Online ISSN: 2735-3982

DOI: -----

MNJ
Menoufia Nursing Journal
Faculty of Nuring
Menoufia University

Perception and Attitude of Internship Nursing Student Regarding Sexual Harassment

Shadia H. Mehasb¹, Soad A. Ramadan², Hend A. Elsayed³, Dina M. Abd El Salam⁴

¹Professor of Maternal and Newborn Health Nursing, Faculty of Nursing – Ain Shams University, ²Asst. Professor of Obstetrics and gynecological Nursing, Faculty of Nursing- Banha University, ³Asst. Professor of Obstetrics and gynecological Nursing, Faculty of Nursing- Banha University, ⁴Clinical Instructor at Nasser institute.

Abstract: Sexual harassment behavior is one of the most difficult problems facing internship nursing students in recent years that evoke stronger emotional reactions. The purpose of the study was to assess perception and attitude of internship nursing students regarding sexual harassment. A descriptive study was utilized in this study. This study was conducted at the Faculty of Nursing - Banha University. A convenience of 276 female nursing students who were registered in the internship year during time of data collection in the academic year 2016-2017. Two Instruments were used for collecting data. Instrument one a structured interviewing questionnaire, it consisted of three parts. Part (1) socio-demographic characteristic of internship nursing students, part (2) data about internship training, and Part (3) students' perception regarding sexual harassment. Instrument two included scale of attitude of internship nursing students toward sexual harassment. The result of this study indicated that, 58.7% of the internship nursing students had an average level of perception regarding sexual harassment. The majority of the internship nursing students had a negative attitude toward sexual harassment. Meanwhile, only 0.4% had a positive attitude toward sexual harassment. There was a statistically positive correlation between the internship nursing students' total perception and attitude scores regarding sexual harassment. Also, there was a statistically significant relation between the studied sample's level of perception and attitude about sexual harassment and age, residence, and arrangement between brothers and sisters. Conclusion, the study concluded that the internship nursing students have an average level of perception regarding sexual harassment and a negative attitude toward sexual harassment. Therefore, it is recommended that, intensive training program should be implemented to develop intern students' awareness to eliminate sexual harassment.

Keywords: sexual harassment, internship nursing students, perception, attitude.

INTRODUCTION

Sexual harassment is seriously eroding the working excellence which should not be taken likely because it is one of the most difficult problems facing women in recent years. The sexual harassment phenomenon has been a growing public threat in Egypt with neither effective assessment nor solutions for it. It ranges from verbal, physical sexual harassment (Justina et al., 2017).

Sexual harassment describes as any unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors or other physical and expressive behaviors of a sexual nature. Sexual harassment involves such behavior that is unwanted, intentional, frequently repeated, demeaning, intimidating, cohesiveness, and creates interference with the normal conduct in the work (Lee et al., 2013).

Sexual harassment in the workplace is a problem especially for women; harassment can damage women's prospects for gaining employment, advancement, and wages. In addition, harassment can create an offensive, hostile, and intimidate work environment that interferes with one's performance and job success. Sexual harassment at the workplace is a violation of human rights. (Hangartner, 2015).

The prevalence rates of sexual harassment behavior among nurses during careers, ranging from 80 to 97%. Nurses are primary caregivers in hospitals and encounter sexual harassment because of the amount of time spent in the hospital to direct patient care. The nature of the nursing profession that it involves working

closely with patients and staff members, which often results in an attachment, both physically and emotionally (**Hitomi et al., 2016**).

Therefore, it is easy for nurses to fall prey to those who take advantage of these situations leading to occurrences of sexual harassment. Many nurses have not been trained to manage sexual harassment situations and didn't report the incidence of sexual harassment. So, sexual harassment threatens the welfare of the nursing students (**Grieco**, 2015).

Most of the time the incidents of sexual harassment are not being reported. It may be due to the lack of awareness regarding sexual harassment, the women may not be aware of the fact that they are actually being sexually harassed and due to the culture of society, also due to humiliation and embarrassment (Gurung et al., 2016).

Sexual harassment in hospital causes many nurses emotional distress, disgust, anger, and it might be associated with nurses' burnout syndrome and high turnover rates. Nursing students suffer from many feelings as frustration, anger, feeling hurt, resentment, helplessness, anxiety, emotional and mental stress to the victims and irritation relating to sexual harassment behavior (Hibino, 2017). Thus, sexual harassment impacts on the nurse's performance and affect the quality of services. This is because its effect is not only to the nurses but also to family members, colleagues, and patients under their care (Ogino et al., 2017).

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Sexual harassment is not a problem in one country, it is a global issue. The European Commission found that 30% to 50% of female employees had experienced some form of sexual harassment (**Hejase, 2015**). Nursing students' experiences of sexual harassment during clinical training, this cause unsafe education environments and have a negative impact on the nursing student not only mental and physical health but also the satisfaction of clinical practice and positive view for nursing and patient **care** (**Lee et al., 2011**).

Nurses are primary caregivers in hospitals and are more likely to face sexual harassment because of the amount of time spent in the hospital to direct patient care. Many nurses are not trained to manage sexual harassment situations (Ali et al., 2015). Therefore, the study was conducted to assess perception and attitude of internship nursing students

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study was to assess perception and attitude of internship nursing students regarding sexual harassment.

Research questions

- 1) What is the level of internship nursing students' perception regarding sexual harassment?
- 2) What is the level of internship nursing students' attitude regarding sexual harassment?
- **3)** Is there a relationship between level of internship nursing students' perception and attitude toward sexual harassment?

METHODS

- **1- Research design:** A descriptive study design was used to achieve the purpose of the study.
- **2- Setting:** The study was conducted at the Faculty of Nursing Banha Universityare more likely to **Sampling:**
 - **Type of sample:** Convenience sample.
 - Sample size: all female nursing students (276) who were registered in the internship year during the time of data collection were included in the study.

3- Instruments of data collection:

Two Instruments were used for collecting data:

<u>Instrument I</u> – Structured interviewing questionnaire

This Instrument was designed by the researcher after reviewing the relative literature. It was designed in the Arabic language. It consisted of 3 parts as follow:

- ❖ Part (1) Social characteristics of internship nursing students such as age, marital status, place of residence, number of brothers and sisters, the arrangement between brothers and sister, educational level of parents, marital status of the mother.
- ❖ Part (2) Data about internship training they included (hours of the shift, shift time, previous exposure to sexual harassment during the training period, who was the harasser, and the frequency of exposure to sexual harassment.
- ❖ Part (3) Students' perception regarding sexual harassment. It consisted of 13 items such as; source of information about sexual harassment, definition of sexual harassment, places where sexual harassment increase, types of verbal, physical, and visual harassment. Factors leading to sexual harassment related to

female, male, and society. Physical, psychological, and social impact of sexual harassment on the girl. Preventive methods of sexual harassment.

Scoring system for perception regarding sexual harassment

Each item was assigned "one" when response yes and "zero" when response no, the total perception score was calculated by summation of scores of yes responses. Total score of perception ranged from 0-59. Total scoring categorized as following:

■ Poor < 50%

■ Average 50% < 75%

■ Good ≥75%.

<u>Instrument II -</u> Attitude of internship nursing students toward sexual harassment.

This Instrument modified by the researcher after reviewing of literature to assess internship nursing students' attitude toward sexual harassment. It consisted of 10 items, 5 items for positive such as the girl must defend herself against the harasser and his resistance; the girl should talk to her close friend about sexual harassment, etc..... And 5 items for negative such as sexual harassment has a negative effect on the girl psychologically, the personality of the girl influences the reaction towards the sexual harassment position she is exposed to, etc.....

Scoring system for attitude toward sexual harassment

Each item was assigned "two" when response agree, "one" when response uncertain, and "zero" when response disagree. Total attitude score ranged from 0-20. Total scoring categorized as following:

■ Negative attitude < 50%

■ Uncertain 50% < 75%

• Positive attitude $\geq 75\%$.

Content validity and reliability of tools:

Content validity of tools was assessed by three experts in obstetrics and gynecological nursing fields. Their opinions were elicited regarding the tools format layout, consistency and scoring system. The experts reviewed the tool for clarity of sentences, consistency, appropriateness of content, the sequence of items, accuracy, relevance, comprehensiveness, simplicity, and applicability of tool; minor modifications were done. Finally, the final forms were developed. Reliability of proposed tools was done by Alpha Cronbach test.

Cronbach alpha of perception was 0.76 and Cronbach alpha of attitude was 0.81.

Ethical considerations:

Ethical aspect was considered before starting the study that includes the following:

- An oral consent was obtained from each female nursing student before starting the data collection.
- Each female was informed about the purpose and benefits of the study at the beginning of interview and time throughout the study.
- Confidentiality was ensured throughout the study process, where personal data were not disclosed, and the females were assured that all data was used only for research purpose.
- There is no harm for the participants.
- Each participant female has the freedom to withdraw from participation at any time.

Administrative design:

An official permission was obtained from the dean of the faculty of Nursing - Banha University to the head of an administration department who responsible for internship nursing students in the faculty in the academic year 2016-2017 and the Benha University Hospital to take permission to conduct the study after explaining the aim of the study and time of data collection.

Pilot study:

Pilot study was conducted on 10% of the total sample (27 students), to evaluate study process, to test the applicability, feasibility, and clarity of the tools as well as to estimate the needed time to fill the questions, and to make sure that items are understood. No modifications were done. The internship nursing students in the pilot study were excluded from the main study sample.

Fieldwork:

Before collecting data, an official approval was submitted to the dean of the faculty of nursing at Banha University to the head of an administration department who responsible for internship nursing students to collect data after explaining its purpose and arrange the suitable meeting time with students. The researcher took a list of students' number at each department (clinical area) to facilitate reaching to them.

The researcher introduced herself to each student, the aim of the study and component of tools were explained at the beginning of the interview. The researcher assured that the data collected would be treated confidentially and used only for the purpose of the research. The researcher took an oral consent from subjects to participate in the study prior to any data collection.

The field work of the current study was carried out from the beginning of May 2017 and completed at the end of July 2017 covered three months. The researcher determined a fixed four days weekly (Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday) to meet the students. Two days (Sunday and Monday) from 9 am -2 pm during morning shift and two days(Tuesday, and Wednesday) from 2 pm- 5 pm during afternoon shifts in the previously mentioned setting.

The researcher met the students of each department separately for filling tools of data collection. Ask students to fill the tool I and tool II. Average of nursing students was 5-7 student/day. Time required filling in the sheets ranged from 20-25 minutes.

Statistical design:

After completion of data collection, the data were organized and tabulated, statistically analyzed using (Statistical Package for the Social Science, version 20, (SPSS). Descriptive statistics, frequency, percent, mean, standard deviation, maximum and minimum were used in the study. Test of significance (Chi-square and Fisher Exact test). Pearson correlation coefficient was used to test the association between the study variables.

- No significant difference obtained at P > 0.05.
- Significant difference obtained at $P \le 0.05$.
- Highly significant difference obtained at P > 0.001.

Limitation of the study:

Sensitive and embarrassing proprieties of the study topic.

RESULTS

<u>Table 1:</u> illustrates that the mean age of the studied sample was 23.15 ± 0.61 years. Less than three-quarters 72.1% of the internship nursing students were single. More than half 56.5% of them lived in a rural area, and 52.2%

of the internship nursing students had a number of sisters more than the brothers in the family. In addition, nearly one third 31.9% of them were ranged the third between brothers and sisters.

<u>Table 2:</u> shows that less than two-thirds 64.5% of studied sample worked 12 hours with a mean 9.86 ± 2.87 hours. In addition, more than half 55.4% of internship nursing students worked long day shift.

<u>Table 3:</u> clarifies that there was a positive highly significant correlation between studied sample's total perception and attitude scores regarding sexual harassment (r = 0.624 and P = 0.000)

<u>Table 4:</u> Illustrates that there was a statistically significant associative relation between the studied sample's level of perception about sexual harassment and age, residence, and arrangement between brothers and sisters ($P \le 0.05$). Meanwhile, there was no statistically significant relation between the studied sample's level of perception about sexual harassment and marital status and number of brothers and sisters ($P \ge 0.05$).

<u>Table 5:</u> demonstrates that there was a statistically significant associative relation between the studied sample's level of attitude toward sexual harassment and age, residence, and arrangement between brothers and sisters ($P \le 0.05$). Meanwhile, there was no statistically significant relation between the studied sample's level of attitude about sexual harassment and marital status and number of brothers and sisters ($P \ge 0.05$).

Figure 1: shows that more than half (58.7%) of nursing students had average level of knowledge regarding sexual harassment.

Figure 2: Distribution of the studied sample according to the total level of attitude toward sexual harassment (n=276). This figure shows that more than half (54.7%) of nursing students had negative attitude regarding sexual harassment.

Table (1): Distribution of the studied sample according to their demographic characteristics (n=276).

Demographic characteristics	No.	%		
Age (years)				
22	25	9.1		
23	193	69.9		
24	50	18.1		
25	8	2.9		
Mean ± SD	23.15 ± 0.61			

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Marital status		
Single	199	72.1
Married	77	27.9
Residence		
Urban	120	43.5
Rural	156	56.5
Number of brothers and sisters		
Brothers	132	47.8
Sisters	144	52.2
Arrangement between brothers and sisters		
First	74	26.8
Second	71	25.7
Third	88	31.9
Fourth	43	15.6

Table (2): Distribution of the studied sample according to nature of work in intern training (n=276).

Variable	No.	%				
Working hours						
6 hours	98	35.5				
12 hours	178	64.5				
Mean ± SD	9.86 ± 2.87					
Shift time						
Morning shift (8 Am- 2 Pm)	83	30.1				
Afternoon shift (2 Pm- 8 Pm)	15	5.4				
Long day shift (8 Am- 8 Pm)	153	55.4				
Night shift (8 Pm- 8 Am)	25	9.1				

Table (3): Correlation between studied sample ' total knowledge and attitude scores regarding sexual harassment (n=276).

Variable	Total knowledge score			
	R	P value		
Total attitude score	0.624	0.000**		

Table (4): Associative relation between of the studied sample' lev el of knowledge about sexual harassment and demographic characteristics (n=276).

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Level of knowledge Demographic	Good n= 5		Average n= 162		Poor n= 109		X ² /FET	P-value
characteristics	No	%	No	%	No	%		
Age (years)	T.							
22-	1	20.0	7	4.3	17	15.6		
23-	4	80.0	123	76.0	66	60.6	15.232	0.019*
24-	0	0.0	26	16.0	24	22.0		
25-	0	0.0	6	3.7	2	1.8		
Marital status								
Single	3	60.0	116	71.6	80	73.4	0.474	0.789
Married	2	40.0	46	28.4	29	26.6		
Residence	T.							
Urban	4	80.0	77	47.5	39	35.8	6.425	0.040*
Rural	1	20.0	85	52.5	70	64.2		
Number of brothers and	l sisters							
Brothers	1	20.0	84	51.9	47	43.1	3.571	0.168
Sisters	4	80.0	78	48.1	62	56.9		
Arrangement between brothers and sisters								
First	1	20.0	49	30.2	24	22.0	12.540	0.051*
Second	2	40.0	48	29.6	21	19.3		
Third	2	40.0	47	29.0	39	35.8		
Fourth	0	0.0	18	11.2	25	22.9		

Table (5): Associative relation between of the studied sample' level of attitude toward sexual harassment and social characteristics (n=276).

Level of attitude	Positive		Uncertain n= 124		Negative n= 151		X ² /FET	P-value
Demographic characteristics	No	%	No	%	No	%		
Age (years)	Age (years)							
22-	0	0.0	9	7.3	16	10.6	13.751	0.033*
23-	1	100.0	100	80.6	92	60.9		
24-	0	0.0	13	10.5	37	24.5		
25-	0	0.0	2	1.6	6	4.0		
Marital status								
Single	1	100.0	89	71.8	109	72.2	0.394	0.821
Married	0	0.0	35	28.2	42	27.8		
Residence								
Urban	1	100.0	68	54.8	51	33.8	13.598	0.001*

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Rural	0	0.0	56	45.2	100	66.2		
Number of brothers and sisters								
Brothers	0	0.0	51	41.1	81	53.6	5.193	0.075
Sisters	1	100.0	73	58.9	70	46.4		
Arrangement between	Arrangement between brothers and sisters							
First	0	0.0	39	31.5	35	23.2	14.385	0.026*
Second	1	100.0	34	27.4	36	23.8		
Third	0	0.0	27	21.7	61	40.4		
Fourth	0	0.0	24	19.4	19	12.6		

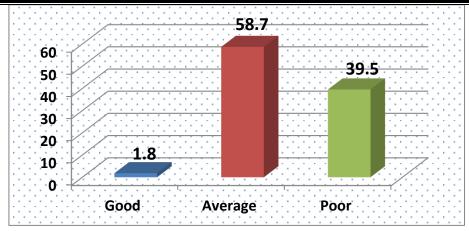


Figure (1): Distribution of the studied sample according to total level of knowledge regarding sexual harassment (n=276).

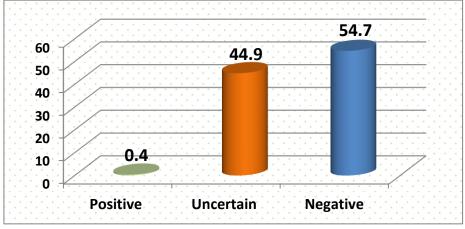


Figure (2): Distribution of the studied sample according to total level of attitude toward sexual harassment (n=276)

DISCUSSION

Nurses are primary caregivers in hospitals and are more likely to face sexual harassment because of the amount of time spent in the hospital to direct patient care. Sexual harassment against nurses has an effect on health, job performance and overall patient care. Many nursing students are not trained to manage sexual harassment situations. Knowledge on sexual

harassment equips the students to face such situation courageously **Gurung et al.**, (2016).

The aim of the present study was to assess perception and attitude of internship nursing students regarding sexual harassment. This aim was significantly achieved through a descriptive study design that answered the research questions; what is the level of internship nursing students' perception regarding

sexual harassment?, what is the level of internship nursing students' attitude regarding sexual harassment? and is there a relationship between level of internship nursing students' perception and attitude toward sexual harassment?

The study findings will be discussed under four main sections: characteristics of the studied sample and internship training, internship nursing students' perception regarding sexual harassment, internship nursing students' attitude toward sexual harassment, and the correlation between the studied sample 'total knowledge and attitude scores regard sexual harassment.

The results of the present study revealed that the mean age of the studied sample was 23.15 ± 0.61 years. Less than three-quarters of the internship nursing students were single. The current result is nearly similar to **Muzamil**, (2017) who found that the higher percentage of the studied sample age 64.7% was ranged from 20-23 years old, and the majorities of them 82.1% were not married. Also, Shebl et al., (2017) who concluded that 64.7% of female students were within age 22-23 and 82.1% was single. The younger age may be a reflection of lack of work experience, resulting in the internship nursing students' inability to handle potentially difficult situations.

Concerning residence, the present result reported that more than one-half of the internship nursing students lived in the rural area; the result of the present study is agreement with **Suhaila and Rampal**, (2012) who reported that more than three quarters 78.3% of the sample was from the rural area. Also, Nazari et al., (2017) reported that about two-thirds 66.3% of the studied sample lived in rural area. However, the present result disagrees with the findings of a study conducted **Kisa and Dziegielewski**, (2013) who found that more than half 56% of the studied sample was from urban areas.

Related to number of brothers and sisters in the family, the result of the present study revealed that about one half of the studied sample had sister more than the brother in family, the present result agreed with **Robbins et al.**, (2015) who reported that more than two-thirds 68.8% of study sample had sisters more than brothers. Also, the current result supported by Kamel, (2012) who found that more than one-half 55.7% of nursing students had sisters more than brothers. This may be due to brothers within family consider a close person to the girl who can advise and talk with here about such topics.

The current study result revealed that nearly one-third of studies sample were ranged the third between brothers and sisters. The present result is in contrast with **Oyedunni**, (2013) who found that more than half 51.6% of the studied sample was the first in their families. Also, **Mohammed and Hashish**, (2014) found that less than half 46.9% were the first daughter in the family.

Regarding nature of work in intern training, the current study findings showed that less than two-thirds of studied sample worked 12 hours and more than half of them worked long day shift. This finding was supported by **Onat and Dinc**, (2012) who found that 82.1% of the sample exposed to harassment during the day shift. In the same **line**, **Lee et al.**, (2011) reported that more than two fifths 43.6% of the female who exposed to sexual harassment worked 12 hours during the day. The current result contrasted with **Suhaila and Rampal**, (2012) who found that most of the sexual harassment episodes occurred during the evening or night shifts. As a result of the lack of control and policies which prevent sexual harassment in the workplace.

The findings of the current study reported that more than half of the internship nursing students had an average level of perception regarding sexual harassment and the minority had a good level of perception. The present result supported by **Cogin and Fish**, (2017) who reported that majority of the nursing students 82.4% had an average perception and 30.2% had a good perception regarding sexual harassment. Also, Bursik and Gefter, (2011) showed that 50.8% of the studied sample had an average knowledge about sexual harassment and nearly one third 31.9% had poor knowledge. This is contrasted with Dane et al., (2010) who found that 36.4% had an average perception. This may be due to the sensitivity of the topic and embarrassment of females to talk about it.

The study noticed that, more than half of the internship nursing students had a negative attitude regarding sexual harassment. The current result supported by **Hibino**, (2016) who found that 75.5% of female students had a negative reaction toward sexual harassment. Because of lack of knowledge about sexual harassment and they had not received any type of training on how to deal with harassment behavior.

Correlation between total knowledge and attitude scores regarding sexual harassment:

The result of the current study clarified that there was a statistically positive correlation between studied sample's total perception and attitude scores regarding sexual harassment. The present result is congruent with **Fiedler and Hamby**, (2014) who stated that the female with adequate knowledge and information about sexual harassment had positive attitude and reaction toward the situation. On the other hand, **Terpstra and Cook**, (2013) showed that there was a positive relationship between knowledge about sexual harassment and attitude toward it. This may be due to perception about the facts around sexual harassment and solutions to eliminate sexual harassment have an effect on the attitude and response to the situations of sexual harassment.

The current study showed that there was a statistically significant relation between the studied

sample's level of perception about sexual harassment and age, residence, and arrangement between brothers and sisters. The present result supported by Gurung et al., (2016) who found that there is a significant association between knowledge on sexual harassment and age of sample (P=0.03). In contrast Chaudhuri, (2017) who reported that there is no significant relationship statistically between knowledge on sexual harassment and age (P= 0.083). Also, Nazari et al., (2017) found that there is a significant statistically relationship knowledge on sexual harassment and residence of the studied sample. Meanwhile, the current result contrasted with Samir et al., (2012) who showed that There was no significant association between the residence and the perception about sexual harassment

Finally, the current result of the present study found that there was a statistically significant relation between the studied sample's level of attitude toward sexual harassment and age, residence, and arrangement between brothers and sisters. present result supported by Yee et al., (2015) who found that there was a relationship between attitude toward sexual harassment. Also, Valente and Bullough, (2015) showed a statistically significant association between residence and attitude toward sexual harassment (p<.01). In contrast, with the current result Kisa et al., (2016) who reported that there is no association between attitude toward sexual harassment and residence (p=0.58). Additionally, Oyedunni, (2013) found that there was a statistically significant relationship between the level of attitude and arrangement between brother and sisters in the family.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the current study concluded that the main source of information about sexual harassment was media. The majority of the internship nursing students had an average level of perception regarding sexual harassment. Meanwhile, the minority had a level of perception regarding sexual harassment. Also, the majority of the internship nursing students had a negative attitude regarding sexual harassment. On the other hand, there was a statistically positive correlation between the internship nursing students' total perception and attitude scores regarding sexual harassment. There was a statistically significant relation between the internship nursing students' level of perception and attitude about sexual harassment and age, residence, and arrangement between brothers and sisters. There for, the study's questions were answered.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the results of the present study, the following recommendations are suggested:

- An intensive awareness program should be implemented to develop intern students' awareness to eliminate sexual harassment.
- Increase knowledge of nursing students about sexual harassment should be a part of the academic and professional preparation of intern students at the faculty of nursing.
- Further researches are needed to be conducted to replicate the present study to increase awareness for breaking the female silence to take appropriate action towards harassment.

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