questions:

To what extent does the absence of sexual education for girls render them more susceptible to sexual harassment within secondary schools?

How does the school environment contribute to the victimization of female

students through sexual harassment within secondary schools?

1.3 Research Hypotheses

- It is hypothesized that the absence of sexual education makes girls more vulnerable to sexual harassment within secondary schools.
- The school environment contributes to the victimization of girls to sexual harassment within secondary schools.

1.4 Research Objectives

The primary objectives of this research paper are as follows:

- To investigate the prevalence of sexual harassment within secondary schools, shedding light on its occurrence and magnitude.
- To identify the underlying motives behind sexual harassment in secondary schools and examine their correlation with the school environment.
- To underscore the significance of comprehensive sexual education in empowering and guiding young individuals towards a lawful and healthy framework for their sexual development.
- To explore the role of the school environment in safeguarding girls from becoming victims of sexual harassment.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its potential contributions to the following areas:

- Drawing attention to the grave perils of sexual harassment in schools and its detrimental impact on their educational function as vital social institutions.
- Raising awareness among families and schools regarding the imperative nature of sexual education for both boys and girls, aiming to shield them from behaviors that contradict our societal values and ethical teachings.
- Introducing and clarifying social concepts and terminology, providing sociologists with a lucid understanding of these concepts' distinctions.
- The practical importance of this study stems from its nature as a field study on the phenomenon of sexual harassment among secondary school students, shedding light on one of the most pressing challenges confronting the Algerian educational system and its ramifications for the victims and society at large.
- Formulating recommendations that benefit families and schools alike, offering actionable guidance to address the issue of sexual harassment.
- Providing relevant authorities with valuable findings to inform their endeavors in mitigating the prevalence of sexual harassment in our schools.

2. Conceptual Definitions

2.1 Sexual Harassment

Defining sexual harassment precisely poses a challenge due to its subjective interpretation across different societies. While its prevalence is notable in Western and Arab societies, there exists no universally agreed-upon definition or international accord specifically addressing this issue (Salama, 2018, p. 16). Consequently, sexual harassment has received multiple definitions, warranting exploration of select interpretations:

2.1.1 Linguistic Definition

In Arabic language, "harassment" carries diverse meanings. Ibn Manzur in *Lisan al-Arab* defines "harash" as enticing and seducing a person or a lion to fall upon its horn. Moreover, it encompasses corrupting and enticing others. In a Hadith, it is forbidden to "harasha" (incite) animals, implying the act of provoking them to behave inappropriately, such as among horses, rams, roosters, and others. "Hareh" also denotes a specific type of garment worn while lying down, while "harasha" refers to engaging in sexual intercourse with a woman while she is lying on her side (Ibn Manzur, 2008, p. 114).

In Larousse French dictionary, harassment (Le Harcèlement) is defined as subjecting individuals or groups to continuous small-scale attacks, persistent demands, criticisms, protests, or ongoing pressures in pursuit of a specific objective (Larousse, 2008, p. 202).

2.1.2 Sociological Definition

According to social researcher Hayat Boufrachen, sexual harassment represents a social behavior that permeates public spaces, and sometimes private spaces, reflecting an immoral phenomenon associated with religious and social deviance. It is considered by some as a means of arousing instincts and captivating the imagination of adolescents, focusing on the enticing aspects of the body and its sexual facets (Al-Waryaghli, 2012, p. 46).

Another definition highlights sexual harassment as a social phenomenon present across societies, with women being the most affected group. Its manifestations vary based on customs, traditions, ethics, religious considerations, and legal accountability within different societies (Akwa, 2009, p. 56).

Additionally, sexual harassment is characterized as a social phenomenon involving behavior driven by unethical intentions, resulting in emotional harm to the victim. It denotes inappropriate conduct driven by distorted emotions and suppressed sexual motivations (Al-Waryaghli, 2012, p. 45).

These definitions collectively emphasize sexual harassment as a pervasive social issue affecting all societies, wherein unethical conduct inflicts harm upon victims, predominantly women.

2.1.3 Terminological Definition

The United Nations defines sexual harassment in its official document (5/2008/SGB ST) as encompassing

unwanted sexual innuendo, requests for sexual services, verbal or non-verbal conduct of a sexual nature, or any behavior that can reasonably be considered offensive or humiliating to others (Fouad Majid, 2017, p. 305).

Scholars Kearn and Hill provide a definition encompassing unwanted sexual behavior and requests for sexual services, whether expressed verbally, in writing, through gestures, or physical actions (Kearn, Hill, 2011, p. 6).

Mohamed Ali Qutb defines sexual harassment as behavior driven by sexually motivated actions that the recipient neither desires nor welcomes. He further describes it as attempts to sexually arouse females, whether girls or women, against their will (Qutb, 2008, pp. 27-33).

These diverse definitions establish sexual harassment as a behavior of a sexual nature that is unwanted and imposed upon the victim.

2.1.4 Concept of Harassment in the Quran

In the Quran, the term "murawadah" (enticement) is mentioned in Surah Yusuf to describe the actions of the Aziz's wife, who attempted to seduce Prophet Yusuf (Joseph). Allah Almighty states, "And she, in whose house he was, sought to seduce him. She closed the doors and said, 'Come, you.' He said, 'I seek refuge in Allah. Indeed, He is my master, who has made good my residence. Indeed, wrongdoers will not succeed'" (Surah Yusuf, verse 23).

The term "murawadah" encompasses seduction, provocation, contact, and pursuit against one's will, encapsulating the attempt made by the Aziz's wife to seduce and entice Yusuf into engaging in intimate relations with her. However, Yusuf (peace be upon him) resisted these advances (Ghali, 2006, p. 15).

2.1.5 Operational Definition

For the purpose of this study, sexual harassment is operationally defined as intentional behavior, including verbal, written, gestural, or physical actions, which carry sexual connotations and target female secondary school students, causing them physical, psychological, or social harm.

2.2 Sexual Education

Sheikh Abdullah Nasih describes sexual education as the process of teaching and enlightening children, engaging them in discussions about sexual matters as they develop an understanding of sex, instincts, and marriage. This education continues throughout their growth, encompassing comprehension of life matters and awareness of what is forbidden (Hamza & Khatab, 2010, p. 11). Likewise, Al-Husseini Maadi defines sexual education as an educational process that equips young individuals and students with knowledge, values, attitudes, and healthy habits related to sex and sexual behavior as both biological and social realities. Its aim is to empower young individuals with positive values and attitudes to guide their sexual motivations within a lawful framework (Maadi, 2005, p. 106).

2.1.1 Operational Definition

Operationally, sexual education can be understood as a component of general education that provides children with theoretical knowledge regarding sexual matters to protect them from future sexual deviations.

2.3 Secondary Schools

Secondary education serves as a crucial link in the educational continuum, bridging the gap between primary education and higher education within the educational system. According to the Glossary of Educational and Psychological Terms, a secondary school is an educational institution that caters to students aged approximately 12 to 18 years, offering a more comprehensive curriculum compared to primary schools (Sarkez, 1997, p. 184). This stage represents a distinct phase in students' developmental journey, catering to their unique needs and aspirations. Positioned within the educational hierarchy, secondary schools play a vital socio-educational role, preparing students for future academic pursuits in universities and higher institutes, as well as equipping them with the necessary skills and knowledge to navigate the professional world. This preparation involves identifying their interests, readiness, and abilities, facilitating informed choices regarding their career paths and areas of specialization (Al-Aqoun, 2017, p. 21).

2.3.1 Operational Definition:

Within the context of this study, secondary schools are educational institutions that form an integral part of the three-tiered

educational system, following intermediate education. These schools guide students based on their individual interests and aspirations, enabling them to pursue their desired areas of specialization, ultimately determining their future trajectories and professional pursuits. Additionally, upon completing this stage, students undergo the Baccalaureate examination, which provides them with opportunities to pursue higher education or enter the workforce.

2.4 Victim

A victim is an individual who has been targeted by an offender attempting to violate their rights, with the intended outcome being realized (Sadek, 1964, p. 19). In accordance with the United Nations Seventh Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, held in Milan in 1985, victims are individuals who have suffered harm, both individually and collectively. This harm encompasses physical or mental harm, emotional distress, economic losses, or significant impairment of their fundamental rights due to acts or omissions that contravene criminal laws, including those prohibiting sexual abuse through the use of force (Helmy, 2013, p. 29).

2.4.1 Operational Definition of the Victim

Within the scope of this study, a victim is operationally defined as any female student currently enrolled in a secondary school who has experienced any form of sexual harassment, including verbal, gestural, written, or physical misconduct perpetrated by a peer, teacher, or staff member within the school environment. Such incidents

result in psychological, physical, or moral well-being harm.

2.5 School Environment

The school environment, as defined by Al-Hindawi, encompasses the interactions among teachers and students, students themselves, school administration and teachers, and the administration and students (Tayeb, 2020, p. 42). Additionally, Holy and Miskel (2005) describe it as the sum of characteristics that distinguish one school from another and significantly influence the behaviors of individuals within it.

2.5.1 Operational Definition

Operationally, the school environment can be understood as the geographical, educational, recreational, and social context in which interactions take place among students and teachers, students themselves, and students and the administration. These interactions have the potential to shape students' behaviors and thoughts, either positively or negatively.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 Sexual Harassment: Historical Roots

Sexual harassment is a longstanding social phenomenon that can be traced back to ancient times, as depicted in the Holy Quran through the story of Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) and the wife of the Aziz (Nobleman). The Quran states: "And she, in whose house he was, sought to seduce him. She closed the doors and said, 'Come, you.' He said, 'I seek the refuge of Allah. Indeed, he is my master, who has made

good my residence. Indeed, wrongdoers will not succeed'" (Surah Yusuf, verse 23). Thus, sexual harassment has deep historical roots predating the recent terminology used to describe it. The concept of sexual harassment emerged in the 1960s or 1970s, as noted by American novelist Fitzgerald, who characterized it as a longstanding social problem with a relatively short history. Women have endured injustice and persecution for decades. During the 17th and 18th centuries in Europe, women faced gender-based discrimination due to the prevailing class system. The upper-class women were discouraged from working or participating in politics, while women from the lower class served as maids. Women during that era experienced various forms of mistreatment and sexual exploitation, particularly in the workplace, where accessing the legal system was challenging due to fear of fines or punishment (Al-Maghribi, 2015, p. 13).

The term "sexual harassment" was coined in the mid-1970s within American psychological circles. Subsequently, it gained legal recognition through the publication of guidelines by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) in the United States a few years later (Al-Shalan, 2019, p. 22).

3.2 Forms of Sexual Harassment in Secondary Schools

3.2.1 Gestural Harassment

This type of harassment involves the use of gestures with sexual connotations. It encompasses actions such as leering at the victim's body with desire, staring at

specific body parts, winking, or making suggestive lip movements. The harasser may employ non-verbal behaviors using their eyes or hands, such as touching the chest or lips.

3.2.2 Physical Harassment

Physical harassment entails unwanted touching or groping of body parts and invading the victim's personal space. It can include placing a hand on the victim's shoulder, touching their hair, or even slapping their buttocks. In crowded environments or during class, the harasser may engage in unwelcome physical contact or rubbing.

3.2.3 Written Harassment

Written harassment occurs through explicit writings on desks, classroom walls, blackboards, or restroom stalls. These inscriptions carry sexual innuendos, such as combining the first letter of a girl's name with the second letter of the harasser's name, accompanied by a heart symbol. Disturbingly, some female students have reported finding explicit drawings, including depictions of male genitalia, in female restrooms.

3.2.4 Motion Harassment

Motion harassment involves stalking and following the victim, either in the schoolyard or during entry and exit from the secondary school.

3.2.5 Electronic Harassment

Technological advancements have made it challenging for families to monitor and

control their children's behavior. The widespread use of mobile phones and various social media platforms has given rise to behaviors that deviate from social norms and values, including electronic harassment (Abdul -Razzaq, 2016, p. 134). Students may engage in sending explicit photos via mobile phones or through social media networks.

3.3 Causes and Factors of Sexual Harassment among Female Students in Secondary Schools

Sexual harassment is no longer confined to workplaces, markets, and streets; it has infiltrated even the most sanctified spaces, such as schools, which are intended to foster education and learning. However, education has been compromised by the prevalence of deviant behaviors, including smoking, drug use, various forms of school violence, and sexual harassment, which is the focus of our study. The spread of this phenomenon can be attributed to several factors:

- Weakened religious values: The erosion of religious values has led to the neglect and obsolescence of numerous moral principles, including modesty, within society.
- Weak school discipline: Inadequate disciplinary measures within schools have allowed students to adopt behaviors that contradict social expectations.
- Mixing and overcrowding in secondary schools: The overcrowding of schools presents a challenge for school administrators to effectively control

students or identify deviant behaviors, including sexual harassment.

- Underreporting of harassment incidents within schools: Both students and their parents hesitate to report harassment incidents within schools due to the fear of social stigma associated with it.
- The victim's appearance and provocative clothing: The victim's inadvertent contribution to harassment can stem from her appearance and attire, which may be revealing or immodest. Additionally, there may be a desire for acceptance and imitation of what is perceived as "trendy."
- Abuse of authority by the harasser and exploitation of the victim's vulnerability.
- Sexual desire as a motivating factor for the harasser to commit the crime.

4.Previous Studies

4.1 A Western Study

In a study conducted by Caroline Theresa Slotten in 2002, titled "A qualitative Study of Twenty-Four Women Who Experienced Sexual Harassment in High School: What Happened, How They Coped, and How It Affected Them" the aim was to delve into the personal narratives of female students who had encountered sexual harassment within universities. Through in-depth interviews, the participants were asked to reflect on their experiences, whether they had reported the incidents to school authorities, parents, or friends, how these experiences had affected them during their academic pursuits, and whether there were enduring consequences resulting from the

harassment. The study's sample comprised twenty-four students who had unequivocally confirmed their encounters with sexual harassment in the context of higher education.

Noteworthy findings emerged from this study, defying prevailing literature, as it became evident that women were predominantly subjected to harassment by males, both fellow students and teachers. Moreover, the occurrences of harassment were typically observed in public spaces within the educational institution, occasionally in the presence of others. Alarming, however, was the fact that victims rarely disclosed these incidents to school administrators or their parents.

4.2 An Arab Study

Another study by Al Tayar (2012) titled "Factors of Sexual Harassment among Elementary School Students from the Perspective of Student Counselors: An Exploratory Survey of Elementary School Counselors in Riyadh City" aimed to identify the underlying factors contributing to sexual harassment among elementary school students and propose preventive measures to address this issue within educational settings. Employing a social survey methodology, the researcher administered a specifically designed questionnaire to a sample of 61 students.

The study uncovered significant results:

- One of the foremost factors leading to sexual harassment among students was the presence of older students.

- Inadequate supervision and monitoring during breaks and dismissal periods were identified as facilitating factors for sexual harassment.
- The study also underscored the insufficient attention given to implementing preventive measures aimed at mitigating instances of sexual harassment among students in schools.

4.3 An Algerian Study

Fareh Abdul Razzak's study (2016), entitled "Sexual Harassment of Female Students in the University Setting," aimed to identify the factors contributing to the prevalence of sexual harassment among female university students. Employing a descriptive approach and utilizing interview questionnaires as data collection tools, the researcher gained valuable insights.

The study yielded the following significant findings:

- Approximately 55.8% of the participants reported a correlation between experiencing sexual harassment and their attire within the university setting.
- 87,5 % reported that the behavior and verbal interactions of students themselves were identified as influential factors in their experiences of sexual harassment.
- A staggering 85% of the sample believed that there was insufficient control within the university

environment, emphasizing the absence of adequate security measures.

- Moreover, 52% of the students chose to conceal their experiences of sexual harassment due to apprehensions regarding social stigma from both society and their families.

4.4 Evaluation of Previous Studies

These previous studies, whether conducted in Western, Arab, or Algerian contexts, all exhibit direct relevance to the subject matter of our study. Each study endeavors to identify the primary causes and contributing factors underlying the pervasive issue of sexual harassment, be it in workplaces, universities, or educational institutions. While the presentation of ideas and formulation of hypotheses may differ across these studies, they collectively enrich our understanding of the phenomenon.

Caroline Theresa Slotten's study has proved instrumental in enhancing the theoretical framework of our research, corroborating the findings from our interviews, particularly concerning the influential role of the school environment in fostering instances of sexual harassment among secondary school students.

Madiha Ahmed Abada's study has significantly contributed to the theoretical underpinning of our research, offering insights into the diverse forms of sexual harassment experienced by women. Additionally, it resonates with our hypothesis regarding the complicity of the school environment in perpetuating the victimization of secondary school students,

given that educational institutions play a crucial role in shaping their development.

Furthermore, Abdul Razzak's Algerian study (2016) has shed light on the factors and causes that contribute to the prevalence of sexual harassment among female university students. It thoughtfully addresses the social stigma endured by victims, which engenders fear and compels them to conceal incidents of harassment. The study also highlights the significance of effective control measures within the university environment, aligning to some extent with our hypothesis, despite the variance in sample characteristics.

5. Research Methodology

The research methodology serves as an objective framework employed by scholars to investigate a specific phenomenon, aiming to provide a comprehensive and precise depiction of it. It entails a thorough exploration of all facets of the phenomenon, facilitating a deeper understanding (Grawitz, 1996, p.318).

5.1 Descriptive Methodology

The descriptive methodology constitutes a scientific approach primarily dedicated to delineating the subject under scrutiny. This process involves a comprehensive examination of the phenomenon, delving into its intricate details, and expressing it either qualitatively or quantitatively through numerical data, estimations, and ratings that elucidate its nature and its associations with other phenomena (Ayad, 2009, p.61).

The descriptive method can be defined as a technique employed to portray the subject of study utilizing a rigorous scientific framework, presenting the findings in a meaningful and interpretable format, often employing numerical representations (Dwidri, 2000, p.183).

In our study, we have embraced the descriptive methodology due to its efficacy in addressing the subject matter. It aims to provide an elaborate portrayal of the phenomenon of sexual harassment in secondary schools, encompassing its characteristics, manifestations, and underlying factors. This will be further expounded upon in our sociological analysis of each individual case.

5.2 Case Study Methodology

The case study methodology, also referred to as the monographic approach, entails an in-depth examination of a specific subject, such as a family, village, tribe, or factory. Its purpose is to explore multiple facets of the subject and derive generalizations that can be applied to similar entities (Abdul salam, 2020, p.171). The case study method involves delving deeply into a particular study, tracing its historical development, and examining all stages to draw insights relevant to the studied subject and other analogous entities (Bouhouch & Al-Dhanabat, 1995, p.89). In our study, we have employed this methodology through conducting individual interviews with the participants. This approach aims to unravel the significant motivations and factors that have rendered female secondary school students vulnerable to sexual harassment within educational institutions. Moreover,

given the sensitive nature of this subject, which falls within the domain of societal taboos, the adoption of this methodology is imperative.

6. Research Techniques

6.1 Observation

Observation holds a prominent position among the fundamental tools employed in the collection of qualitative data. It particularly proves invaluable in situations where alternative data collection methods present challenges (Al-Khayat, 2010, p.243).

We have extensively relied on non-participant observation as a crucial and indispensable technique within our research. Its role, complementing the interview method, is vital. Specifically, we have keenly observed participants' behaviors, gestures, actions, reactions, and overall demeanor, complementing our analysis with their verbal expressions to achieve a comprehensive understanding.

6.2 Interview

The interview stands as a significant research technique that facilitates the exploration of participants' opinions and perspectives through interactive communication. Direct engagement between the researcher and participants in a specific setting constitutes a fundamental prerequisite for conducting interviews (Saboun, 2012). The interview can be defined as a verbal interaction occurring between two individuals within a face-to-face encounter, where the interviewer endeavors to elicit information and insights

from the interviewee, encompassing their opinions and beliefs (Ghrayebia et al., 2002, p.61).

We have employed the interview technique as it seamlessly aligns with the subject matter of our study. Through interviews, our aim is to uncover the genuine motivations and reasons that have subjected female secondary school students to sexual harassment within their educational environments.

7. Study Sample

We have employed purposive sampling to identify participants who have fallen victim to sexual harassment within secondary schools in Ain Defla province. Based on this criterion, our sample consists of five students within the secondary school setting, aged between 15 and 17. They have encountered diverse forms of sexual harassment within their educational institutions. Notably, acquiring the study sample proved to be a nuanced endeavor due to the sensitive and delicate nature of the topic at hand.

8. Cases Presentation and Sociological Analysis

8.1 The First Case

In the first case, we encounter a 16-year-old student, identified as (W), enrolled in her second year of secondary school. She possesses flowing, black hair that cascades down her back, adding to her allure. Her striking appearance is complemented by a touch of makeup adorning her countenance. Tragically, she has become a victim of a distressing instance of sexual

harassment at the hands of an educational supervisor. Recounting the incident, she bravely shares, "There was a time when I was absent, and I went to the administration to acquire a justification for my absence. The educational supervisor approached me and, seizing my hand, demanded a kiss. Overwhelmed by fear, I swiftly retreated... You see, in Algerian families, discussions about matters of a sexual nature are deemed shameful and strictly forbidden. Even my mother, in her cautionary moments, advises me to be cautious and avoid such topics and relationships... We are simply not supposed to broach such sensitive subjects until we get married. Nevertheless, through the internet and our interactions with peers, we manage to acquire knowledge..."

The secondary school, according to the student, is no longer fulfilling its educational role. In the student's own words: "Education has gone downhill... Smoking, swearing, drug abuse, and the appalling harassment of girls have become a catastrophe. The educational supervisor, whom I viewed as a father figure, took advantage of the opportunity when I was alone and attempted to harass me. What can you do? If you complain, they won't give you your rights; instead, they blame and shame you. If I tell my family, they might put an end to my education. I didn't report it to the administration, and I didn't even speak up to anyone except my friend... There was no supervision, and the secondary school administration was completely negligent."

Sociological Analysis and Commentary on the First Case

Within the first case, we witness an instance of verbal sexual harassment, where the perpetrator, an educational supervisor, capitalizes on his position of authority and the victim's need for an excuse for her absence. Using explicit language, he attempts to establish an inappropriate connection with a student who occupies the status of his daughter (in Algerian culture, "a daughter" refers to someone under the protection and care of the elder). This incident serves as a distressing indication that the school environment no longer guarantees the safety and well-being of female students, while the supervisor has abdicated his responsibility of maintaining order within the educational institution.

Due to a lack of adequate control and supervision within the school environment, this supervisor exploited the victim's isolated presence to harass her. As revealed through the victim's account, she acquires her understanding of sexuality from her peers and the internet, as discussions pertaining to sex remain taboo within her family. Consequently, she felt apprehensive about reporting the harasser to the administration, fearing potential negative consequences and social stigma. This finding aligns with the study conducted by Abdul Razzaq (2016), which elucidated that victims often choose to remain silent due to the fear of social stigmatization.

Moreover, the school environment has become a breeding ground for various deviant behaviors, including sexual harassment, while victims prefer to remain silent due to the unfavorable reactions of the administration. This observation

resonates with the findings of Caroline Theresa Slotten's study (2002), which highlighted that harassment predominantly occurs in public areas of the school, sometimes with the involvement or presence of others. Regrettably, victims rarely disclose these incidents to the school administration or their parents.

8.2 The Second Case

The second case revolves around a 15-year-old student, denoted as (W), who has fallen victim to sexual harassment at the hands of a fellow student. As per her testimony, this student, who happens to be older due to repeating the year four times, targets her by repeatedly touching her hair. He audaciously remarks, "None of you has hair as beautiful as Nassima's," as he consistently positions himself behind her, attempting to engage in physical contact while engaging in conversation. However, she steadfastly resists his advances.

Opening up about an incident, she shares, "Once, he passed me a piece of paper, he drew a heart symbol and inscribed our initials, professing his affection by writing, 'I love you, be with me.' Instantly, I returned the paper to him and wrote, 'May God guide you,' warning him of the consequences if he were to repeat his actions. I refrained from reporting the incident to the administration, as I did not wish to magnify the situation, fearing humiliation and the subsequent repercussions. Harassment runs rampant within the school, particularly in the form of verbal offenses, permeating every nook and cranny, from the entrance and staircases to the courtyard. Even girls

contribute to this unsettling environment by flaunting provocative attire and heavy makeup. Unfortunately, the administration remains apathetic, lacking vigilance or intervention, that's why such incidents take place."

Sociological Analysis and Commentary on the Second Case

Within the second case, we encounter a form of written sexual harassment perpetrated by a fellow classmate seeking to express his inappropriate desires. The victim refrains from reporting the incident, fearing potential stigma and subsequent humiliation. This reservation stems from the socio-cultural privacy ingrained within Algerian families and society, where discussing such sensitive matters remains a taboo subject. This finding resonates with the research of Madiha Ahmed Abada (2007), which underscores the fact that the majority of sexual harassment victims choose to remain silent to avoid scandalous exposure.

The victim's account highlights that students' attires make them susceptible to harassment, affirming the correlation identified in Abdul Razzaq's study (2016) between a girl's exposure to sexual harassment and her choice of clothing and appearance. Furthermore, the harasser exploits his gender and seniority to perpetrate sexual harassment, exemplifying the prevailing dominance of male authority. In his perception, the victim is viewed as weak and subordinate, reflecting the enduring patriarchal attitudes deeply ingrained in society. This observation aligns with Robert W.

Connell's research, which demonstrates how societal structures continue to reinforce male dominance and treat women as subordinates.

Furthermore, the school environment remains ineffective, as the administration fails to gain insight into the specifics of the incident and neglects to address it adequately. This brings attention to the lack of guidance and counseling services within educational institutions.

8.3 The Third Case

The third case features an 18-year-old student, denoted as (S), who is in her third year of secondary school. She exudes an aura of beauty and elegance, carefully reflected in her choice of attire. Tragically, she has become a victim of sexual harassment at the hands of a fellow student, who shares the same classroom but is older (21 years old) due to repeating the year. Exploiting the conclusion of the morning session, he would coerce her into lingering and pretend to be writing, thus ensuring their privacy. During these encounters, he would touch her inappropriately, cautioning her, "Don't leave, wait for me. If you utter a word, you're finished." Intimidated, he would seize her hand and kiss her. Fearing his menacing presence, she tearfully confides, "I hurriedly departed, trembling with fear. Eventually, I confided in my mother, divulging every detail. Consequently, she took action and transferred me to another school. Thankfully, my mother comprehends my ordeal, and I hold nothing back from her. She acts as both my mother and confidante. Unfortunately, the frequency of harassment

within the school environment has escalated, particularly during breaks and near restrooms. One can overhear comments that induce shame and discourage victims from speaking out. It is no more a secondary school, it became a place for romantic relationships, while supervisors fail to fulfill their duties, demonstrating a lack of vigilance and control over students."

Sociological Analysis and Commentary on the Third Case

In this case study, we examine the distressing experience of Case (S), who became the target of physical harassment by a deviant student, engaged in drug use, and older than her. The situation escalated when the student proceeded to touch and kiss her, further threatening her against reporting the incident to any authority figure. In seeking support, Case (S) turned to her mother, only to discover that transferring to a different secondary school was the sole solution perceived by her mother. Evidently, the case highlights the alarming issue of an unsafe school environment, where deviant behaviors such as drug abuse, smoking, and harassment of female students have proliferated and she notes also that supervisors within secondary schools fall short in fulfilling their responsibilities as expected.

As corroborated by Madiha Ahmed Abada's research in 2007, the growth of sexual harassment can be attributed to various institutional and structural factors. Notably, our subject in focus chose to remain silent about the harassment, confiding in her mother solely out of fear

induced by the harasser's threats. Importantly, Felicia April Hunt's study in 2004 revealed that reporting such incidents generally has a negative impact on victims' situations at the university level. Similarly, Robert Mathew's research indicates that the majority of victims endure anxiety, depression, and fear of disclosing their experiences.

In light of these findings, the only recourse for Case (S) was to transfer to another secondary school, seeking relief from her distressing ordeal.

8.4 The Fourth Case:

The next case centers on (N) a 17-year-old student, enrolled in the second year of secondary school, who encountered sexual harassment perpetrated by her math teacher. The victim courageously shared her harrowing experience, "he would repeatedly call me to the blackboard to write lessons, just so he could leer at my body... And when the session ends and I get to leave, the teacher would ask me to wait and write lessons in his notebook, while ostensibly praising my handwriting, only to take advantage of the situation and touch me in sensitive areas." When asked: "In sensitive areas like what?" Exuding an aura of timidity and a faint blush coloring her cheeks, she timidly answered, "My breasts."

When questioned about whether she had disclosed the incident to her parents, she firmly stated, 'No, such matters are virtually impossible to broach with them. Instead, I only confided in a close friend,

discussing these issues at home is unheard of, I am not close to my mother. We simply don't delve into such sensitive topics.' With unwavering resolve, she continued, 'I refrained from informing my parents because I dreaded the potential escalation if they were to confront the teacher. The last thing I want is to exacerbate the situation as I might get shamed. It's disheartening to admit, but I find it difficult to place my trust in any teacher.' Inquiring further about whether she had reported the harassment to the school authorities, her response was definitive, 'No, I didn't. I can't shake the belief that they might overlook the matter, or worse, the teacher could hold it against me. Besides, there have been instances where other girls faced harassment, and the administration turned a blind eye. I fear the repercussions, as it could adversely impact my academic performance, especially given that the subject in question is mathematics, a core part of my curriculum.'"

Sociological Analysis and Commentary on the Fourth Case

The case under scrutiny unveils a disturbing reality, where a teacher, who is typically seen as a role model and authority figure, abused his position to perpetrate acts of harassment through physical advances and suggestive gestures. Robert Mathew's research compellingly argues that male dominance continues to cast its shadow over societies, leading to a decline in the teacher's traditional role in education. Tragically, this decline is evidenced by the rising incidents of violence, including sexual harassment, within educational institutions.

Furthermore, Abdul Razzak's 2016 study highlights the lack of effective control mechanisms within school environments, a contributing factor to such distressing incidents. Additionally, through the victim's interview, we observed a lack of open communication between her and her mother "I am not close to my mother", making it difficult for her to discuss such sensitive issues. Moreover, her statement of fearing embarrassment "I might get shamed" reinforces the glaring lack of proper sexual education within Algerian families, where discussing such topics is often deemed taboo, especially in front of children, particularly girls.

Consequently, the cultural context still remains reluctant to openly address the issue of sexual harassment, thereby placing the burden of responsibility on the female victims.

8.5 The Fifth Case

Participant (F), a 16-year-old young woman, possesses a striking beauty, of medium stature, with short black hair. She applies light makeup, subtly visible, while attending her second year of secondary school. Regrettably, this girl encountered sexual harassment from a male student, a senior in the third year of secondary school, who happens to be older than her. Reflecting on the distressing incident, Participant (F) recounted the incident as follows: "As we were ascending the stairs, one of the boys approached me and intentionally brushed against me. I was wearing slim-fit pants at the time. I felt something inappropriate, and my friend suggested that he had groped my buttocks. I couldn't control my emotions and ended

up cursing at him. I went to the school administration and reported what happened, writing it down on a piece of paper and handing it over because I couldn't say it as I felt embarrassed. But the administration didn't take any serious action, just warned him verbally... Honestly, I didn't expect him to do such a shameful and disgraceful act. I couldn't tell my family about this, as we don't discuss such matters at home, it's shameful. We never curse or talk about such things. We only discuss sex matters among friends. For instance, we talk about someone making advances and wanting to be in a relationship with one of us. Nowadays, you can find everything on the internet, and any information you search for is available. We spend our leisure time together, and this environment makes students delve into inappropriate actions. The school environment no longer fosters discipline, leading to an increase in deviant and disrespectful conduct."

Sociological Analysis and Commentary on the Fifth Case

From a sociological standpoint, this case experienced sexual harassment through inappropriate physical contact from a peer while climbing the stairs and heading towards the classroom. overcrowding and a lack of supervision during transitional periods further facilitated the harasser's conduct. The malefactor's actions betray a deficiency in proper upbringing, indicative of someone lacking sound familial guidance. The inappropriate touch on her posterior is a behavior that exudes sexual connotations from a sexually deviant individual lacking a proper understanding

of sexual education. This aligns with the findings of Al-Tayar's (2012) study, which identifies inadequate monitoring and supervision by school administrators during break times and dismissal as contributory factors to sexual harassment.

Furthermore, the school administration's leniency towards the harasser's actions merely through a verbal warning allows us to revisit Robert Mathew's study, which concludes that societies have been influenced by a masculine perspective. Additionally, Madiha Abada's study (2016) corroborates this case, as many women who become victims of harassment experience feelings of shame, embarrassment, and confusion, as well as resentment towards men. This could be justified by (N's) response of cursing at the harasser. Through this case, we can deduce that the case's family does not provide adequate and proper information about sexual education to their daughter, as indicated in her statement that she could not disclose the incident to her family due to the sensitive nature of such matters in their household. Furthermore, the family environment is no longer a secure space for the student, as it has become a breeding ground for deviant behaviors, including sexual harassment, as stated by the case when she mentioned, "The school environment no longer fosters discipline, leading to an increase in deviant and disrespectful conduct." This observation aligns with Caroline Theresa's study (2002), which states that harassment usually occurs in public areas of the school, sometimes in the presence of others, and

victims rarely report the incidents to the school administration or their parents.

9. Conclusion

Sexual harassment is an issue that extends beyond the streets, workplaces, or markets; it has permeated educational institutions, especially secondary schools. Our study has shed light on pivotal factors contributing to the victimization of female students through sexual harassment. These factors include the lack of proper sexual education and a culture of silence due to the fear of social stigma, perpetuating the taboo nature of these heinous acts. Additionally, inadequate supervision within schools has fostered deviant behaviors, including sexual harassment, among students. Therefore, it is imperative for all stakeholders to collaborate, conduct further research, and delve into the root causes to curb its prevalence and safeguard our sons and daughters from its damaging psychological and social consequences.

General findings of the study

Drawing upon the results of our field study, a number of significant results have been brought to light:

- The study reveals that in a majority of cases (60%), the perpetrators of harassment were identified as fellow students, while 20% involved teachers, and another 20% implicated school employees.
- The forms of harassment experienced by the students displayed a distressing spectrum, ranging from verbal and

written advances to unwarranted physical contact.

- It is noteworthy that a significant proportion of the interviewed students lacked access to adequate sexual education. Consequently, they sought information from their peers or the internet, which might not always provide accurate or comprehensive knowledge.
- The school environment emerged as a critical contributing factor in the victimization of students to sexual harassment. The insufficient supervision by school administrators, coupled with a lack of guidance from educational authorities, allowed this issue to escalate perilously within Algerian secondary schools.
- Notably, the study highlighted that weak school supervision played a role in fostering deviant behaviors among students during their crucial developmental stage, often in defiance of established social norms and expectations.
- A poignant revelation of the study was that many victims chose to suffer in silence, either underestimating the gravity of the harassment or fearing social stigma. This unfortunate trend significantly exacerbates the problem of sexual harassment, as perpetrators continue their actions unchecked.

Recommendations

Based on our research findings, we propose the following measures:

- Implementation of educational and awareness sessions within schools to enlighten students about the perils and consequences of sexual harassment.
- Activation of sexual education in Algerian schools, possibly incorporating it as a subject taught by specialists to enhance students' awareness of sexual crimes in general and sexual harassment in particular.
- Strengthening school healthcare services and appointing psychologists and social workers in secondary schools to provide guidance and support to victims of sexual harassment.
- Leveraging mosque sermons to address various forms of violence prevalent in schools, including sexual harassment, smoking, and drug abuse, thereby raising parental awareness about the psychological and social dangers these behaviors pose to their children.
- Encouraging parents to report perpetrators of sexual harassment against their children, ensuring they face appropriate consequences as a deterrent to potential offenders within and outside educational institutions.
- Establishing regular communication with parents and school staff to identify pressing issues affecting children and facilitate their resolution.
- Utilizing media platforms to heighten awareness of the dangers of sexual harassment in educational institutions at all levels, and its detrimental effects on victims, families, and society as a whole.

- Revising internal regulations and enacting internal laws within educational institutions to govern student behavior toward each other and toward administrative and teaching staff.
- Implementing gender segregation and promoting single-sex schools to prevent gender mixing and mitigate the problem of sexual harassment within educational settings.

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Appendices:

Interview Guide:

Case Number:

Date of Interview:

Location of Interview:

Interview Timing:

First Axis: Participants' Personal Information

Age:

Educational Level:

Second Axis: General Information

Who harassed you? When and where did it happen?

What type of harassment did you experience?

How did you react to the harassment?

Third Axis: Data related to the First Hypothesis: "The absence of sexual education for girls makes them vulnerable to sexual harassment within secondary schools."

Is there any discussion about sex-related matters within your family? If you answered "no," why is that?

Do you have sufficient knowledge about sexual education? If you answered "no," why is that?

Do you discuss sex-related issues with your peers?

In your opinion, do you believe that the lack of sexual education within Algerian families contributes to female students becoming victims of sexual harassment in secondary schools?

Fourth Axis: Data related to the Second Hypothesis: "The school environment contributes to the victimization of girls to sexual harassment within secondary schools."

In your view, do you think that spending extended periods with male students is a contributing factor to female students becoming victims of sexual harassment?

Did you report the sexual harassment incidents to the school administration?

How did the school administration react when you reported the incidents?

In your belief, does the school environment play a role in female students becoming victims of sexual harassment within secondary schools?