

A Cross Sectional Study on the Prevalence of Abuse and Self Defence among Female Medical Students in Hubli

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Abstract

Background: Female abuse and harassment are burning issues of the present times and has shown increasing trend of late. Harassment at workplace is a violation of Human Right. It degrades a person's privacy and dignity leading to emotional stress, humiliation, anxiety and depression. Hence a study on the prevalence of abuse among female medical students is highly warranted.

Methods: A cross sectional study was conducted for a duration of one month among 100 female medical students in Hubli, providing them with pretested semistructured questionnaire after obtaining informed oral consent. The participants were assured of their confidentiality. The data collected, was entered in excel sheet, tabulated and represented as tables and graphs.

Conclusion: 95% female students felt that they have been harassed at least once, among which 53% of the abusers were strangers. Verbal abuse was the most common form of abuse. Majority of them failed to inform higher authorities and had deep psycho social impact. Only a meagre of them were trained in self defense technics.

Keywords: Abuse, Self Defense, Female Medical Students, Hubli

Introduction

Female abuse is defined as 'intentional and systemic use of tactics to establish and maintain power and control over the thoughts, beliefs and conduct of a woman through the inducement of fear and/or dependency.'^[1] This definition encompasses aspects of the definition from the United Nations Declaration on the elimination of violence against women (1993)

Harassment is defined as any 'improper and unwelcome conduct that might reasonably be expected or be perceived to cause humiliation to another person.'^[2] It takes the form of words, gestures, or actions which tend to annoy, alarm, abuse, demean, intimidate, belittle, humiliate or which create an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment.^[3]

Harassment at workplace is a violation of Human Right. It degrades a person's privacy and dignity.

It causes emotional stress to the victim apart from humiliation, anxiety, depression, anger, powerlessness, fatigue and physical illness.

Street harassment refers to verbal comments and physical actions between strangers that are unwelcome or threatening and those that occur in public places. It is an understudied form of violence against women.^[4]

Aim

1. To study the prevalence of abuse among female medical students in Hubli.
2. To study the psycho social impact of abuse in female medical students
3. To study the prevalence of self defense technics among female medical students

Materials and Methods

A cross sectional study was conducted among 100 female medical students- comprising of 2nd yr,3rd yr,interns and postgraduates studying in medical college of Hubli.The sample was selected using convenient sampling and the study was done for a period of one month from 9 Dec 2019 to 8 Jan 2020.A pretested,semi structured questionnaire was handed over to the study participants after obtaining informed oral consent for the study.The participants were assured of their confidentiality.The data thus collected was entered into an Excel sheet,tabulated and represented as tables and graphs.

Result

Among the 100 participants,65 of them were pursuing MBBS degree while the rest of them were pursuing postgraduation.90% of them had working shifts of 5-8 hours in a day when compared another 8% having 9-12 hour shifts and 2 of them worked for more than 12 hours a day.The age distribution of the study participants were almost equally distributed,with 54% of them in the age group of 18-22 years and 45 percent of them between 23-26 yrs with one person above 26years.Furthermore 98% of the study population had normal BMI while only 2% were undernourished.

74% of them confessed themselves to be modest in appearance whereas 23 of them felt they were beautiful and another 3 felt they were very beautiful. In addition to it,more than half of the study population had friendly attributes as part of their personality(Figure 1).Discomforting looks and stares,embarassing

comments and jokes,unwanted physical contact and flirting were what that was considered as 'harassment' by the study population.Shockingly 95% of the study subjects faced with harassment atleast once.89% of the students were abused by males while 7% were abused both by males and females.67% of the study participants wer abused outside their campus.

Apparently, verbal abuse was considered to be the most common form of abuse among others(Table 1). while 22 of them were abused often(figure 2).Saddening to hear is that,54 of them were completely freezed and couldn't even react during abuse.(table2).Furthermore 88 of them reported about the abuse another person-mostly to their friends(Table 3).Among those who failed to report the incident,the reasons identified were:fear of complicated legal procedures,didn't consider the act as important and was unaware as to whom to open up with.

Incidentally majority of the abusers were in the age group between 26-35 years.(fig.3) Altogether about 53% of the abusers were starngers to the study participants,while 16% of them were in campus staffs and other workers,8% were their own classmates and 5% patient and their relatives while others didnt wish to comment.

It is interesting to note that 18 of them were abused by a group of people and another 15 of them were abused both in groups and later individually.On enquired with the reason for abusing,many felt a male dominated society of ours to be the reason(Table 4)

Lastly 83% of the females were not trained in any self defense technics which is a lacunae in our modern society that needs to be addressed.

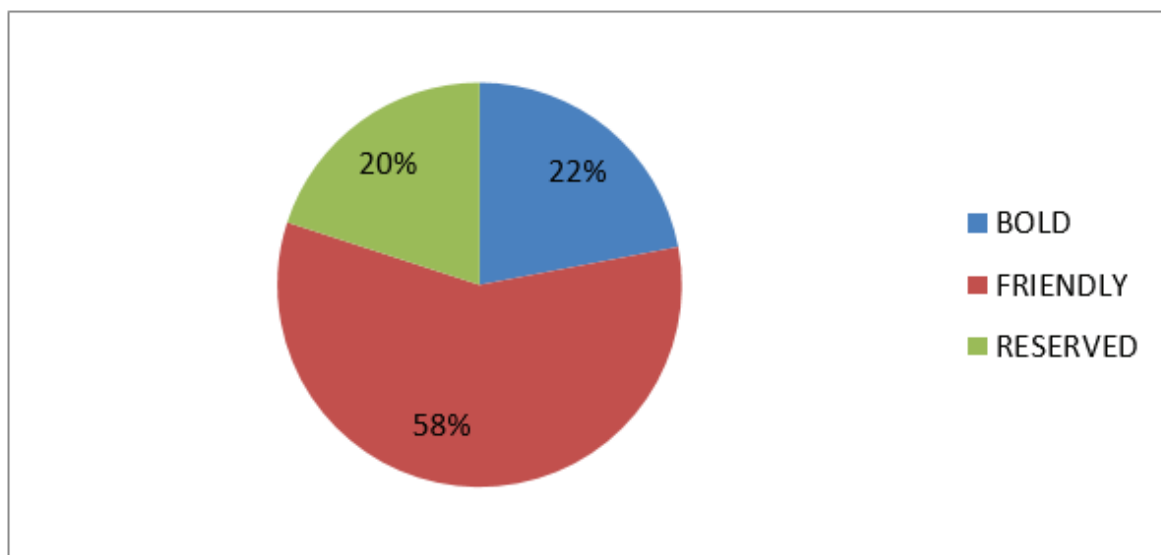


FIGURE 1: FIGURE 1 INDICATES PERSONALITY ATTRIBUTE AMONG STUDY PARTICIPANTS

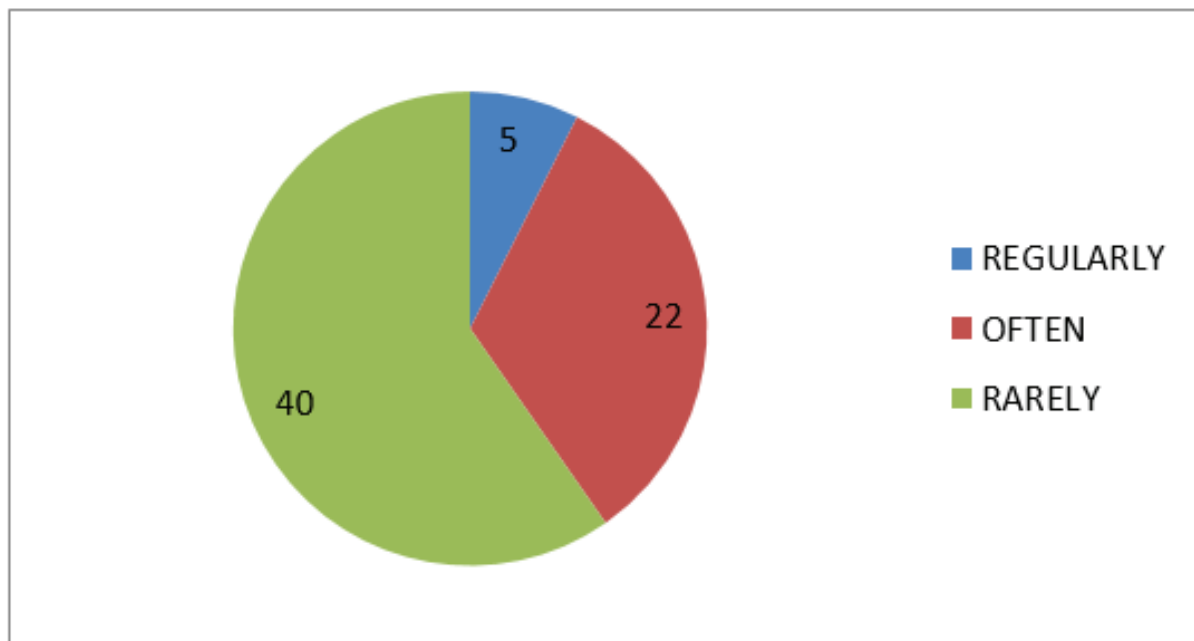


FIGURE 2: FIGURE 2 INDICATES FREQUENCY OF HARASSMENT(N=67)

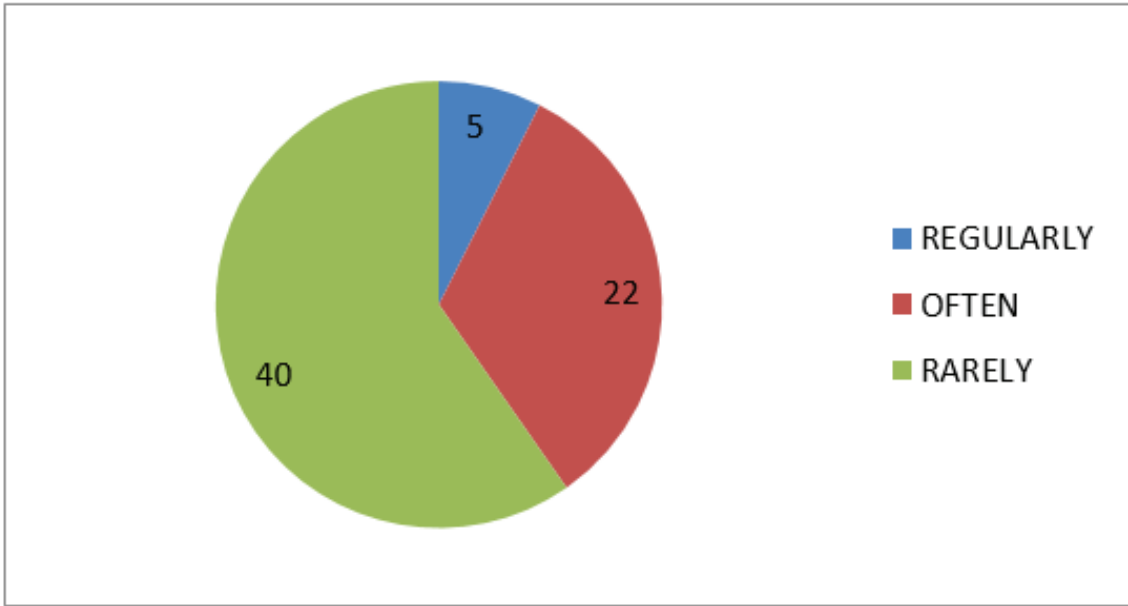


FIGURE 3: FIGURE 3 INDICATES AGE DISTRIBUTION OF THE ABUSERS(N=94)

TABLE 1: TABLE 1 INDICATES THE NATURE OF HARASSMENT

NATURE OF HARASSMENT	NO. OF PARTICIPANTS(N=100)
SEXUALLY PROVOKED LOOKS	24
VERBAL ABUSE	29
UNWANTED PHYSICAL CONTACT	22
RAPE	0
ACADEMIC ABUSE	7
RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION	4
LANGUAGE DISCRIMINATION	14

TABLE 2: TABLE 2 INDICATES THE IMMEDIATE RESPONSE OF PATICIPANTS UPON HARASSMENT

REACTION OF PARTICIPANT TO HARASSMENT	NUMBER(N=100)
NONE	56
SHOUTED AND ASKED TO STOP ABUSE	20
THREATEN TO REPORT	6
PHYSICALLY TRIED TO STOP	3
RAN AWAY	15

TABLE 3: INDICATES WITH WHOM THEY HAVE SHARED THE UNTOWARD INCIDENT WITH

SHARING/REPORTING THE INCIDENT TO	NUMBER(N=100)
FRIENDS	58
FAMILY	35
HIGHER AUTHORITY	6
POLICE	1

TABLE 4 INDICATES PROBABLE REASON SUSPECTED BY THE PARTICIPANTS FOR ABUSE

REASON TO BE HARASSED	NUMBER(N=100)
GOOD ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE	7
GOOD LOOKING	17
INNOCENCE	22
MALE DOMINATED SOCIETY	31
DO NOT KNOW	23

Conclusion

95% female students felt that they have been harassed atleast once,among which 53% of the abusers were strangers.Verbal abuse was the most common form of abuse .Majority of them failed to inform higher authorities and had deep psycho social impact.Only a meagre of them were trained in self defense technics.

Ethical Clearance: Not Taken

Source of Funding: Self

Conflict of Interest: Nil

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