

Research Article

Knowledge and Experience on Gender-Based Sexual Harassment Among Students of Marinduque State University: Input to Localized Gender and Development Framework of Implementation

Keam Eric Malabayabas; Anne Grace Labatete

Marinduque State University, Marinduque, Philippines

Correspondence should be addressed to *Corresponding Author: malabayabas.keameric@marsu.edu.ph; annegracel75@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

From as simple as catcalling to the heinous act of rape, violence knows no gender. Probing the awareness and experiences of students related to Safe Spaces Act could avert gender-based sexual harassment (GBSH) incidents. Using questionnaire, data were collected from 535 students of Marinduque State College. Results revealed that respondents were mostly female, single, 21-25 years old, fourth year students, and residents of Boac Municipality. 40-46% of them are moderately aware on selected provisions of the Act. 51% experienced GBSH in streets and public places, mostly committed by strangers however 78% were not reported. Institutionalizing GBSH preventive approaches among HEIs was highly recommended. This includes collaborative implementation with agencies of PNP and LGU.

Keywords: Safe Spaces Act; Gender violence, Gender protection, Gender advancement and development; GAD

1. INTRODUCTION

Gender-based violence is a reality that has become increasingly present in different areas of contemporary society (United Nations, 2013). Scholars are theorizing and describing situations from street harassment, academic and work harassment to sexual violence in many contexts (Padrós, 2014). Scientific research has been conducted on the issue, focusing not only on the causes of harassment but also on measures for its prevention and response (Gross et al., 2006).

For Philippine Commission on Women, in the Philippines, the enactment of Republic Act No. 11313, otherwise known as the Safe Spaces Act states that Gender-Based Streets and Public Spaces Sexual Harassment are crimes of gender-based streets and public spaces sexual harassment are committed through any unwanted and uninvited sexual actions or remarks against any person regardless of the motive for committing such action or remarks both online and public spaces. And the Local government units (LGUs) shall bear primary responsibility in enforcing it. Likewise, all educational and training institutions, whether public or private, shall designate an officer-in-charge to receive complaints regarding violations of the law, and shall ensure that the victims are provided with a gender-sensitive environment that is both respectful to the victims' needs and conducive to truth-telling.

At the PNP MIMAROPA CIRS website, rape and sexual harassment related cases topped among the most prevalent crimes in the region. There were 347 rape and sexual harassment related cases reported from the period of January 2020 to December 2021.

Hence, the need to raise awareness among citizens on the deep and invisible problem of sexual harassment, and so the different social sectors can develop actions that would contribute to the prevention and response to gender-based violence in our society (Vidu et al., 2017). With these foregoing circumstances, this study aimed to determine the knowledge and experiences on gender-based sexual harassment among students of Marinduque State College and provide input to gender and development policies and programs.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study utilized a descriptive correlational approach since the study focused on describing relationships between variables rather than supporting inferences of causality (Polit & Beck, 2017). This research design is applicable to this study since it determined how one variable influences the other remaining variable. Likewise, the independent variables were not controlled.

The respondents were the students of Marinduque State College – Main Campus, enrolled during 2nd Semester, AY 2021-2022. A researcher-made questionnaire was utilized and designed specifically for this study based on related literature and related studies. The questionnaire is comprised of three parts. First part determined their profile, the second part determined the level of awareness on Safe Space Act, and the third part determined the experiences of the respondents on gender-based sexual harassment acts. Part II of the questionnaire was composed of 4-point Likert scale questions with designated verbal interpretation of Not, Slightly, Moderately, and Fully, respectively. While part III was answered by choosing from the options provided in the questionnaire.

A preliminary phase was conducted to assess the reliability and validity of the questionnaire (Alabed et al., 2020). The researcher-made questionnaire was validated by students, research professor, statistician, and other experts (Psychologist or Behaviorist) in the field to assess the degree of relevance. A pilot study with 30 participants was accomplished. Using Cronbach's Alpha, the results were tested for internal consistency. The 30 participants for the validation of the questionnaire were randomly selected. 20 from the students of Marinduque State College and 10 experts in the field, combination of Social Studies/Public Administration professors, researchers, statisticians, Psychologist or Behaviorist. Students who participated in the validation no longer served as participants in the actual conduct of the study.

The statistical tools used in interpreting and analyzing the gathered /data were frequency distribution, mean, ranking and percentage. Ethical considerations were also integrated into this research process to maintain and protect the rights of the participants. The protocol was submitted to and approved by Marinduque State College – Research Ethics Review Committee. Ethical principles were thoroughly observed in the research. The privacy of the participants was safeguarded. They were not obliged to provide their names or any sort of identification that can be linked to them. This provided a pressure-free environment to allow the participants to give their responses freely. Throughout the data collection and analysis phase, the confidentiality of respondents was maintained. Reporting all the data honestly and without alteration or manipulation of the respondents' answers to satisfy certain predictions or interest groups was also guaranteed. With this, the researchers ensured to provide accurate and valid results.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1. Profile of the Respondents

1.1 Gender		
Category	Frequency	Rank
Male	169	2
Female	333	1
LGBTQ+	33	3
1.2 Age		
Category	Frequency	Rank
16-20	259	2
21-25	267	1
26-30	6	3
31 and above	3	4
16-20	259	2
1.3 Civil Status		
Category	Frequency	Rank
Single	523	1
Married	12	2
Separated	0	
Annulled	0	

Table 1 shows the profile of the respondents of the study. Result showed that the greater number of the respondents are female; aged 21 to 25; and are single. Responses were taken from both voluntary and randomly selected respondents. Voluntary

responses were gathered from the online (google form) administered questionnaire. While, others are from randomly selected students of MSC to be respondents of the study.

Table 2. Awareness of the Respondents to RA No. 11313

PROVISION ON SEC. 5 OF RA 11313		4	3	2	1	TWF	WM	Interpretation
a.	The crime is committed through any unwanted and uninvited sexual actions or remarks against any person regardless of the motive for committing such action or remarks.	245	217	62	11	535	3.30	Fully aware
b.	Includes the following:							
1.	Catcalling, wolf-whistling, unwanted invitations, misogynistic, transphobic, homophobic, and sexist slurs;	219	232	64	18	533	3.22	Moderately aware
PROVISION ON SEC. 5 OF RA 11313		4	3	2	1	TWF	WM	Interpretation
2.	Persistent uninvited comments or gestures on a person's appearance;	211	231	74	15	531	3.20	Moderately aware
3.	Relentless requests for personal details;	183	235	104	13	535	3.10	Moderately aware
4.	Statement of sexual comments and suggestions;	229	220	70	13	532	3.25	Moderately aware
5.	Public masturbation or flashing of private parts, going, making offensive body gestures at someone, and other similar lewd sexual actions;	282	173	67	19	535	3.36	Fully aware
6.	Any advances, whether verbal or physical, that is unwanted and has threatened one's sense of personal space and physical safety. This may include cursing, leering and intrusive gazing, and taunting.	233	215	68	19	534	3.24	Moderately aware
7.	Persistent telling of sexual jokes, use of sexual names; and	254	207	58	16	535	3.31	Fully aware
8.	Stalking.	316	156	52	9	533	3.46	Fully aware
Over -All Mean							3.27	Fully aware
PROVISION ON SEC. 13 OF RA 11313		4	3	2	1	TWF	WM	Interpretation
a.	Include acts that use information and communications technology in terrorizing and intimidating victims.	197	253	73	12	535	3.19	Moderately aware
PROVISION ON SEC. 13 OF RA 11313		4	3	2	1	TWF	WM	Interpretation
b.	The act includes:							
1.	Physical, psychological, and emotional threats, unwanted sexual misogynistic, transphobic, homophobic and sexist remarks and comments online	292	198	35	10	535	3.32	Fully aware
2.	Invasion of the victim's privacy through cyberstalking and incessant messaging;	201	248	75	11	535	3.19	Moderately aware
3.	Uploading and sharing without the consent of the victim any form of media that contains photos, voice, or video with sexual content;	232	224	66	11	533	3.27	Fully aware
4.	Any unauthorized recording and sharing of any of the victim's photos, videos or any information online;	294	179	48	13	534	3.41	Fully aware

5.	Impersonating identities of victims online or posting lies about victims to harm their reputation; or	297	181	44	10	532	3.44	Fully aware
6.	Filing false abuse reports to online platforms to silence victims.	268	198	53	15	534	3.35	Fully aware
c.	Include acts that use information and communications technology in terrorizing and intimidating victims.	239	202	74	18	533	3.24	Moderately aware
Over- All Mean							3.32	Fully aware

PROVISION ON SEC. 17 OF RA 11313		4	3	2	1	TWF	WM	Interpretation
Higher penalty will apply if act was committed on following cases:								
1.	If the act takes place in a common carrier or PUV including, but not limited to jeepneys, taxis, tricycles, or app-based transport network vehicle services where the perpetrator is the driver of the vehicle and the offended party is a passenger;	149	270	92	24	535	3.02	Moderately aware
2.	If the offended party is a minor, a senior citizen, or a person with disability (PWD), or a breastfeeding mother nursing her child;	221	210	84	19	534	3.19	Moderately aware
3.	If the offended party is diagnosed with a mental condition tending to impair consent;	199	232	76	24	531	3.14	Moderately aware
4.	If the perpetrator is a member of the uniformed services, such as the PNP and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), and the act was perpetrated while the perpetrator was in uniform;	186	225	101	23	535	3.07	Moderately aware
5.	If the act take place in the premises of a government agency offering frontline services to the public and the perpetrator is a government employee.	160	254	103	17	534	3.04	Moderately aware
Over- All Mean							3.09	Moderately aware

Table 2 shows the awareness of the respondents on selected provisions of RA No. 11313 or Safe Spaces Act, particularly Section 5 - Gender-Based Streets and Public Spaces Sexual Harassment, Section 13 - Gender-Based Online Sexual Harassment, and Section 17 - Qualified Gender-Based Streets and Public Spaces and Online Sexual Harassment. Result showed that as to the provisions under Section 5, respondents are fully aware on the violative acts of GBSH in streets and public spaces particularly the act of stalking. Similarly with the provisions under Section 13, on GBSH acts committed online, respondents are fully aware, specifically impersonating identities of victims online or posting lies about victims to harm their reputation. While, for Section 17 on qualified GBSH both in streets and public spaces and online in which higher penalty will apply, respondents are only moderately aware, most specifically on the provision if the act takes place in a common carrier or PUV including, but not limited to jeepneys, taxis, tricycles, or app-based transport network vehicle services where the perpetrator is the driver of the vehicle and the offended party is a passenger. Data revealed that although majority among the respondents are already aware on GBSH acts violating their rights, however, many are still victims of violative acts under RA No. 11313 or The Safe Spaces Act.

Table 3. Respondents' Experience on Gender-Based Sexual Harassment

1.1 Personal Experience on Act/s of Gender-Based Sexual Harassment				
Category	Yes		No	
	F	%	F	%
Streets & Public Places	275	51%	259	49%
Online	233	44%	302	56%
1.2 Kinds of Gender-Based Sexual Harassment Experienced				
On Public Places:	Frequency		Rank	

Catcalling, wolf-whistling, unwanted invitations, misogynistic, transphobic, homophobic, and sexist slurs;	231	1
Persistent uninvited comments or gestures on my appearance;	130	4
Relentless requests for my personal details;	112	5
Statement of sexual comments and suggestions;	103	6
Public masturbation or flashing of private parts, going, making offensive body gestures to me, and other similar lewd sexual actions;	39	8
Cursing, leering and intrusive gazing, and taunting.	87	7
Persistent telling of sexual jokes, use of sexual names	148	2
Stalking	144	2
Online:	Frequency	Rank
Physical, psychological, and emotional threats, unwanted sexual misogynistic, transphobic, homophobic and sexist remarks and comments online, publicly or through direct and private messages	163	2
Cyberstalking and incessant messaging	221	1
No consented uploading and sharing in social media my photos, voice, or video with sexual content;	64	5
Unauthorized recording and sharing of my photos, videos or information online	82	3
Impersonating my identity online or posting lies to harm my reputation	69	4
Filing false abuse reports to online platforms to silence me.	51	6

1.3 Place in Streets and Public Spaces Where Acts of Gender-Based Sexual Harassment was Experience

Public Places	Frequency	Rank
Streets	350	1
Restaurant/Café	11	6
Public CR	28	5
Park	36	4
School	156	2
Public Utility Vehicle (i.e. jeep, tricycle)	114	3
Others (home/house, neighbor's house, court, barangay, store)	9	7

1.4 Place in Online Spaces Where Acts of Gender-Based Sexual Harassment was Experienced

Online	Frequency	Rank
Facebook	366	1
Instagram	46	5
Chatrooms (i.e. Messenger)	149	2
E-mail	11	7
Text/SMS	47	4
Dating Apps	41	6
Online Game Apps	54	3
Others: Telegram, Twitter	4	8

1.5 Person Who Committed the Act of Gender-Based Sexual Harassment

Person	Frequency	Percentage
Person known to the respondent	136	25%
Person unknown to the respondent	399	75%

1.6 Status of Reporting of the Victim of Gender-Based Sexual Harassment

Status	Frequency	Percentage
Reported	117	22%
Not Reported	418	78%

1.6 Effect of Gender-Based Sexual Harassment to Victim

Effects	Frequency	Rank
Fear of other gender	95	7.5
Fear in public places	209	1
Emotional and mental stress (anxiety, depression, mood disorder)	186	3
Physical Stress (headache, sleeping disorder, eating disturbances, weight loss/gain)	95	7.5
Low self-esteem or confidence	198	2
Panic reactions or phobia	148	4
Self-harming behavior	69	12

Changed dressing style	65	13
Changed communication habit	79	10
Anger	119	5
Insecurity	114	6
Guilt/Self-blame	72	11
Shame	94	8
Decreased interest in activities and communication	83	9
Distant	95	7.5
Calm	40	14
Others	2	15

Table 3 shows the personal experiences of the respondents on gender-based sexual harassments (GBSH). Result showed that as to the experience on gender-based sexual harassment, respondents said that GBSH related acts are mostly experienced in streets and public places rather than online; commonly GBSH experienced on public places are the act categorized under catcalling, wolf-whistling, unwanted invitations, misogynistic, transphobic, homophobic, and sexist slurs, while in online is cyberstalking and incessant messaging; for common public places where GBSH is experienced, respondents answered streets, while facebook for online; person unknown to the victim are those who usually commit GBSH acts; majority of the committed GBSH are not reported; and the common effect of GBSH acts towards a person is fear in public places. Data revealed that GBSH are thriving more on streets and public places despite that most of the youth now-a-days are spending more time online. Experiences by the respondents, both in streets and public places and online may be considered as simple acts of GBSH but are considered runup to possible heinous crimes such as rape. These acts as commonly experienced in the streets for public places serve as strong indication that streets are becoming unsafe for people, thus calls for awareness and pro-active action from the local government units who are basically in-charge in securing the safety of streets under their jurisdiction. While, facebook being the most unsafe social platform as revealed in the result is probably due to the reason that it is the most commonly used social media platform among the youths.

4. CONCLUSION

From the result of the study the following conclusion were arrived: a) Student-respondents are fully aware on violative acts of GBSH, both in streets and public spaces and online, though moderately aware on qualified GBSH both in streets and public spaces and online in which higher penalty will apply; b) Streets and public places became more unsafe, as most acts of GBSH is happening rather in online, thus calls for awareness and pro-active action from the local government units who are basically in-charge in securing the safety of streets under their jurisdiction; c) Common act of GBSH committed is categorized under catcalling, wolf-whistling, unwanted invitations, misogynistic, transphobic, homophobic, and sexist slurs, while in online is cyberstalking and incessant messaging may seem be simple acts but are considered runup to possible heinous crimes such as rape; d) GBSH act happening online are commonly committed through facebook, probably due to the reason that it is the most commonly used social media platform among the youths.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The researchers would like to acknowledge the participation and support of the following: Office of the President, Marinduque State College for allowing to conduct this study; Research & Extension Department, Marinduque State University for the endorsement and assistance in the conduct of the study; Faculty members, for sharing and endorsing the research study to their students; Students of Marinduque State University, for participating in the success of the study.

REFERENCES

- [1] Abe, I. (2012). Defining and awareness of sexual harassment among selected university students in Lagos Metropolis, Nigeria. *Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies*, 3(3), 212-218.
- [2] Crooks, C. V., Jaffe, P., Dunlop, C., Kerry, A., & Exner-Cortens, D. (2019). Preventing gender-based violence among adolescents and young adults: lessons from 25 years of program development and evaluation. *Violence against women*, 25(1), 29-55.
- [3] Gross, A. M., Winslett, A., Roberts, M., & Gohm, C. L. (2006). An Examination of Sexual Violence Against College Women. *Violence Against Women*, 12(3), 288-300. doi: 10.1177/1077801205277358
- [4] Hill, D. W. (2020). Communication as a moral vocation: Safe space and freedom of speech. *The Sociological Review*, 68(1), 3-16.
- [5] Mason, R. (2016, September 14). Theresa May

- criticises university 'safe spaces' for shutting down debate. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from www.theguardian.com/education/2016/sep/14/theresa-may-criticises-university-safe-spaces-for-shutting-down-debate (last accessed 2 June 2019).
- [6] Padrós, M. (2014). A Transformative Approach to Prevent Peer Violence in Schools Contributions from Communicative Research Methods.
- [7] Phadke, S. (2010). Non-legal strategies women use to deal with online abuse. Internet Democracy Project Report, New Delhi, India. pp: 1-5.
- [8] Phyllis, L. Croker (1983). An analysis of university definitions of sexual harassment. *SIGNS: Journal of Women in culture an Society*, 8, 4, 696-707.
- [9] Sharoni, S., & Klocke, B. (2019). Faculty confronting gender-based violence on campus: Opportunities and challenges. *Violence against women*, 25(11), 1352-1369.
- [10] Sol, RJ. (2022). Responses and Initiatives of Selected Agencies in the Municipality of Boac, Marinduque on the Implementation of Republic Act No. 11313 Also Known as the Safe Spaces Act.
- [11] United Nations. (2013). Elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls. 57th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW57). World Conferences on Women. Retrieved from <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/csw57-stop-violence-against-women#sthash.XM5jd5G7.dpuf>
- [12] Vidu, A., Valls, R., Puigvert, L., Melgar, P., & Joanpere, M. (2017). Second order of sexual harassment-SOSH. *Multidisciplinary Journal of Educational Research*, 7(1), 1-26