

# **Sexual Harassment – Questionnaire Survey for Education Sector 2014**

## **Summary of Survey Findings**

### **Background**

1. Research studies have repeatedly shown that sexual harassment is a serious problem for students in Hong Kong and overseas countries. Sexual harassment in a school environment is harmful. It can undermine a student's sense of personal dignity and safety, disrupt the person's education, and interfere with his/her ability to reach full potential in life. If left unchecked, sexual harassment in the school setting has the potential to escalate to violent behaviour. Educators have a legal duty to take steps to prevent and respond to sexual harassment. Under the Sex Discrimination Ordinance, conduct of a sexual nature which creates a hostile or intimidating environment in an educational setting is unlawful.

2. In a survey for education sector carried out by the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) in March 2013, nearly half (47%) of the responding schools did not have any anti-sexual harassment policy. Following the release of the survey report, the EOC has organised a series of seminars and workshops to equip educators for the purpose of formulating an anti-sexual harassment policy and handling related complaints. A Framework for Sexual Harassment Policies in Schools was also prepared by the EOC with a view to providing a structure for schools to develop a comprehensive and effective anti-sexual harassment policy. Concurrently, the Education Bureau (EDB) of the HKSAR Government started organizing seminars to enhance the awareness of school sponsoring bodies, principals and teachers on the importance of preventing sexual harassment in schools.

3. In order to evaluate the effects of these efforts and follow the development of anti-sexual harassment policy in schools since the last survey, this "Sexual Harassment – Questionnaire Survey for Education Sector 2014" was conducted in partnership with the Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union. Questionnaires were distributed to all primary and secondary schools (including government, aided, direct subsidy scheme, special, private and international schools) as well as local tertiary institutions across the territories in late August 2014. A total number of 1,172 questionnaires were distributed and 494 completed questionnaires were returned, giving the response rate of 42%. The survey involved 251 primary schools, 208 secondary schools and 23 tertiary institutions, with 12 questionnaires unspecified.

## Key Findings

4. For the survey in 2014, out of 494 respondents, 437 respondents (88%) indicated that there was a policy statement on anti-sexual harassment in their schools whereas 57 (12%) did not (*Table 1[a]*). A similar survey in 2013 indicated that out of 321 respondents, 170 respondents (53%) revealed that there was a policy statement on anti-sexual harassment in schools. Such findings show that there has been a substantial increase in the number of schools having anti-sexual harassment policy since the previous year.

5. The present findings indicated that the rates of having a policy statement on anti-sexual harassment for primary schools, secondary schools and tertiary institutions are 86%, 90% and 100%, respectively. When compared to the 2013 data (respective 47%, 57% and 100%), it is encouraging to note that the rates of having a policy statement on anti-sexual harassment among primary and secondary schools have significantly increased in 2014.

6. Furthermore, 237 schools started implementing a policy on anti-sexual harassment in 2013 and 2014 (*Chart 1[b]*). This tends to suggest that the seminars and training sessions provided by the EOC under the Anti-sexual Harassment Campaign in the past two years have effectively encouraged and assisted the schools in formulating and implementing anti-sexual harassment policy.

7. The most common items in the policy statement on anti-sexual harassment include: “The options available for dealing with sexual harassment complaints formally” (98%), “A clear statement that sexual harassment will not be tolerated” (96%), and “The legal definition of sexual harassment” (95%). When compared to the 2013 data (*Table 2[a]*), significant differences were noted in some items: “The policy on anti-sexual harassment is posted on bulletin boards / school intranet” (+41% difference) and “The options available for dealing with sexual harassment complaints informally” (+18% difference). Such results indicated that the contents of the anti-sexual harassment statement are increasingly comprehensive and, therefore, the whole policy and measures become more transparent and user-friendly to the stakeholders.

8. In contrast, the least common items (frequency rate <50%) include: “The names and telephone numbers of officers who are responsible for dealing with complaints, providing information and advice, etc.” (47%), “Offer anti-sexual discrimination training to staff” (45%), and “The policy on anti-sexual harassment is published periodically in school newspapers and new students’ orientation sessions” (21%). (*Table 2[a]*) The option “Others” (7%) included: “Incorporate anti-sexual harassment policy into management and operation guideline”; “Incorporate anti-sexual harassment policy into Teacher’s Handbook”; and “Disseminate the anti-sexual harassment policy in the morning assembly / parents meeting / staff meeting”.

Such findings indicated that the anti-sexual harassment policy was not thorough, with implementation measures (e.g., training and education, contact information of complaint-handling personnel) often lacking.

9. In summary, of the 17 items listed in the anti-sexual harassment policy, an overall increase in the level of inclusion in a range from 1% to 41% amongst 15 items was noted, when data of 2013 and 2014 were compared.

10. Among the schools without a policy statement on anti-sexual harassment, the major reasons are “Staff are not trained in formulating the related policy statement” (49%) and “It appears no urgency to formulate a policy statement on anti-sexual harassment” (43%). When compared to the 2013 data, the proportions of such concerns respectively decreased by 12% and 2% in 2014. It was also worthy to find that the proportion of schools, which were planning, studying or formulating a policy statement on anti-sexual harassment, increased from 3% in 2013 to 30% in 2014. (*Table 2[b]*)

11. There are minor reasons for not having an anti-sexual harassment policy such as “Sexual harassment has not occurred in the school and therefore, it is not a necessity to formulate the related policy statement” (19%) and “There are concerns that people may misinterpret frequent occurrence of sexual harassment in the school after the formulation of the related policy statement” (8%). It showed that among the 53 responding schools without a policy statement on anti-sexual harassment, 53% were willing to adopt a formal policy on anti-sexual harassment in 2014 (*Table 2[c]*).

12. In the present survey, when asked if there were complaints about sexual harassment in schools in the previous year, 50 respondents revealed that there had been 1-2 cases of sexual harassment (*Table 3*). Within previous 3 years (2011-2013), 41% of the responding schools had their teachers received training on anti-sexual harassment. Among these schools, more teachers had received such training in schools with a policy statement (40%) than those without it (1%). (*Table 4*) It appears that once the anti-sexual harassment policy is in place, school administrators recognise the need to provide teachers with relevant training in order to implement the policy effectively.

13. From July 2013 to July 2014, about one-third (33%) of the teachers in schools had received training on anti-sexual harassment provided by the EOC / EDB (*Chart 5*). It seems that more school administrators are aware of adverse consequences of sexual harassment and understand there is a need to offer training to their staff and implement the preventive measures. However, there is still room for further improvement such that the remaining two-thirds could be offered training on anti-sexual harassment.

14. The topics of EOC's quarterly training workshops of "Preventing and managing sexual harassment in the workplace" (79%) and "Introduction to mediation" (76%) were welcomed by schools. Other suggestions included training on topics such as "How to investigate sexual harassment cases" and "How to handle emotional responses of the victims". (Table 10)

## **Recommendations**

15. It is encouraging to note that 437 surveyed schools (88%) in 2014 have adopted a policy statement on anti-sexual harassment. When compared to the 2013 data, these results indicate that under the auspices of EOC's Anti-sexual Harassment Campaign, the level of awareness of stakeholders on anti-sexual harassment in schools has been elevated.

16. It is reassuring that about one-third (33%) of the schools stated that their teachers in schools had received training on anti-sexual harassment provided by the EOC / EDB from July 2013 to July 2014. But there is still room for improvement so that eventually all teachers will receive appropriate training on anti-sexual harassment.

17. As for responding schools without a policy statement on anti-sexual harassment (53 schools), it is disappointing to see that 47% had no plan to formulate this policy in the near future. Given the serious nature of sexual harassment, it makes sense for "relevant stakeholders" to encourage teachers and principals to take prompt action to embrace an anti-sexual harassment policy.

18. The most common reasons for not having an anti-sexual harassment policy are still "Staff are not trained in formulating the related policy statement", "It appears no urgency to formulate a policy statement on anti-sexual harassment", and "Sexual harassment has not occurred in the school and therefore, it is not a necessity to formulate the related policy statement". Due to the potential harm of sexual harassment, educators should not wait until sexual harassment becomes serious before taking actions to tackle it.

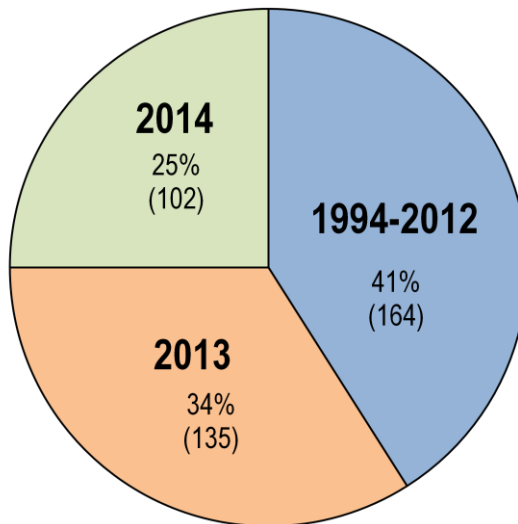
19. It is important to note that 735 schools did not respond to the survey, and it is likely that they have not yet adopted a policy statement on anti-sexual harassment. The EOC will continue to offer help, especially in providing anti-sexual harassment training to staff and students in schools. It is recommended that the EDB should enforce schools to implement the EDB guidelines: Questions & Answers on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Schools. Otherwise, the anti-sexual policy statement adopted by schools exists in form, but not in substance.

## Tables and Charts

1[a]. Is there a policy statement on anti-sexual harassment in your school / tertiary institution?

Item	2013 (N=321)	2014 (N=494)
Yes	170 (53%)	437 (88%)
No	151 (47%)	57 (12%)

1[b]. If yes, in which year has the policy statement on anti-sexual harassment been implemented in your school / tertiary institution? (N=401)



2[a]. If there is a policy statement on anti-sexual harassment in your school / tertiary institution, its content includes:

Item	Inclusion (%)		
	2014 (N=437)	2013 (N=170)	Difference (2014-2013)
The options available for dealing with sexual harassment complaints formally.	98	94	+4
A clear statement that sexual harassment will not be tolerated.	96	96	0
The legal definition of sexual harassment.	95	86	+9
A message that management is committed to eliminating and preventing sexual harassment.	93	93	0
Information about the organisation's internal complaint procedures, assuring employees that confidentiality will be observed.	93	88	+5
A behavioural definition of sexual harassment, i.e. some examples of conduct which could amount to sexual harassment.	90	85	+5
The policy on anti-sexual harassment is disseminated to all staff.	88	86	+2
An assurance that no one will be victimised or penalised for coming forward with a complaint.	74	67	+7
A note that the complainant may lodge a complaint directly with the EOC or take action in the District Court.	73	63	+10
The options available for dealing with sexual harassment complaints informally.	70	52	<b>+18</b>
A note about disciplinary action.	65	55	+10
The policy on anti-sexual harassment is posted on bulletin boards / school intranet.	63	22	<b>+41</b>
Offer anti-sexual discrimination training to students.	51	45	+6
The names and telephone numbers of officers who are responsible for dealing with complaints, providing information and advice, etc.	47	42	+5
Offer anti-sexual discrimination training to staff.	45	34	+11
The policy on anti-sexual harassment is published periodically in school newspapers and new students' orientation sessions.	21	14	+7
Others:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Incorporate anti-sexual harassment policy into management and operation guideline / teachers required to countersign on the document.</li> <li>- Incorporate anti-sexual harassment policy into Teacher's Handbook / staff training programme / sex education curriculum.</li> <li>- Staff receiving documents about equal opportunities, and anti-sexual harassment policy &amp; operation manual.</li> <li>- Disseminate the anti-sexual harassment policy in the morning assembly / parents meeting / staff meeting.</li> </ul>	8	7	+1

2[b]. If there is NOT a policy statement on anti-sexual harassment in your school / tertiary institution, the reasons are:

Item	Reason (%)		
	2014 (N=54)	2013 (N=146)	Difference (2014-2013)
Staff are not trained in formulating the related policy statement.	49	61	-12
It appears no urgency to formulate a policy statement on anti-sexual harassment.	43	45	-2
In planning, study or progression.	30	3	+27
Others:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Do not know the necessity of formulating a policy statement on anti-sexual harassment / no information for reference / the sponsoring body does not require the school to formulate the related policy statement.</li> <li>- We have a grievance policy / mechanism that covers instances of this.</li> <li>- Some code of practice is adopted e.g., male staff never attend the needs of female students related to sex.</li> <li>- The policy statement on anti-sexual harassment is included in other school policies.</li> <li>- Sexual harassment is tackled under existing legislation / no need of having related school-based policy.</li> <li>- The discipline/ counselling team keeps the related guidelines issued by the EDB.</li> <li>- Have committee to follow up complaints of sexual harassment.</li> <li>- Have meeting notes of reminding staff about anti-sexual harassment.</li> <li>- The sponsoring body has prepared guidelines on anti-sexual harassment.</li> <li>- Have no urgency / not in agenda.</li> <li>- The EBD has not provided guidelines on anti-sexual harassment.</li> <li>- Our staff have never raised the issue of anti-sexual harassment in the meetings.</li> </ul>	20	18	+2
Sexual harassment has not occurred in the school / tertiary institution and therefore, it is not a necessity to formulate the related policy statement.	19	19	0
There are concerns that people may misinterpret frequent occurrence of sexual harassment in the school / tertiary institution after the formulation of the related policy statement.	8	7	+1
Sexual harassment will not bring serious consequences and therefore there is no need to formulate the related policy statement.	0	0	0

- 2[c]. If there is NOT a policy statement on anti-sexual harassment in your school / tertiary institution, based on your understanding, will a policy statement on anti-sexual harassment be formulated for your school / tertiary institution in the current year?

Item	Implementation in	
	2013 (N=147)	2014 (N=53)
Yes	31%	53%
No	69%	47%

3. Based on your understanding, were there any complaints about sexual harassment in your school / tertiary institution in the previous year?

Number of schools / tertiary institutions	2013 (N=308)		2014 (N=476)	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
With policy statement	<u>26</u>	136	47	373
Without policy statement	<u>9</u>	137	3	53

Notes:-

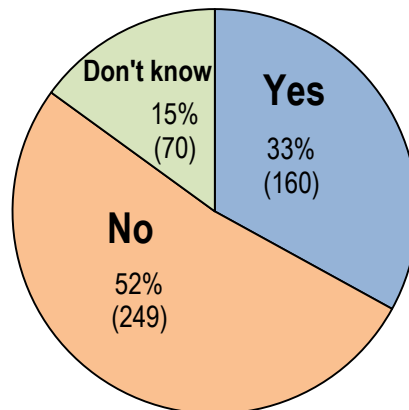
- (1) In 2013, numbers of schools / tertiary institutions receiving SH complaints in the previous year are significantly different if there is a policy statement or not,  $p < 0.05$ .
- (2) In 2013 and 2014, most schools / tertiary institutions received 1 or 2 cases of SH complaints per year.
4. Within previous 3 years, have teachers received training on anti-sexual harassment in your school / tertiary institution?

Number & percentage of schools / tertiary institutions	2010-2012 (N=266)		2011-2013 (N=406)	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
With policy statement	48 (18%)	90 (34%)	163 (40%)	194 (48%)
Without policy statement	12 (5%)	116 (44%)	6 (1%)	43 (11%)
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>60 (23%)</b>	<b>206 (78%)</b>	<b>169 (41%)</b>	<b>237 (59%)</b>

Note: The number of trained teachers per school / tertiary institution varies in a range of 1-180 in 2010-2012, while it is 1-409 in 2011-2013.



5. From July 2013 to July 2014, have teachers in your school / tertiary institution received training on anti-sexual harassment provided by the Education Bureau / EOC? (N=479)



Note: The number of trained teachers per school / tertiary institution from July 2013 to July 2014 varies in a range of 1-115.

6. Your position in the school / tertiary institution? (N=313)

Position	2013 (N=313)	2014 (N=479)
Principal	75% (235)	50% (241)
Vice Principal	11% (34)	21% (101)
Others - For schools, they involve panel heads in academic performance / discipline / counselling / sex education, social workers and regular teachers. - For tertiary institutions, they involve personnel in charge of human resources and student affairs, counsellors, and equal opportunities officers.	14% (44)	29% (137)

7. The school / tertiary institution you are now serving

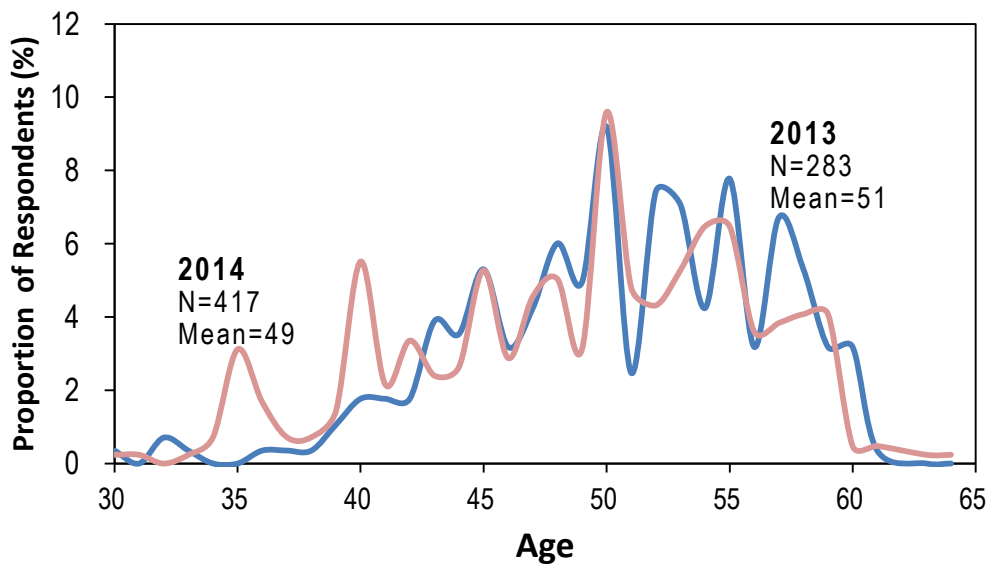
Number & percentage of schools / tertiary institutions	2013 (N=314)			2014 (N=482)		
	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
With policy statement	75 (47%)	85 (57%)	7 (100%)	216 (86%)	187 (90%)	23 (100%)
Without policy statement	84 (53%)	63 (43%)	0 (0%)	35 (14%)	21 (10%)	0 (0%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>159 (100%)</b>	<b>148 (100%)</b>	<b>7 (100%)</b>	<b>251 (100%)</b>	<b>208 (100%)</b>	<b>23 (100%)</b>

School Type	Primary				Secondary			
	Yes		No		Yes		No	
Year	2013	2014	2013	2014	2013	2014	2013	2014
Government	3	9	3	0	6	9	5	1
Subsidized / aided	48	140	62	21	49	97	35	10
Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS)	3	5	0	2	7	11	5	4
Special	15	21	10	3	13	22	10	0
International	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0
Private	0	4	2	1	1	0	0	0
(not specified)	5	37	7	7	8	48	7	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>21</b>

8. Your gender

Gender	2013 (N=312)	2014 (N=480)
Male	49%	43%
Female	51%	57%

9. Your age



10. If training courses on anti-sexual harassment will be offered by the EOC, what topic(s) do you want the EOC to provide? (N=457)

Item	n	%
Preventing and managing sexual harassment in the workplace (one of the topics of EOC's quarterly training workshops)	361	79
Introduction to mediation (one of the topics of EOC's quarterly training workshops)	348	76
Others		
- How to formulate a policy statement on anti-sexual harassment		
- Training on anti-sexual harassment for students and parents		
- How to investigate sexual harassment cases		
- How to handle emotional responses of the victims		
- Introduction of relevant sexual harassment cases		
- Tips for organizers of orientation camps to ensure that students will not engage in activities involving sexual harassment		
	20	4