

Relationship between Female Adolescent Socio-Demographic Characteristics and Exposure to Sexual Harassment

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Abstract

Background Sexual harassment is any unwelcome verbal, non-verbal, or physical conduct of a sexual nature that is severe or pervasive and undermines the dignity and well-being of adolescent females. **Aim:** This study aimed to assess the relationship between the socio-demographic characteristics of female adolescents and exposure to sexual harassment. **Design:** Descriptive research design was used to achieve the aim of this study. **Setting:** The study was conducted at the secondary school of nursing at Fayoum Health Insurance for students from grades 1 to 5. **Sample:** A Convenient sample was composed of about 284 female students from grades one to five **Tools:** data were collected through a structured interviewing questionnaire to assess socio-demographic data, knowledge, attitudes, and exposure to sexual harassment, as well as an observational checklist to evaluate protective and self-defense practices. **Results:** Results indicated that 51.4% of students had poor knowledge of sexual harassment, 35.2% had average knowledge, and only 13.4% had good knowledge. Additionally, 52.8% of students exhibited negative attitudes toward sexual harassment, and 59.2% demonstrated inadequate self-defense practices While 40.8% of them had adequate self-defense practices. **Conclusion:** More than half of female students had a poor level of total knowledge regarding sexual harassment. More than half of female students had a negative attitude regarding sexual harassment there was a highly statistically significant positive correlation between total knowledge score and total self-defense practices during sexual harassment. **Recommendation:** Implement health education sessions in different schools regarding sexual harassment for female adolescents

Key Words: Female Adolescent, Sexual Harassment and Socio-Demographic Characteristics

Introduction:

Sexual harassment is a deeply rooted societal issue that affects individuals across the globe, with female adolescents representing one of the most vulnerable population groups. The developmental stage of adolescence is a critical period marked by rapid physical, emotional, and cognitive changes. During this time, adolescents begin to form their identities, establish social relationships, and seek independence. Notably, this time frame also shows cases of increased risks of exploitation and abuse, particularly sexual harassment (*Littleton & DiLillo, 2021*).

Sexual harassment encompasses a range of behaviors that are sexual, unwelcome and create a hostile or offensive environment for the person experiencing them. This may include verbal remarks, physical advances, inappropriate touching, suggestive gestures, or persistent unwelcome

attention. It can occur in public places, educational institutions, and online platforms or even within the home (*Aji et al., 2024*).

Sexual harassment is not only a violation of personal boundaries and dignity but it is also considered a form of gender-based violence and discrimination under international human rights frameworks. For adolescents, particularly females, these experiences can have lasting consequences on their development, academic performance, and psychological well-being (*Zelin et al., 2022*).

Addressing sexual harassment among female adolescents is essential for ensuring their safety, promoting gender equality, and safeguarding their mental and physical health. Adolescents who are subjected to harassment may experience anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress, and difficulties in forming healthy relationships later in life (*Dionte' McHenry, 2023*).

The impact often extends beyond the individual, affecting families, communities, and the education system. By exploring the factors that increase vulnerability such as socio-demographic characteristics policymakers, educators and health professionals can develop targeted interventions to prevent harassment" and support affected individuals (*Blake et al., 2024*).

Conservative or traditional societies, including several Arab countries, discussions around sexual harassment remain taboo. Female adolescents are often blamed for their experiences, leading to feelings of shame and guilt. These cultural barriers discourage victims from speaking out or seeking help, which perpetuates the cycle of abuse. In such contexts, the role of education, community awareness, and supportive systems becomes even more crucial (*Chafai, 2021*).

Family dynamics also influence how adolescents

experience and cope with harassment. Girls from stable, two-parent households with open communication channels may feel more supported and empowered to report incidents. On the other hand, those from broken families or those lacking parental involvement may experience neglect, making them more susceptible to victimization and less likely to seek help. Emotional support from family members plays a protective role and can help mitigate the negative consequences of harassment (*Hardt et al., 2023*).

The emotional toll of sexual harassment on adolescent girls is profound and often underestimated. Victims may experience fear, shame, embarrassment, and low self-esteem. These feelings can interfere with their academic performance, social relationships, and future aspirations. Chronic exposure to harassment can lead to serious mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, and

suicidal thoughts (*Wismayanti et al., 2021*).

Despite the high prevalence of harassment, many female adolescents do not report their experiences. Barriers include fear of being blamed, lack of trust in authorities, and absence of confidential reporting systems. Cultural norms that stigmatize victims of sexual harassment further silence adolescent girls and prevent them from seeking justice. These barriers highlight the need for safe, confidential, and adolescent-friendly reporting mechanisms, as well as legal frameworks that protect victims and hold perpetrators accountable (*Faizo, 2023*).

Raising awareness about sexual harassment is a critical step in prevention. Schools, families, and communities must engage in open dialogues that break the stigma surrounding harassment and promote gender respect. Health education programs that target adolescents can

empower girls with knowledge about their rights, safe behaviors, and ways to seek help. At the same time, involving boys and men in these efforts is essential to change the cultural attitudes that enable harassment to persist (*Crusto et al., 2024*).

Community Health Nurses play a pivotal role in preventing and responding to sexual harassment among adolescents. They are often among the first professionals to interact with victims and can provide psychological first aid, counseling, and referrals to specialized services. Nurses also contribute to raising awareness through health education sessions, advocacy, and policy development. Their presence in schools, clinics, and community centers allows them to serve as trusted sources of support and information for vulnerable girls (*Kurmi et al., 2024*).

Beyond individual care, nurses are uniquely positioned to advocate for systemic changes that protect

adolescent girls from harassment. By participating in research, public health campaigns, and policy discussions, nurses can help shape laws and programs that promote safe environments. Their holistic approach to health addressing physical, emotional, and social needs makes them key stakeholders in any strategy aimed at reducing sexual harassment and supporting victims. Empowering nurses through training and resources enhances their ability to serve as frontline defenders of adolescent rights and dignity (*Gatuguta et al., 2021*).

Significance of the study

Sexual harassment among adolescent girls is a deeply concerning issue, with studies highlighting its prevalence and impact on mental health, social empowerment and overall well-being. For instance, research conducted in Egypt found that **72.9% of adolescent girls** had experienced sexual harassment, with

verbal harassment being the most common (*Mohamed et al., 2023*). Additionally, cyber sexual harassment has been reported by **68% of sexually active adolescent girls** in the U.S., with significant associations to poor mental health outcomes (*Reed et al., 2019*).

Community and school-based nurses are often in direct contact with adolescents and are well-positioned to recognize signs of abuse, offer psychological support and advocate for safer environments. The findings of this study can inform the development of nursing protocols, training programs and awareness campaigns aimed at reducing the prevalence of harassment and promoting adolescent well-being. Ultimately, this research supports the creation of safer, more equitable spaces for young girls to grow, learn, and thrive without fear (*Hoskote et al., 2023*).

AIM OF THE STUDY

The study aimed to assess the relationship between female adolescent socio-demographic characteristics and exposure to sexual harassment through;

- Assessing the female's adolescent knowledge regarding sexual harassment.
- Assessing the female's adolescent attitude regarding sexual harassment
- Assessing female's self -- defense practices toward sexual harassment.
- Assessing the relationship between female adolescent socio-demographic characteristics and exposure to sexual harassment.

Research Questions:

- 1- What are female adolescent knowledge regarding sexual harassment?

- 2- What is female adolescent attitude regarding sexual harassment?
- 3- What are female's adolescent self -- defense practices toward sexual harassment?
- 4- Is there a relationship between female adolescent socio-demographic characteristics and exposure to sexual harassment?

SUBJECTS AND METHODS**Study Design:**

A descriptive study design was used to answer the research question .

Study Setting:

The study was accomplished at Fayoum Secondary Government School of Nursing (from level 1 to level 5) located in Fayoum Governorate., Egypt.

Participants:

The study participants included all students of technical secondary school for nursing in health insurance), Fayoum Governorate.

all students = 284 female students (from the 1st to 5th grade).

Sample Size and Sampling Technique:

A Convenient sample technique was used in this study. The sample was chosen based on the following criteria:

1. Students who are willing to participate in the study.
2. Age from 15-19 years (secondary school age).
3. Female.

Study Tools:

Data was gathered by utilizing tools that were used to achieve the purpose of the current study. They were written in a simple Arabic language and consisted of two tools:

Tool (1): A structured interviewing questionnaire:

It was prepared by the researcher after reviewing the relevant and current literature and designed in the Arabic language to suit the

understanding of the study subjects to collect data regarding Socio-demographic characteristics of the study sample, female student's knowledge and self defence practices toward sexual harassment. The tool consisted of the following parts:

- **Part I :Socio-demographic characteristics** such as age, education degree, marital status family income, and number of family members.
- **Part II : Assessing secondary female knowledge regarding sexual harassment** as (the definition, the types, who is attacker, who is the victim, causes, methods of prevention, and the complications of harassment (psychological, social, and physical).
- **Part III: Assessing secondary female students' attitudes towards sexual harassment at home, street,**

school, hospital and how to deal with sexual harassment.

- **Part IV: Descriptive Assessment of female students' exposure to sexual harassment** as: what method of transportation frequently used, how much exposure to sexual harassment, and place where sexual harassment occurred (*Stehlik, Thomas (2018)*).

Tool (2): Observation checklist for protective practices taken by female adolescents as (reporting to school members or family members or friends to deal with the harasser (*Lonsway et al., 2011: Hill and Kearl 2011 & MahaAlbdour 2017*)).

Scoring system:

1- Level of knowledge related to sexual harassment

Scoring system:

The questionnaire contained 8 close end questions, and the total score of the questionnaire was 16 grades, the complete correct answer was scored as

two degrees, the incomplete correct answer was scored as one degree and the don't know was scored as a zero. These scores were summed and were converted into a percent score. It was classified into 3 categories:

- **Good** $\geq 75\%$. (12-18 grades)
- **Average** 50- $<75\%$. (8-11 grades).
- **Poor** $<50\%$. (0-7 grades).

2- Female students' attitudes regarding sexual harassment

Scoring system:

The scale was composed of 7 items, and the total scores of the scale were 7 grades, each item was evaluated as "yes" was scored as one degree, and "No" was scored as a zero. These scores were summed and were converted into a percent score. It was classified into 2 categories:

- **Positive** $\geq 60\%$ (5-7 grades)
- **Negative** $<60\%$ (0-4 grades).

3- Female students' self-defense practices during sexual harassment.

The scale was composed of 20 items, and the total scores of the scale were 20 grades, each item was evaluated as “done” was scored as one degree, and “not done” was scored as a zero. These scores were summed and were converted into a percent score. It was classified into 2 categories:

- **Adequate** $\geq 60\%$ (12-20 grades)
- **Inadequate** $<60\%$ (0-11 grades).

Phases of the study:

1. Ethical considerations

The researcher gets approval from the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Nursing, Fayoum University. Then obtained an official letter issued from the faculty of nursing at Fayoum University to the appropriate authorities of the directorate of education at El-Fayoum to get an official letter with permission to directorate at Fayoum Secondary Technical Nursing schools in the selected setting to obtain their

permission for data collection from students. The researcher obtained the participants' consent after being informed about the purpose of the study. The researcher assured that participation in the study is voluntary, the collected data will be treated confidentially and used only for the study and then informed the participants that they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. The results will be used as a component of the necessary research. As well as for further publications and education.

2. Literature review

The researcher reviews national and international literature related to the relationship between female adolescent socio-demographic characteristics and exposure to sexual harassment.

3. Developing the study tool

The researcher developed the tools after reviewing the relevant literature to assess the relationship between female adolescent socio-demographic characteristics and exposure to sexual harassment in Secondary Technical Nursing Schools .

3.1. Validity:

The developed tool was formulated and submitted by five experts in the field of community health nursing to evaluate the accuracy, relevance, and clarity of the tools.

3.2. Pilot study:

A pilot study will be carried out on 10% of the study subjects equal to 28 student to test the applicability, feasibility, and practicality of the tools, and then the necessary modifications will be done according to the results of the pilot study.

3.3. Reliability of tool:

Reliability of tool:

Testing the reliability of the tools through Alpha Cronbach reliability analysis.

Tools	Alpha Cronbach
Female students' knowledge regarding sexual harassment	0.854
Female students' attitude regarding sexual harassment	0.743
female students' self-defense practices during sexual harassment	0.923

3.4. Data Collection:

Once the researcher gets permission to conduct the study, initiate the data collection. The data were collected for 2 months (from the 12th of February to the 12th of April 2024) The researcher visited the selected Secondary schools on Sundays and Mondays weekly from 9 A.M. to 1 P.M. until the end of the complete data (284) study of Secondary school students.

It included the following phases:-

- I. First phase** (Assessment phase); interview available female to explain the aim of the study and obtain their consent to participate in the study before any data collection. Initial assessment was done by the investigator for all study subjects to collect data. The researcher will start by introducing himself to each adolescent. Give a clear and brief idea about the aim of the study and its expectations.
- II. Second phase** (Implementation phase); available females will fill out a structured interview questionnaire. The researcher will be available 2 days/a week to collect data Each student will be interviewed for (10 -20 minutes)
- III. The third phase** (Evaluation phase) analyzes data and discusses the result.

Data collection took place in the classrooms. Questionnaires were distributed to the students with the assistance of the class teachers, and it took (20 -25 minutes) to fill them in.

The researcher began by presenting herself to the research subjects, giving them a brief explanation about the aim and the nature of the study and inviting them to participate in the study.

Data was gathered by the researcher until the required sample was obtained.

Statistical Analysis

The statistical analysis of data was done by using the computer software Microsoft Excel Program and Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 25. Data were presented using descriptive statistics in the form of frequencies and percentages for categorical data, the

arithmetic mean (X), and Standard Deviation (SD) for quantitative data.

Degrees of significance of results were considered as follows:

- P-value > 0.05 Not significant
- P-value < 0.05 Significant
- P-value < 0.01 Highly Significant.

RESULTS

Table (1) shows that 46.8% of the studied female students their age ranged between 17- 18 years, the Mean \pm SD of age was 17.47 ± 1.25 years. Also, 59.9% of them reside in rural areas. Moreover, 35.2% of them have two Brothers. Furthermore, 34.9% of them were the second among their siblings. Also, 60.2% of students' father's ages ranged between 50-<60 years, the Mean \pm SD of age was 52.03 ± 4.92 years.

Table (2) shows that 53.2% and 53.5% of the studied female students had incomplete correct knowledge about the concept and types of sexual

harassment, respectively. Also, 58.5% and 57.7% of them had incomplete correct knowledge about the role of the family in solving the problem of harassment and the psychological effects resulting from exposure to harassment, respectively. While, 59.9% and 54.2% of them didn't know the reasons for sexual harassment and the appropriate punishment that the harasser deserves, respectively. Also, the Mean \pm SD of the total knowledge score was 7.60 ± 4.07 .

Figure (1) shows that 51.4% of the studied female students had a poor level of total knowledge regarding sexual harassment. Also, 35.2% of them had an average level of total knowledge. While 13.4% of them had a good level of total knowledge.

Table (3) displays that, there was a highly statistically significant relation between total female students' self-defense practices during sexual harassment and their socio-

demographic characteristics such as age, classroom, fathers' age, fathers' educational level, mothers' age, mother's educational level, monthly income of the family and attending awareness programs at ($p = < 0.01$). Also, there was a statistically significant relation between their residence and mothers' jobs ($p = < 0.05$). While there was no statistically significant relation with their fathers' jobs at ($p = > 0.05$).

Figure (2) reveals that 59.2% of the studied female students had inadequate self-defense practices during sexual harassment. While 40.8% of them had adequate self-defense practices.

Table (4) indicates that there was a highly statistically significant positive correlation between total knowledge score and total attitude score ($r = 0.761$, $p = 0.000$), total knowledge score and total self-defense practices during sexual harassment ($r = 0.790$, $p = 0.000$), and total attitude score and

total self-defense practices during sexual harassment ($r = 0.767$, $p = 0.000$). While, there was a highly statistically significant negative correlation between exposure to sexual harassment and total knowledge score ($r = -0.363$ -, $p = 0.000$), total attitude score ($r = -0.308$ -, $p = 0.000$), and total self-defense practices during sexual harassment ($r = -0.477$ -, $p = 0.000$).

Part I: Socio-demographic characteristics of the studied female students.**Table (1): Frequency Distribution of The Studied Female Students According to Their Socio-Demographic Characteristics (n=284).**

Socio-demographic characteristics	No.	%
Age		
15-16 years	75	26.4
17-18 years	133	46.8
19 years	76	26.8
Mean ± SD	17.47±1.25	
Place of residence		
Rural	170	59.9
Urban	114	40.1
Classroom		
First grade	56	19.6
Second grade	57	20.1
Third grade	57	20.1
Fourth grade	57	20.1
Fifth grade	57	20.1
Number of brothers		
One	57	20.1
Two	100	35.2
Three	90	31.7
More than three	37	13.0
The ranking between the siblings		
First	76	26.8
Second	99	34.9
Third	73	25.7
Fourth	36	12.7
Father age		
40-<50 years	95	33.5
50-<60 years	171	60.2
≥ 60 years	18	6.3
Mean ± SD	52.03±4.92	
Fathers' educational level		

Part (II): Assessment of the female students' knowledge regarding sexual harassment.

Table (2): Frequency distribution of the studied female students according to their knowledge of sexual harassment (n=284).

Knowledge items	Complete correct answer		Incomplete correct answer		Don't know	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
The concept of sexual harassment	95	33.5	151	53.2	38	13.4
Types of sexual harassment	76	26.8	152	53.5	56	19.7
The reasons for sexual harassment	38	13.4	76	26.8	170	59.9
The appropriate punishment that the harasser deserves	61	21.5	69	24.3	154	54.2
The role of the family in solving the problem of harassment	62	21.8	166	58.5	56	19.7
The role of society and the media in solving the problem of harassment	76	26.8	148	52.1	60	21.1
The psychological effects resulting from exposure to harassment	60	21.1	164	57.7	60	21.1
Physical effects resulting from exposure to harassment	84	29.6	139	48.9	61	21.5
Mean ± SD Range	7.60±4.07 2-14					

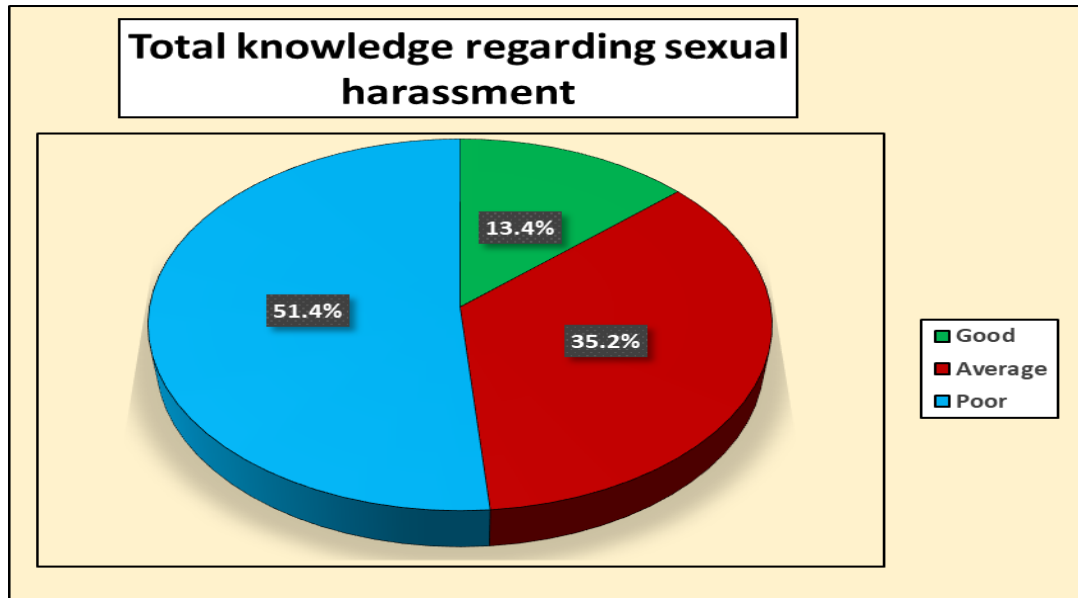


Figure (1): Percentage distribution of the studied female students according to their total knowledge regarding sexual harassment (n=284).

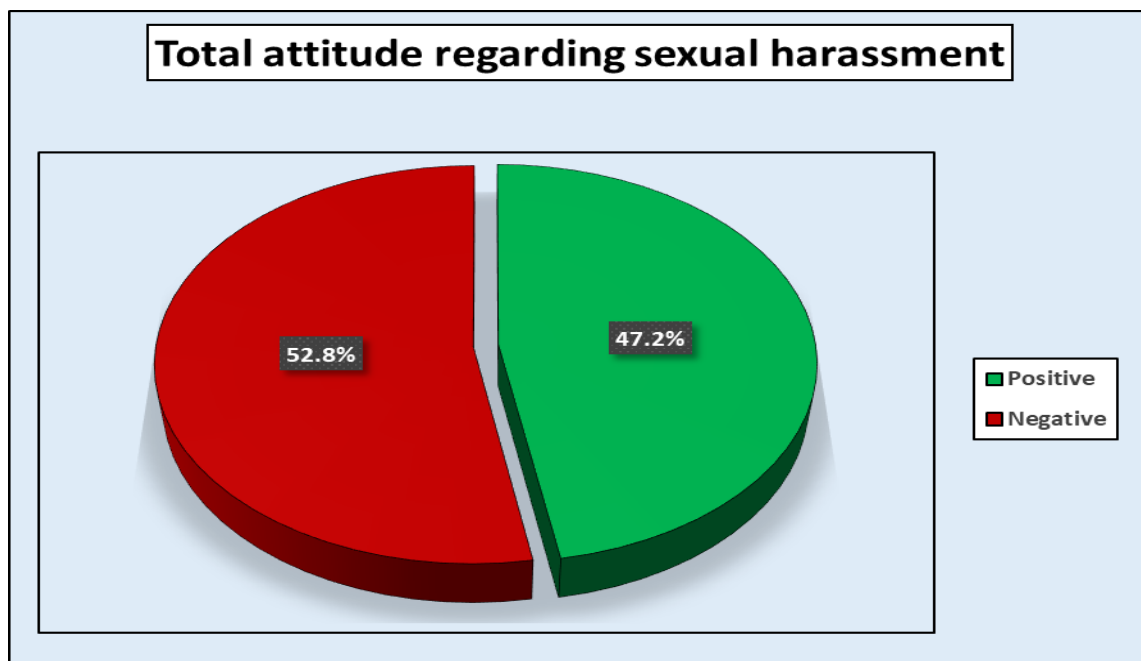


Figure (2): Percentage distribution of the studied female students according to their total attitude regarding sexual harassment (n=284).

Table (3): Relation between socio-demographic characteristics of the studied female students and their total self-defense practices during sexual harassment (n=284).

Socio-demographic characteristics		Total self-defense practices during sexual harassment				X ²	P value
		Adequate (n=116)		Inadequate (n=168)			
		No.	%	No.	%		
Age	15-16 years	4	5.3	71	94.7	159.66	0.000**
	17-18 years	42	31.6	91	68.4		
	19 years	70	92.1	6	7.9		
Residence	Rural	60	35.3	110	64.7	5.401	0.020*
	Urban	56	49.1	58	50.9		
Classroom	First grade	3	5.4	53	94.6	132.98	0.000**
	Second grade	12	21.1	45	78.9		
	Third grade	13	22.8	44	77.2		
	Fourth grade	31	54.4	26	45.6		
	Fifth grade	57	100.0	0	0.0		
Fathers' age	40-<50 years	82	86.3	13	13.7	122.54	0.000**
	50-<60 years	32	18.7	139	81.3		
	≥ 60 years	2	11.1	16	88.9		
Fathers' educational level	Illiterate	2	11.1	16	88.9	99.42	0.000**
	Read or write	4	10.5	34	89.5		
	Basic education	13	17.1	63	82.9		
	Secondary education	67	58.8	47	41.2		
	University education	30	78.9	8	21.1		
Fathers' job	Working	91	38.9	143	61.1	2.105	0.147
	Don't work	25	50.0	25	50.0		
Mothers' age	40-<50 years	44	77.2	13	22.8	48.09	0.000**
	50-<60 years	59	38.6	94	61.4		
	≥ 60 years	13	17.6	61	82.4		
Mothers' educational level	Illiterate	2	6.5	29	93.5	80.91	0.000**
	Read or write	7	17.1	34	82.9		
	Basic education	27	27.6	71	72.4		
	Secondary education	65	68.4	30	31.6		
	University education	15	78.9	4	21.1		
Mothers' job	Working	50	65.8	26	34.2	FET 2.080	0.037*
	Don't work	66	61.1	42	38.9		
The monthly income of the family	Sufficient	64	67.4	31	32.6	100.06	0.000**
	Insufficient	22	14.6	129	85.4		
	Sufficient and more	30	78.9	8	21.1		
Attending awareness programs	Yes	23	100.0	0	0.0	FET 0.000	0.000**
	No	93	35.6	168	64.4		

Part (VII): Correlation between the studied variable.**Table (4): Correlation between total knowledge score, total attitude score, total self-defense practices, and exposure to sexual harassment among the studied female students (n=284).**

Variables	Total knowledge score	Total attitude score	Total self-defense practices score
Total knowledge score			
Total attitude score	r = 0.761 P = 0.000**		
Total self-defense practices score	r = 0.790 P = 0.000**	r = 0.767 P = 0.000**	
Exposure to sexual harassment	r = -0.363- P = 0.000**	r = -0.308- P = 0.000**	r = -0.477- P = 0.000**

DISCUSSION

Different individuals are inclined to sexually harass teenage girls. It has been discovered that male peers, friends, and family members are more likely to engage in sexual harassment of female students. Research indicates that sexual harassment has detrimental effects on students' enrollment, academic achievement, psychological well-being, and behavioral outcomes, in addition to damaging their dignity, self-esteem, and social relationships. It is essential to understand that sexual

harassment is not the victim's fault; instead, it is the responsibility of the perpetrators and society as a whole to address and prevent it. Not much research has been conducted on this urgent issue. To take both preventive and protective measures, it is necessary to evaluate the current state of awareness and perceptions about sexual harassment (Gyawali et al., 2021). Hence, the present research aims to assess the relationship between female adolescents' socio-demographic characteristics and their exposure to sexual harassment..

Part (I): Assessment of female students Socio-demographic characteristics of the studied:

Concerning the age of female students, the current study result showed that, less than half of the studied female students their age ranged between 17- 18 years, the Mean \pm SD of age was 17.47 ± 1.25 years. This result may be due to that younger age may be a reflection of lack of experience and lower education, resulting in students' inability to handle potentially difficult situations.

This result is supported by **Thapalia et al. (2019)**, who conducted a mixed-method study titled "Understanding, Experience, and Response to Sexual Harassment among Female Students" and reported that more than half of the students their age ranged between 16 and 18 years, with a mean age of 16.3 ± 1.45 years. However, the current study's findings contrast with those of **(Mohamed et**

al. (2022), who conducted a study in Egypt titled "Sexual Harassment among Adolescent Girls: The Role of Social and Psychological Empowerment." They reported a mean age of 15.1 ± 2.2 years for the students in their sample.

The results of the current study also indicated that over half of the female students under investigation were from rural areas. This finding is consistent with **(Gindy and Ragheb's (2018)** study, "Health Educational Program Regarding Prevention of Sexual Harassment among Young Female Adolescents," which found that half of the female adolescents in their study resided in rural areas. Similarly, **He et al. (2024)** found that over half of the students they studied were from rural areas. Their study examined the relationship between sexual harassment intervention strategies and university students'

perceptions and attitudes toward sexual harassment in Beijing, China.

On the other hand, the present result disagrees with **Robbins et al. (2015)**, who explored sexual harassment in nursing and reported that more than two-thirds of their sample had more sisters than brothers. Similarly, the current result is not supported by Kamel (2012), who investigated nursing students' perceptions regarding sexual assault and their expected reactions, finding that more than half of the students had more sisters than brothers.

The present result contrasts with **Oyedunni (2013)**, who investigated the experience of sexual harassment and coping strategies among students at a nursing school in a tertiary hospital in Southwest Nigeria. Oyedunni found that more than half of the studied sample were the first-born in their families. Similarly, **Mohammed and Hashish (2015)**, in their study on

sexual violence against females and its impact on sexual function, found that less than half of the participants were the first daughter in their family.

with **Shrestha and Bajracharya (2023)**, who assessed awareness and perception of sexual harassment among female adolescent students and reported that nearly half of the respondents' fathers and mothers had secondary-level education. It also aligns with **Aboelnour (2022)**, who found that half of the fathers of the studied female students had secondary education in their study titled "Assessment of Female Students' Knowledge and Self-esteem Regarding Sexual Harassment at Beni-Suef University."

Moreover, the current study found that one-third of the students' mothers had secondary education. Additionally, more than one-quarter of the students' mothers were employed, with less than two-thirds of them working in the

governmental sector. This finding contradicts **Gindy and Ragheb (2018)**, who reported that more than two-fifths of the mothers in their study had completed preparatory school, and two-fifths were not working. Similarly, the result contrasts with **Aboelnour (2022)**, whose study “Assessment of Female Students' Knowledge and Self-esteem Regarding Sexual Harassment at Beni-Suef University” showed that more than half of the fathers in the study had secondary education, while less than three-quarters of the mothers were not employed.

The current study found that the majority of the students had a television. However, most of them did not participate in awareness programs on the prevention of sexual harassment at school. This result aligns with **Zakaria et al. (2020)**, who conducted an institution-based cross-sectional study in Bangladesh to assess the knowledge, attitudes, and practices

regarding sexual and reproductive health among older adolescent girls. Their study reported that a high percentage of the participants regularly watched TV.

Part (II): Assessment of The Female Students' Knowledge Regarding Sexual Harassment.

According to the findings of the current study, over half of the female students demonstrated only partial knowledge about the definition and various forms of sexual harassment. This could be attributed to the relatively younger age of the students, which might suggest a lack of awareness regarding sexual harassment.

This finding is supported by **Sharma and Magar (2018)** in their study, “Awareness of Sexual Abuse among Adolescents in the Baglung District of Nepal,” which found that

more than half of the adolescents were aware of the definition of sexual abuse.

Similarly, **Witkowska and Menckel (2016)** in their study, “Sexual Harassment in Schools: Prevalence, Structure, and Perceptions,” reported that more than two-fifths of females had poor knowledge before program implementation. However, these results contradict **Larry (2016)**, who found that a high percentage of females had a good understanding of the definitions and types of sexual harassment. In contrast, **Yahya et al. (2020)**, in their study “Young Female Adolescents’ Perception of Sexual Harassment,” found that less than one-quarter of the studied female adolescents had satisfactory knowledge about the meaning of sexual harassment, and less than one-third had satisfactory knowledge about the types of harassment.

The current study showed that more than half of the students had incomplete knowledge regarding the role of the family in addressing harassment and the psychological effects of exposure to harassment. Additionally, over half of the students were unaware of the reasons for sexual harassment and the appropriate punishment for the perpetrator. The Mean \pm SD of the total knowledge score was 7.60 ± 4.07 . From the investigator's perspective, this result may reflect the relatively low educational level among the female students under study.

This finding is consistent with **Yahya et al. (2020)**, who reported that less than one-third of the female adolescents had satisfactory knowledge about the role of the family in preventing sexual harassment, and one-third had satisfactory knowledge about the causes of sexual harassment. In line with this, **Lee et al. (2016)**, in

their study “Experience and Perception of Sexual Harassment During Clinical Practice Among Korean Students,” stated that educational programs can significantly increase students' understanding through the use of basic principles such as acceptance, understanding, empathy, and communication, which help students make informed decisions about their problems.

On the other hand, this result contrasts with **Celik (2017)**, who conducted a study in Turkey with 1,000 participants on sexual harassment against adolescent students. Celik found that the majority of students in this study reported that they were unaware of sexual harassment. The discrepancy could be due to differences in the study setting, culture, traditions, and beliefs of the participants, as well as the researchers' perspectives.

Regarding overall knowledge about sexual harassment, the current study revealed that more than half of the female students had a poor level of total knowledge on the subject. This suggests a need for systematic training to improve their understanding of sexual harassment, which could be integrated into regular sessions. Providing such training will enhance the knowledge of both students and faculty members about sexual harassment and gender equality. Schools must also establish effective and stringent processes for reporting sexual harassment incidents, ensuring that complaints are addressed appropriately. Ideally, these topics should be covered systematically in the classroom, with personal development and life education classes used to educate students about sexual harassment.

This finding is supported by **Shrestha and Bajracharya (2023)** in

their study “Awareness and Perception of Sexual Harassment among Female Adolescent Students,” which reported that a low percentage of female adolescent students had a high level of awareness.

In contrast, this finding contradicts **Ojha (2021)**, who conducted a study on knowledge about sexual abuse among school-going children and found that most of the sample had good knowledge. Similarly, **Sharma and Bisunke (2022)** reported in their study “Knowledge and Attitude Regarding Sexual Harassment among Students at a Government School in Dhading, Nepal” that almost all respondents had good knowledge of sexual harassment. Furthermore, **Onyinyechi et al. (2023)** conducted a study on sexual violence knowledge and experience among female adolescents in public schools in Enugu State during the COVID-19 pandemic and reported that the

majority of the female adolescents had good knowledge regarding sexual violence.

Part (VII): Correlation between Knowledge, Attitude, Self-Defense Practices, and Exposure to Sexual Harassment

The study indicated a highly statistically significant positive correlation between total knowledge score and total attitude score ($r = 0.761$, $p = 0.000$), total knowledge score and total self-defense practices ($r = 0.790$, $p = 0.000$), and total attitude score and total self-defense practices ($r = 0.767$, $p = 0.000$). Additionally, there was a highly statistically significant negative correlation between exposure to sexual harassment and total knowledge score ($r = -0.363$, $p = 0.000$), total attitude score ($r = -0.308$, $p = 0.000$), and total self-defense practices ($r = -0.477$, $p = 0.000$).

This finding is consistent with **Yossif & Elbahnasawy (2017)**, who found a significant positive correlation between total knowledge, attitudes, and practices before and after the implementation of a sexual harassment prevention program. Similarly, there was a positive and statistically significant association between knowledge, attitudes, and practices after the program's implementation.

Implications for Public Health and Prevention

The relationship between female adolescents' socio-demographic characteristics and their exposure to sexual harassment is an important area of research. Factors such as age, education level, family income, parental background, and residential location can influence the likelihood and nature of sexual harassment exposure. For instance, girls from low-income families or densely populated urban areas may be

more vulnerable due to environmental risks and limited supervision. Additionally, lower educational attainment and parental education levels may lead to a lack of awareness and limited access to protective resources. Understanding these socio-demographic factors is crucial for designing effective prevention strategies, educational programs, and policy interventions aimed at protecting vulnerable adolescent girls from sexual harassment.

CONCLUSION

Based on the current study's findings and responses to the research questions, it was determined that there was a limited level of knowledge regarding sexual harassment among the study sample. More than half of the participants demonstrated a poor level of knowledge, while more than third had an average level, and the majority also held negative attitudes toward

sexual harassment whereas less than half displayed a positive attitude.

With regard to self-defense practices during harassment incidents, less than two thirds of the students were found to have inadequate practices, while only about two fifth demonstrated adequate self-defense measures.

The findings revealed a statistically significant positive correlation between total knowledge and attitude scores, as well as between knowledge and self-defense practices. Similarly, a significant positive correlation was observed between attitude scores and self-defense practices.

On the other hand, exposure to sexual harassment was significantly and negatively correlated with knowledge levels, attitude scores, and self-defense practices.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of the current study, the following recommendations are suggested:

- policies should empower school administrators to take appropriate and immediate action when incidents occur.
- Health education initiatives in various schools to enhance awareness about sexual harassment, including accurate knowledge and appropriate response strategies.
- Provide booklets, manuals, and simplified educational materials for parents and teachers, offering essential information and practical guidance on how to address and prevent sexual harassment.
- Promote religious and ethical awareness through mosques and churches, emphasizing the importance of treating all females in public spaces

with the same respect one would afford to a mother or sisters.

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