

Management of Sexual Harassment through Assertiveness Skills

An Intervention Inquiry among Rural Adolescent Girls in Kalady Grama Panchayath

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ABSTRACT

Objective Assessing and comparing the assertiveness and management of sexual harassment before and after the administration of the assertiveness skills training to the rural adolescent girls. *Method* Geographical universe of the research is the geographical area of the Kalady Grama Panchayath. The population of the research includes all higher secondary girl students studying in aided schools and government in Kalady Grama Panchayath. The researcher proposes a multi stage sampling system for the research. Research design selected was Quasi –Experimental research design without control group. To collect data the researcher administer the tools like check list to identify the experience of sexual harassment, Questionnaire to assess the management of sexual harassment experiences and a standardized questionnaire to check the assertiveness behaviour among adolescent girls. The collected data was analyzed using appropriate inferential statistical methods employing SPSS 10 version. *Findings* – Majority of the higher secondary adolescent girls have some form of sexual harassment experiences .The management of these harassment experiences is also very poor. There is a slight change in the assertiveness level before and after intervention as well as there is change in the management of sexual harassment experience after assertiveness intervention programme.

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Conclusions – It is clear that poor assertiveness skills lead to problems so it is important for children to give appropriate training to improve these skills. Thus, they can more enjoy their social interactions and feel good about themselves.

Key words: Sexual harassment, Management, Assertiveness skill, rural adolescent girls, Interventions

INTRODUCTION

Kerala is known as the 'God's own country' with her great human development indices and natural serenity. Despite having the highest female literacy rate in the country, India's southernmost state has emerged with the worst record in terms of respecting and protecting womanhood. The rural adolescent girls in Kerala are dangerously exposed to sexual harassment. The day to day experiences of the rural adolescent girls who move about in various transportation devices and social spheres are receiving the unwelcomed expressions and behaviours of their sexual counterparts in various ages and social statuses. The experience can be from strangers, very personal people, peer group, authorities and in fact from anybody at any time at any place in any form. According to crime branch statistics 357 rape cases has been reported in Kerala in last three months of this year, At least 4 or 5 women are sexually attacked every day in Kerala. So the incidence of sexual harassment out numbers all these figures. The harassment rate among rural adolescent girls will be much more. The real factor behind this structural and functional inability in managing the sexual harassment is their difficulties in the efforts of assertiveness in life situations The experience of harassment if not properly managed and resolved can also create a number of psychological and social disabilities and traumatic experiences to them in future.. This paper is an attempt to assess and compare the assertiveness and management of sexual harassment before and after the administration of the assertiveness skill training to the rural adolescent girls.

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CONCEPTS AND RELATED STUDIES

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment has been a fact of life since human first inhabited the earth. Prior to being identified and named, these various unwanted and unsolicited acts of a sexual nature went by different names. The Supreme Court's definition of sexual harassment includes "such unwelcome sexually determined behaviour (whether directly or by implication) as physical contact and advances; a demand or request for sexual favours, sexually coloured remarks; showing pornography; any other unwelcome physical, verbal or non verbal conduct of sexual nature"(The Supreme Court Guidelines on Sexual Harassment at Workplace Vishaka and others vs. State of Rajasthan and others, 1997). It is researched that sexual harassment experience result in various consequences to those who had faced with harassment experiences. Among the physical and emotional symptoms reported by victims of harassment are Nausea, headache, tiredness, lack of motivation, difficulty in concentrating and lowered sense of self esteem (Crull 1982). In another study noted that females tend to rate sexually oriented behaviour as sexual harassment to a greater degree than do their male counterpart (Powell1983) .Several studies carried out on university campuses have also revealed very significant results. For example, in Malaysia, a survey that was carried out between 1986 and 1988 on a university campus revealed that about 80 per cent of women interviewed had been harassed in some way or other (Badriyah, 1988 in Zaitun 2001). Similarly, a study conducted by the Gender Study Group of Delhi University in India found that almost half of the women respondents had been harassed by someone in authority, i.e either teaching or non-teaching staff(Lawyers collective (2001)

Assertiveness Skill

Lack of social skills appears to generate social failure. Poor competency as a child may affect badly in their interpersonal functioning as an adult. Social skills

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deficits of children are often described as similar to assertiveness deficits. Inadequate social skills have also been related to delayed cognitive development and impaired academic performance (Cartledge & Milburn, 1978; Strain, Cooke & Apolloni, 1976 as cited in Gresham and Nagle,1980).

Assertiveness is all about having the confidence to make the right contribution in the right context. Assertiveness techniques are required for dealing with our teachers, friends, school authorities and even members of our family. . According to Richmond and McCroskey (1985), assertiveness “is the capacity to make requests; to actively disagree; to express positive or negative personal rights and feelings; to initiate, maintain, or disengage from conversations; and to stand up for oneself without attacking another.” Assertiveness is an important skill for children to develop healthy human relations with peers, parents, teachers, and all the other social contacts. When children use assertiveness skills in their social, academic and personal life, they enhance the potential of reaching successful outcomes.

Assertiveness Training

Assertiveness is a skill which can be developed and improved. Assertiveness training aims at the modification of non-assertive social behavior and acquiring assertiveness responses (Hargie,Sannders and Dicksons,1994) When we trace the history of assertiveness training ieven relates back to the 1949. Andrew Salter in the year 1949 in his Conditioned Reflex Therapy described an early form of assertion training .Wolpe (1958) and Lazarus (1971) were the other behavior therapists who clearly differentiated assertion from aggression, The main goal of assertiveness training is to increase the individual awareness of verbal patterns, interaction ,feeling etc, and increase the verbal and listening skills.

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Studies have found that group training is more effective than individual assertiveness training (Rathu's 1975). There are 4 types of assertion training according to (Lange & Jacobowski, 1976) which are A) Exercise oriented B) Theme oriented C) Semi-Structured D) Un Structured. The situation in which assertiveness is required is an important aspect for consideration. Eisler, Hersen, Miller and Bard (1975) concluded that an individual who is assertive in one interpersonal context may not be assertive in another inter-personal context. Likewise some individuals may not have difficulty in responding to negative assertion but are not able to respond to situation which requires positive expressions. So it is very important that not only assertiveness techniques are taught but they should be equipped or trained for skillful usage of assertiveness in different situation.

Lot of studies have conducted to bring about the effectiveness of assertive training on students. Bornstein, Bellack and Hersen, (1977) conducted an assertiveness training with children using the behavioral rehearsal, modeling, feedback and coaching procedures. They found that assertiveness training was effective in modifying the social behaviors of four passive and shy children. Wise, Bundy, Bundy and Wise (1991) developed a systematic assertiveness training program for adolescents, based on social cognitive theory. The results indicated that young adolescents can acquire and retain the symbolic information that forms a basis for assertive behavior. Galassi, Litz and Galassi (1974) investigated the effectiveness of group assertiveness training with non-assertive college students. After receiving 8-week training including videotape modelling, video-peer-trainer feedback, behavioural rehearsal, group support and biblio therapy, significant differences were found between experimental and control groups on the self-expression, eye contact and assertive content. These results showed that assertiveness training in groups using video feedback was useful for college

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students .Leone and Gumaer (1979) developed a group assertiveness training program with shy children. The first phase utilized reinforcement procedures, relaxation, guided fantasy, behavior contracts, and feedback mechanisms. The second phase eliminated features no longer needed as children progressed. The evaluation demonstrated that this program was effective in increasing assertive behavior.

AIM

Assessing and comparing the assertiveness and management of sexual harassment before and after the administration of the assertiveness skills training to the rural adolescent girls.

METHODOLOGY

Researcher used a Quasi –Experimental research design without control group. The universe of the study will be the geographical area of the Kalady Grama Panchayath. The population of the research includes all higher secondary girl students studying in aided and government schools in Kalady Grama Panchayath. There are around five hundred adolescent girls students studying in the aided higher secondary schools in Kalady Gramam Panchayath. The researcher proposes a multi stage sampling system for the research. The sampling technique is simple random sampling. Data collection inventory was 1) A Check list to identify the experience of sexual harassment (SES,KOSS &OROS,1982) . 2)Self prepared Questionnaire to assess the management of sexual harassment experiences adapted from a survey on stopping sexual Harassment conducted by AFSCME,USA .and 3) Standardized questionnaire(RATHU’S) to check the self assessment on assertiveness behaviour among adolescent In the first stage researcher identify 150 students from the population to screen for the sexual harassment experiences and the management of sexual harassment experiences, In the second phase researcher identified 50 adolescent girl students from who are

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have experiences of sexual harassment and having poor assertiveness skill as well as poor management of sexual harassment experiences. The identified group of 35 adolescents were provided with an assertiveness training programme with concentration on the management of sexual harassment through the assertiveness behaviour. The collected data will be analyzed using appropriate inferential statistical methods employing SPSS 10 version. Then the trends and findings are interpreted in the light of the existing theoretical and empirical knowledge base.

RESEARCH QUESTION

1. Does the assertiveness training programme have a significant effect on the assertiveness level of higher secondary school children?
2. Does the assertiveness training programme have a significant effect on the management of sexual harassment experiences

TRAINING PROCEDURE

Training procedure is planned in a social group work intervention model. Implementation of the programme took 8 weeks. The implementation carried out one day in a week by the researcher. The programme was implemented in a mini auditorium of the selected schools. The session generally took 45 minutes.

TRAINING PROGRAMME

The training programme include task to develop to say 'No' to unreasonable request, with harassment experiences, standing up for their rights and learning to stand up for their rights and learning to discriminate assertive behaviour from aggressive and passive behaviour ,Role play, group play, short-lectures, group discussions and home work were used as a part of training. In 8 week assertiveness training, 1st week training for warm up and introduction to each other and build a rapport with other members and last week a terminating session by constituting a regular group for adolescent girls with the help of their teachers, which will go on even after the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The population of the research includes all higher secondary girl students studying in aided and government schools in Kalady Grama Panchayath. There were almost equal number of respondents from both aided (74 ie 49.3%)and government schools(76 ie50.7%).Majority of the respondents belongs either to 16 or 17 age group and a least number belongs to18 year category. The current trend of family type in Kerala is clearly seen in the study also ie.76.3% belongs to nuclear family and 21.3% from extended families. Even in rural areas number of joint families is very less. Another interesting finding is that about 59.3% of the students depend on private bus for their travel .Very small number of children depends on school bus and other private vehicles.

Table No.1 Sexual Harassment Experiences by The Respondents

Sl. No	Sexual Harassment Experiences	Frequency	Percentage
1	Unwanted touching ,fondling	13	8.7%
2	Unwanted verbal sexual behaviour	16	10.7%
3	Sexual comments about body or appearance	27	18.0%
4.	Sexually suggestive display-Pictures, posters etc.	4	2.7%
5	Sexually suggestive phone calls-mails and messages	13	7%
6	2+3	26	17.3%
7	1+3	14	9.3%
8	1+2+3	11	7.3%
9	No harassment experience	26	17.3%
	Total	150	100%

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The table No.1 brings out the sexual harassment experience among higher secondary adolescent girls.18.0% of the girls experienced sexual harassment by getting comments about their body or appearance.17.3% experience unwanted verbal sexual behaviour and comments on body or appearance.8.7% experience unwanted fondling and touching.7% were getting sexually suggestive phone calls and a least number that is 2,7% faced with display of sexual posters and photographs. Out of 150 respondents only 26 (17.3%) of them doesn't have any sexual harassment experiences. A big majority among the respondents depend on private bus for their travel. About 63(42%) of the respondents experience sexual harassment during travel to school. There is no school bus facility for government school, Both government schools and aided school is located in rural area where necessary transport facilities is not there.

Table No.2 Place Where Sexual Harassment Occurs

Sl.No	Place Where Harassment Occur	Frequency	Percentage
1	During travel to school	63	42%
2	Neighbourhood premises	3	2%
3	On the road	6	4.0%
4	In the class premises	3	2.0%
5	1+2	1	.7%
6	1+2+4	28	18.7%
7	4+3	20	13.3%
8	No where it happens	26	17.3%
	Total	150	100

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The data depicts that 42% of the respondents face harassment during their travel. Another 18.7% faces harassment during travel, from neighbourhood and experienced even in the school premises itself. Very least number of respondents (2.0%) have sexual harassment experiences in school premises only. 17.3% of the respondents doesn't face such an experience. This problem is the common problem with higher secondary girl children studying in government and aided schools in Kerala, because majority of them use either private bus or state transport for their travel. About 42% had sexual harassment experiences during their travel to school. So the teachers, parents, school authorities, police should consider it as a serious issue and should take necessary step to handle such issues of harassment.

Table No.3 When the Sexual Harassment Happened in Life

Sl.No	How far it happens	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Currently happening	61	40.7%
2.	Happened in last 1 or 2 years	45	30%
3.	More than 2 years	17	11.3%
4.	Once experienced	2	1.3%
5.	Not at all happened	22	14.7%
6.	Not remembering	3	2.0%
	Total	150	100

The table No 3 represents the period of their sexual harassment experience. 40.7 % of the respondents are of the opinion that they are currently facing incidences of harassment. 30 % of them had harassment experiences in last one or two years and 11% are of the opinion that they face it more than two years before. 14.7% are of the opinion that they never face such experiences and 2.0 % do not remember any such experiences. Most of them even currently experiences sexual harassment. So the teachers, parents and the authorities need

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to take up the issue seriously. The school councilors can play a major role in supporting those who had many emotional problems out of sexual harassment experience.

Table No.4 Who is the Harasser

Sl.No	Harasser	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Class mates or school staff	2	1.3%
2.	Staff in the Private Bus	8	5.3%
3.	Travellers in the bus	50	33.3%
4.	On the road	44	29.3%
5.	Neighbourhood premises	2	1.3%
6.	5+4	21	14%
7.	No such experiences	23	15.3%
	Total	150	100%

TableNo.4 represents the person who harasses the respondents. About 33.3% of the respondent's faces harassment from the other travellers in the private bus.29.3% of them come across harassment experiences while they are on road and they face harassment in their neighbourhood premises.14% experiences sexual harassment either on the road and in neighbourhood premises. Very least (8%) were harassed by the staff in the bus and in class or by school mates (1.3%).

Table No.5 Self Perception towards Sexual Harassment Experiences

Sl.No	Self perceptions	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Victim is responsible	14	9.3%
2.	Feel Sad	44	29.3%
3.	Feel angry towards the experience	38	25.3%
4.	Feeling of fear	11	7.3%
5.	Some problem with his body	30	20%
6.	No response	13	8.7%
	Total	150	100%

The data in Table No.5 represents their perception towards their harassment experiences. About 29.3% are feeling sad towards their experience.

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Another 25.3 % are of the perception that they feel angry to the harassment incidence. 20% percent perceive their body is responsible for such incidents. Least number of respondents (7.3%) perceived the experiences with fear and 9.3% represents that they have the feeling that the victim is responsible for the harassment incidence.

Table No.6 Level Of Assertiveness among the Respondents

Sl.No	Level Of Assertiveness	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Highly Assertive(55+)	5	3.3%
2.	Fairly Assertive(40-55)	39	26%
3.	Assertive in certain situation(25-40)	73	48.6%
4.	Not at all Assertive(10-25)	33	22%
	Total	150	100%

Table No.6 represents the level of assertiveness among the total respondents. About 48.6% belongs to a category where the person will be assertive to certain Situation. 26% belongs to a category where the respondents are fairly assertive and 22% are not at all assertive ,they are the focus of my intervention .Only 3.3% belongs the category of highly assertive.

Table 7 shows The Self Management of Sexual Harassment Experiences before and after Assertiveness Training

Sl.No	Self Expressions	Before	After
1.	Reacted on the spot by herself	0	12(34.3%)
2.	Reacted on the spot by seeking help from friends	2(2.9%)	12(34.3%)
3.	Reacted on the spot by seeking help from other people.	1(2.9%)	3(8.6%)
4.	Try to avoid that situation	1(2.9%)	8(22.9%)
5.	Do not react at all	31(88.6%)	0
	Total	35(100%)	35(100%)

The expression of self management towards sexual harassment before and after assertiveness training is represented in Table No.7..About 34.3% of the

respondents made up their mind to react on the spot against harassment experiences, but there was no respondent before assertiveness training. 34.3% were ready to react by seeking help from their friends after training and only 2.9% reacted before training. About 8.6% seek the help from unknown people help to react after training, there were only 2.9% who seek help from unknown people before training. All the trainees decided to react against the sexual harassment after assertiveness training. The training components like sharing of sexual harassment experiences, Self defence techniques, harassment sensitizing class and the games planned to strength their assertiveness helped the adolescent girls to react against harassment. In Kerala culture the girls are not permitted to talk loudly and react in public. So this condition restricts them from self reactions. Even the parents and teachers consider a obedient silent child as a good girl and one who react back and shows confidence will be considered bad. These sort of communication from teachers and parents restrict the girls from assertiveness.

Table No.8 Organised Efforts to Manage Sexual Harassment Experiences before and after Assertiveness Training

Sl.No	Organised Efforts	Before	After
1.	Complaint to school authorities	0	13(37.1%)
2.	Complaints to bus owners	0	19(54.3%)
3.	Don't complain to anybody	35(100%)	3(8.6%)
	Total	35(100%)	35(100%)

Table No.8 brings the data regarding the organised efforts against sexual harassment before and after assertiveness training .It is reported that 37.1% were ready to complain the issue to school authorities and 54.3% were ready to complain to bus owners with the help of their teachers. Nobody is ready to complain before training. It is interesting to note that there were only 3,(8.6%) who were not ready to complain. after training . During the training there was a session which includes both teachers and students. So that teachers perspective

towards sexual harassment has changed and they come up to a level where there is an opportunity to help their students to overcome such issue.

Table No.9 Management of Emotional Problems Attached with Sexual Harassment Experience Before And After Assertiveness Training

Sl.No	Managing emotional problems	Before	After
1.	Share it with friends	8(22.9%)	10(28.6%)
2	Share it with parents	2(5.7%)	20(57.1%)
3.	Share it with school councillor	0	3(8.6%)
4.	Teacher	0	2(5.7%)
5.	Try to solve it by oneself	6(17.1%)	0
6.	Spend time in prayer	6(17.1%)	0
7.	Don't do anything	17(17.1%)	0
	Total	35(100%)	35(100%)

Management of emotional problems attached with sexual harassment is depicted in Table No.9. After training Majority of the respondents are ready to share the harassment experiences and emotional problems with their parents. There is an increase in the number of respondents (57.1%) who share the emotional problems with their parents. But a least majority is decided to share with teachers (5.7%) and councillors (8.6%) even after training. In Kerala there are school councillors in all government schools. Those councillors can intervene into the emotional, social, psychological issues of those children who has undergone harassment experience.

Table No.10 Results Concerning the Effect of the Assertiveness Training on the Assertiveness Level of the selected respondents after intervention

Independent samples t test was conducted to evaluate the effect of the assertiveness training on the assertiveness levels of 35 higher secondary girls who had sexual harassment experiences .

TableNo.10 Represents the Mean and Standard Deviations of The Assertiveness Level for both Before And After Assertiveness Training.

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Level of assertiveness	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Pre-test score	35	24.03	2.05
Post- test score	35	30.40	4.160

* $p < 0.05$

As shown in Table 10, the mean of the pre-test assertiveness scores is 24.03 with a standard deviation of 2.05 while the mean scores of the post-test assertiveness score is 30.40 with a standard deviation of 4.160. The difference between the mean scores of the two independent samples was significant. In other words, the results indicated the effectiveness of the assertiveness training increases the assertiveness scores of the subjects. According to the statistical analysis, present experiment lends support to the efficacy of assertiveness training for improving higher secondary students' assertiveness level. These results can be supported by some of the research on the literature. For example, Rotherman, Armstrong and Booraem (1982), indicated that assertiveness was higher among classes who received 12-week assertion training than others who did not. As mentioned earlier, a number of authors (Alberti & Emmons, 1975, Bower & Bower, 1967, Lange & Jacobowski, 1976) postulated that training in assertiveness results in changed attitudes towards self, including increased self esteem. The study of Combes (1995) is in line with the authors above. since home-school continuity is important for the transfer and the generalization of the skills, if parents were included the study, that might have had a positive effect on the study.

RESEARCHER'S OBSERVATIONS

Initially they were reluctant to come to the group and to share as well as take part in the assertiveness training programmes. Later, after ice-breaking

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session they were enthusiastic and cheerful during the session. They actively participated in role-play, group play and in the discussions. They demand for more group play and games during the sessions. Later they started sharing their bad experiences they come across with and ways of managing the problems. By the end of the eighth session they themselves come up with a suggestion to have such groups as well as activities regularly and they initiated the formation of a group in the school itself by the help of their teachers or school councillors.

IMPLICATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study aim to analyse the effects of assertiveness training on the assertiveness level of higher secondary school children the results revealed that there is a slight difference in the assertiveness level. . This study has some implications for parents, teachers, school counsellors and all the other people who are in any kind of relationship with students. The traditional focus of schools is on the academic curriculum than teaching personal skills and social skills. We generally expect that these skills will be acquired as part of the development process. But many children find it difficult to acquire these social skills especially assertiveness skill to fight against the harassment experiences. So the role of teachers, parents and school councillors to teach, to model and to observe all kinds of assertive skills to enhance children's social development.

The study was carried over among adolescent girls in rural area which cant be generalised to all higher secondary school students. Another limitation of the study is about the shortness of intervention programmes. So the teachers and school counselors were responsible to have groups for girls who come across with sexual harassment. The teachers and school counselors need to be trained to conduct such assertiveness building training to the students on a regular basis.

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