

Equal Opportunities Commission

Territory-wide Study on Sexual Harassment of University Students in Hong Kong

Promotional Materials

Sex Discrimination Ordinance

Definition of Sexual Harassment:

Sexual harassment targeting an individual: A person engages in unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature in relation to you, in circumstances in which a reasonable third party would have anticipated that you would be offended, humiliated or intimidated.

Examples:

- A classmate behaved intimately with you, such as touching your thigh, hugging around your waist or pressing close to you, without your consent.
- A classmate sexts you and wants you to be a sex partner.
- A lecturer offers you assistance to get the scholarship in exchange for sex.

Creating a sexually hostile environment: A person engages in conduct of a sexual nature which does not target at you, but creates a hostile or intimidating environment for you.

Examples:

- In the orientation camp, students play games involving inappropriate physical contact in front of you, even though you are not playing the game.
- Someone shares obscene videos in the message group of classmates.
- Some students make dirty jokes in group discussion, making you feel uncomfortable.

Applicable fields:

Provisions on sexual harassment are applicable to specific public domains: education, employment, provision of services, etc. For example, the law forbids:

- Sexual harassment between students;
- Sexual harassment between university teaching staff and students;
- Sexual harassment between coaches and students;
- Sexual harassment between university staff members (including student part-timers).

About the Research:

A total of 14,442 university students completed and submitted the online questionnaire. In this study, 9 universities collaborated with the EOC, 13 university representatives participated in a focus group discussion, and 28 students took part in in-depth interviews to share their experience of sexual harassment.

Prevalence of Sexual Harassment:

In total, nearly one-fourth of university students (23%) were sexually harassed in 2016-17. If the data

is disaggregated by sex, 27.0% of female students and 18.4% of male students were sexually harassed.

Among students who were sexually harassed:

72.7% were harassed by university classmates,

7.2% were harassed by students of other universities,

4.4% were harassed by lecturers or professors,

4.4% were harassed by non-teaching staff.

Reasons for not reporting the sexual harassment incidents to the university:

20.7% said they were unsure whether the incident is sexual harassment

11.2% said they worried about ineffective complaint mechanism or protracted process

10.6% said they did not want to jeopardise the relationship with the harasser(s)

8.7% said they did not know the channels for lodging complaints

7.2% said they were afraid of retaliation by the harasser(s)

Awareness of university anti-sexual harassment policy:

58.6% of student did not know university has an anti-sexual harassment policy. Only 2.5% of victims lodged complaints with their university.

Sexual Harassment cases (extracted from the EOC Territory-wide Study on Sexual Harassment of University Students in Hong Kong):

Case 1: I was wearing a suit that day. After my presentation, the male professor suggested, "Next time if you wear less, maybe you'll get higher marks ..." I feel very uneasy ...

Case 2: There's a muscular guy ... a female student touched his chest saying "nice pecs!" ... The guy probably didn't take it as sexual harassment because of gender stereotype.

Case 3: (After sports training, I shared a taxi with a guy from another team) All of a sudden he touched my breast and exclaimed, "Wow! Your boobs are so much bigger!" I pushed his hand aside and said, "What are you doing? Don't do that ..."

Interview quotes (extracted from the EOC Territory-wide Study on Sexual Harassment of University Students in Hong Kong):

- Interviewee is a male undergraduate. "They made fun of it, for instance, describing sex between men and some sex positions. They also mentioned some terms which I felt uneasy. I told myself not to mind their words ... When I chatted with them about affection, they suddenly asked, 'Will you be penetrated? Got fxxxed in the ass? Do you gays have anal and rectal problems?' I thought their remarks were discriminatory. I felt uneasy when they made

fun of it ... I did not say anything ... The other fellow students kept on joking ... They didn't mean to hurt me ... but are hostile towards the gay community ...”

- Interviewee is a male undergraduate. “I was little bit worried. My grades were the first thing I cared about, because I was planning to study for a postgraduate degree. He was teaching two of my courses, and could easily influence my grades. I was merely worried about the possible impact on my grades, and so I couldn't be really cold towards him. I'd try and refuse him tactfully, whether the come-on was obvious or implied. I'd never say “no” right in his face ...”
- Interviewee is a female postgraduate. “The sexual harassment incident committed by the professor triggered me to look for information about sexual harassment online. The incident has been suppressed inside me for a long time. To me, it is a double-edged sword, which made me understand that I did not have any knowledge on sexual harassment and sex education, and that I did not know how to protect myself.”
- Interviewee is a female undergraduate. “Sexual harassment happens in the residential hall. People would talk about which halls often do drinking games or where most of the sexual harassment takes place. Some drunken students were being carried over to a dorm room ... what followed would be kissing and fondling ... I heard some people said you should expect doing these games in that hall!”
- An online submission submitted by a female student. Yesterday after lunch, a PhD kept saying my body is sexy and the shape of my hip is so attractive that she wants to pinch and touch, and how well it should feel. Though we are both female, I still feel offended. I said NO and bounce away her hands.
- Interviewee is a female postgraduate. It's really down to changing the culture, which requires educating. In the long term, we need better sex education. Sex education is appalling in Hong Kong, it's so bad. “No one teaches us about consent, no one teaches us about what sex even is, no one teaches what you can and cannot do, no one teaches women what their rights are, in relation to sex.”