



The Effect of Sexual Harassment towards Women

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ABSTRACT

Due to the advanced media network, sexual harassment incidents are getting more and more attention. In many cases of sexual harassment, the majority of the victims are women, so this article will examine the impact of sexual harassment on women from their perspective. We asked 100 women of different age groups by questionnaire, and their answers will give us a clearer understanding of the impact of sexual harassment on women.

1. Introduction

"Sexual harassment." Isn't this word familiar? We often see sentences like this in certain events, such as social media, newspapers and even advertisements. According to a website, a non-profit organization called Stop Street Harassment released an online poll that showed that 81% of women have experienced sexual harassment in their lives (Chatterjee, 2018). So what is the definition of sexual harassment? According to the Cambridge Dictionary (n.d.), sexual harassment is unwanted or offensive sexual attention, sexual suggestions, or sexual talk, especially from an employer or other person in a position of power. I'm sure most women have experienced this at one time or another, even if it was just a look from a man because it is a form of sexual harassment. According to an interview where they interviewed 271 bisexuals, 79% of the women had experienced sexual harassment (Subbiah et al.) Sexual harassment can have long-term psychological effects on the victim, which in turn can lead to repercussions in the social and work fields because sexual harassment can change their entire life and their view of the world around them because sexual harassment cannot be undone once it happens. Although sexual harassment is considered a form of gender discrimination and aggression, it was not brought to the attention of public law until 1980. To date, victims of sexual harassment can feel embarrassed to come forward about their experiences because some people tend to blame the victim rather than the perpetrator. Sexual harassment not only happens to women in the workplace but also in college. The research reveals that between 2018 and 2022, there were over 1,200 reports of sexual harassment committed by workers across all California State University campuses (Austin, 2023). This is a worrying issue because the university is supposed to be a place of education. Sexual harassment is still a common problem on campus and more research is needed to investigate its causes. People need to understand that sexual harassment is not a small problem, it can affect the victim in different ways such as insecurity, depression, PTSD, and other such problems.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The effect of sexual harassment on women is insecurity

The main impact of sexual harassment on women is a profound sense of insecurity. This feeling is pervasive because sexual harassment incidents occur not only during the night and morning but can happen at any time and anywhere, leaving women constantly on edge. The difference in physical strength between men and women also contributes to this insecurity, as women often find it challenging to protect themselves during such encounters. Moreover, sexual harassment fosters a heightened sensitivity and suspicion toward men and their surroundings. For instance, women may feel anxious about using public transportation due to the potential risk of harassment in crowded and confined spaces. A study revealed that a significant 67.4% of women experienced sexual harassment while traveling on TransMilenio trains (Quinones, 2020). Women's insecurity extends to other public places as well, especially when inadequate facilities contribute to an increase in sexual harassment incidents. Shockingly, about one in three women globally face the risk of assault and harassment due to the lack of safe toilets. This deficiency forces women to spend an estimated 97 billion hours annually searching for a secure place to use the restroom. Even when they do find a secluded spot, they remain vulnerable to rape or assault (Reddy et al.). The cumulative effect of these incidents reinforces women's feelings of insecurity when venturing outdoors, impacting their daily lives and well-being significantly.

2.2 Depression is the second effect of sexual harassment toward women

Depression emerges as a significant consequence of sexual harassment of women, exacerbated by societal factors that hinder victims from seeking help and lead to victim-blaming attitudes. After experiencing sexual harassment, many women avoid seeking help from friends or elders and instead internalize

their emotions, leading to long-term repression and potential depression. The current lack of comprehensive sex education in society contributes to women's reluctance to discuss their experiences with others or venture out after harassment incidents, further isolating them and intensifying their emotional burden. With the rise of social media, some media outlets exploit sexual harassment incidents for attention, often distorting the context. This misrepresentation can lead to public misunderstandings and perpetuate the notion of victim guilt, causing victims to blame themselves for the harassment they endured. Society's sympathy towards female victims of sexual harassment diminishes over time. This shift is evident in the tendency to criticize victims' dress codes and private lives, adding to the emotional distress faced by survivors. Research, such as the #MeToo experiment by Borgiorno et al. (2019), demonstrates that victim-blaming occurs irrespective of the gender of participants, male perpetrators often receive more empathy, while female victims receive less, perpetuating harmful attitudes towards survivors. In summary, victim blaming and prolonged depression will cause women to be prone to depression after experiencing a sexual harassment incident.

2.3 Sexual harassment can lead the victim to develop PTSD

Sexual harassment can lead to the development of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in victims, causing significant emotional distress and potentially harmful consequences. Research highlights that rape and sexual harassment are among the most traumatic events that can trigger PTSD in both men and women (Creamer, 2001). Signs of PTSD include frequently recalling the traumatic event, experiencing distressing dreams related to the incident, and avoiding situations that might remind victims of the harassment (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, n.d.). Without proper treatment, victims may resort to self-harm as a coping mechanism to escape the haunting memories of the sexual molestation they endured. Various forms of sexual harassment can contribute to PTSD in women. In one study of rape survivors, an alarming 94 out of 100 women experienced PTSD symptoms within two weeks of the incident (Battaglino, 2017). Additionally, a study on sexual assault survivors revealed that a staggering 81% of 2,106 women developed PTSD symptoms within a week (Bialasiewicz, 2021). It is crucial to recognize that any form of sexual harassment, whether it be verbal, physical, or emotional, can have severe consequences, leading women to suffer from PTSD.

3.0 Research findings

Part 1: Questionnaires

Figure 1: Sexual harassment does not have a negative impact on a women's mental health.

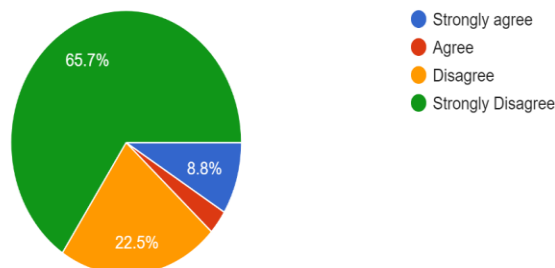


Figure 1

Figure 1 shows that 65.7% of respondents strongly disagree with the statement that sexual harassment has no effect on a woman's mental health. 8.8% of those surveyed firmly agree that sexual harassment has no effect on a woman's mental health. Regarding the negative effect, 22.5% of respondents disagree, whereas 2.9% agree.

Figure 2: Experiencing sexual harassment can lead to a decline in a women's self-esteem.

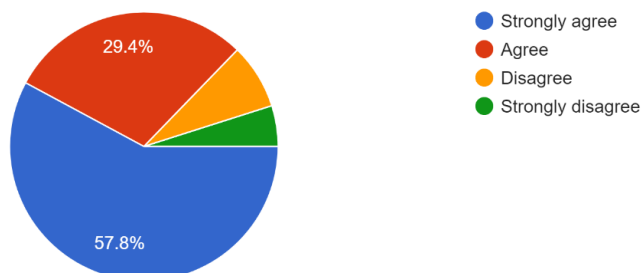


Figure 2

Figure 2 shows that 57.8% strongly agree that sexual harassment can lead to a decline in a women’s self-esteem. 29.4% agree on the decline of a women’s self-esteem. Another 7.8% of respondents disagree with the statement and 4.9% strongly disagree.

Figure 3: Sexual harassment affects a women’s sense of safety and security.

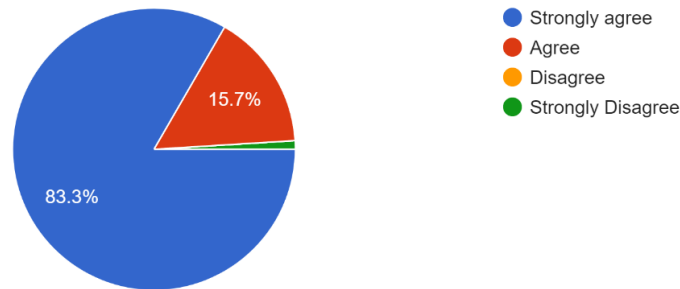


Figure 3

83.3% of respondents strongly agree that sexual harassment affects a women’s sense of safety and security. 15.7% of respondents agree that sexual harassment affects women’s sense of safety and security. 0% of respondents disagree and 1% strongly disagree.

Figure 4: Sexual harassment can result in anxiety and fear for women.

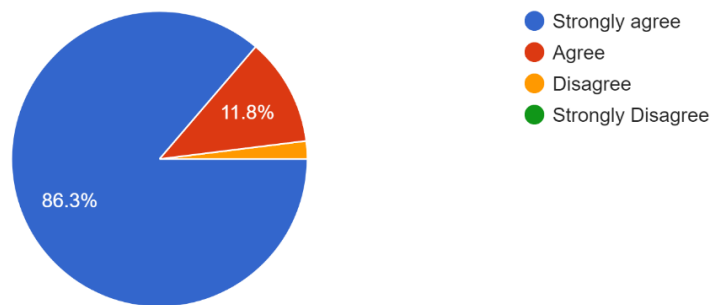


Figure 4

According to the findings, 86.3% strongly agree and 11.8% agree that sexual harassment can result in anxiety and fear for women. 2% disagree and 0% strongly disagree that sexual harassment can result in anxiety and fear for women.

Figure 5: Women who experience sexual harassment may feel a sense of being defenseless.

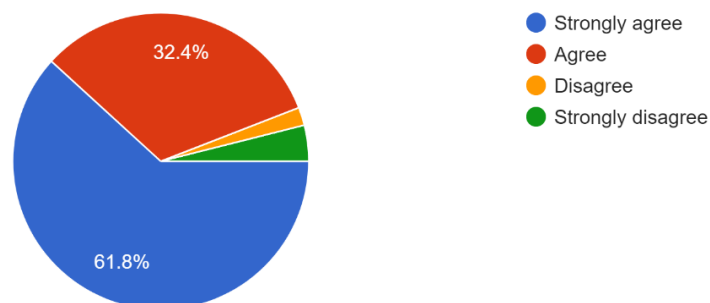


Figure 5

Figure 5 reveals that 32.4% of respondents agree and 61.8% of respondents firmly believe that women who struggle from sexual harassment may feel powerless. The remaining 2% of respondents are in agreement, and 3.9% strongly agree.

Figure 6: Sexual harassment can hinder a women’s professional growth and career advancement.

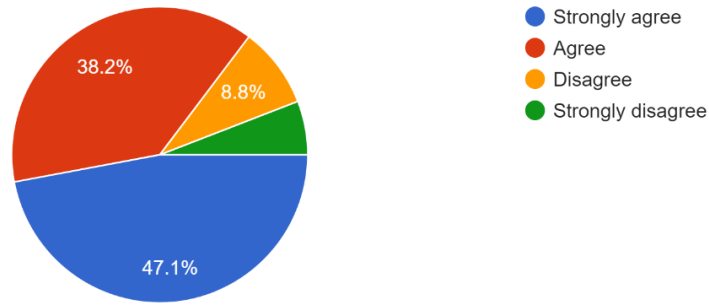


Figure 6

Figure 6 shows that 47.1% strongly agree and 38.2% agree that sexual harassment can hinder a women’s professional growth and career advancement. The other 8.8% disagree, and 5.9% of respondents strongly disagree.

Figure 7: Sexual harassment contributes to a hostile work environment for women.

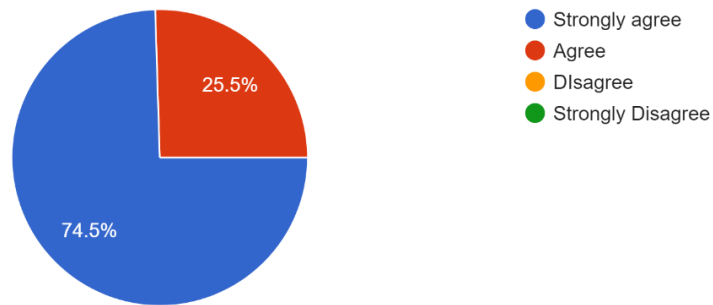


Figure 7

25.5% of respondents and 74.5% strongly agree that sexual harassment makes the workplace unpleasant for women. 0% strongly disagree with the previous statement.

Figure 8: Sexual harassment can lead to a lack of trust in relationships for women.

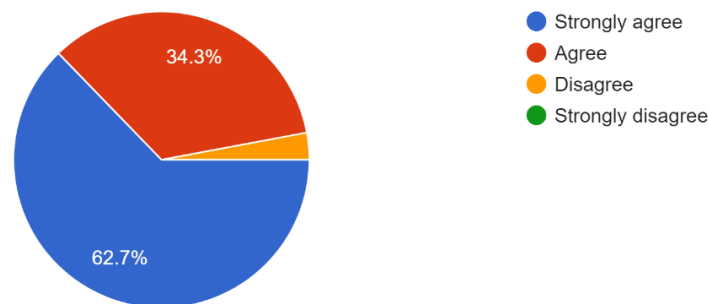


Figure 8

62.7% of respondents strongly agree and 34.3% agree that sexual harassment might cause women to lose faith in romantic relationships. 0.0% strongly disagree, and 2.9% disagree.

Figure 9: Sexual harassment can cause physical health problems for women.

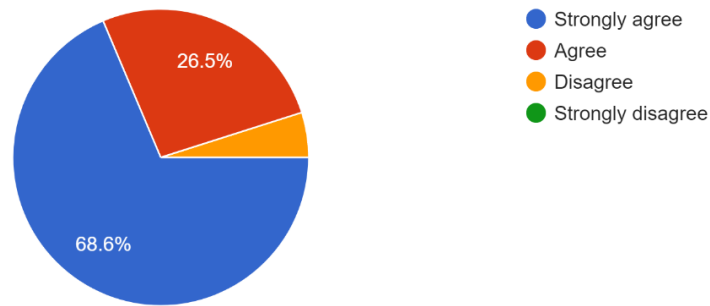


Figure 9

68.6% strongly agree that sexual harassment can cause physical health problems for women. While the other 26.5% agree, 4.9% disagree and 0% strongly disagree which states that sexual harassment could not cause any physical health problems for women.

Figure 10: Sexual Harassment can negatively impact a women’s academic performance.

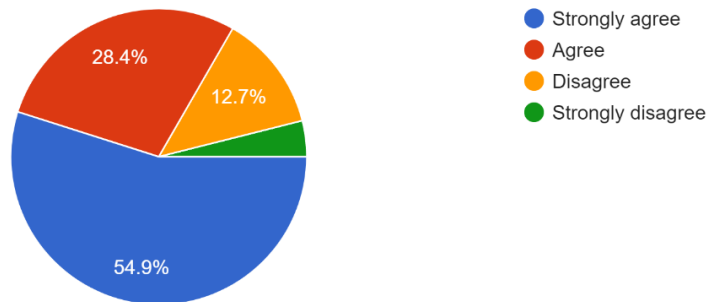


Figure 10

According to the pie chart, 54.9% strongly agree and 28.4% agree that sexual harassment can have a negative effect on a woman's academic achievement. 12.7% and 3.9% of respondents strongly disagree with the mentioned above statement.

Figure 11: Sexual harassment can result in social isolation for women.

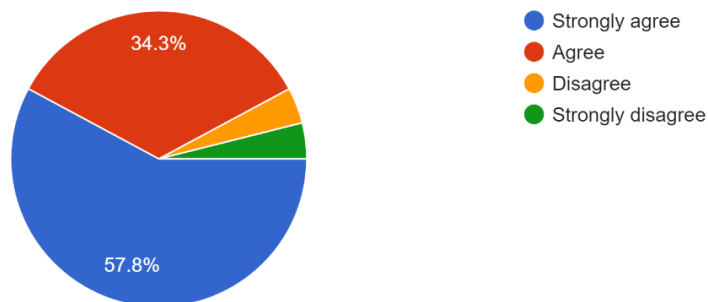


Figure 11

57.8% strongly agree that women who experience sexual harassment may become socially isolated. 34.3% of respondents agree, while 3.9% strongly disagree, indicating that they do not believe that women who have suffered sexual harassment separate themselves.

Figure 12: Sexual harassment does not lead to a loss of confidence in women.

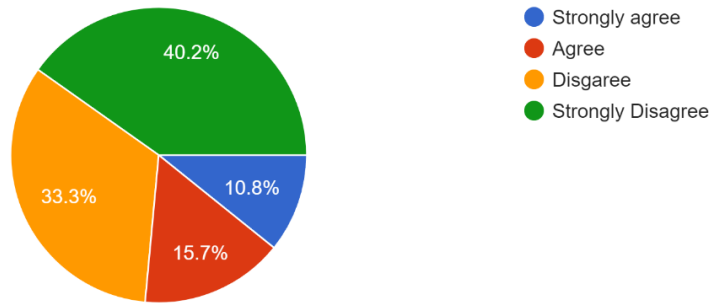


Figure 12

Figure 12 shows that 40.2% of respondents strongly disagree with the statement that they do not believe that sexual harassment can cause a woman to lose confidence. When it comes to whether sexual harassment victims will lose confidence as a result of the harassment, 33.3% are in disagreement, 15.7% are in agreement, and 10.8% are strongly in agreement.

Figure 13: Sexual harassment affects a women's ability to assert herself in various situations.

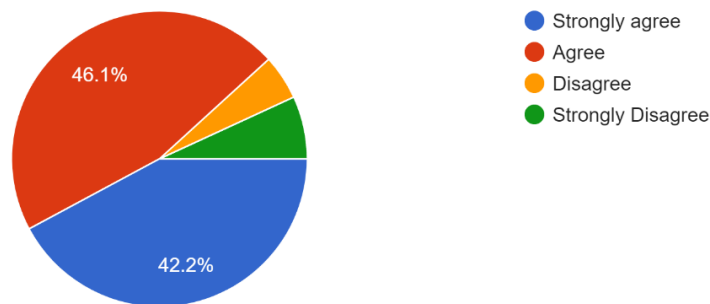


Figure 13

46.1% agree and 42.2% that sexual harassment affects a women's ability to assert herself back in various situations. 6.9% strongly disagree and 4.9% disagree which suggests that they assume women who experienced sexual harassment do not affect a woman's ability to assert themselves in multiple situations.

Figure 14: Women who experience sexual harassment may develop symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

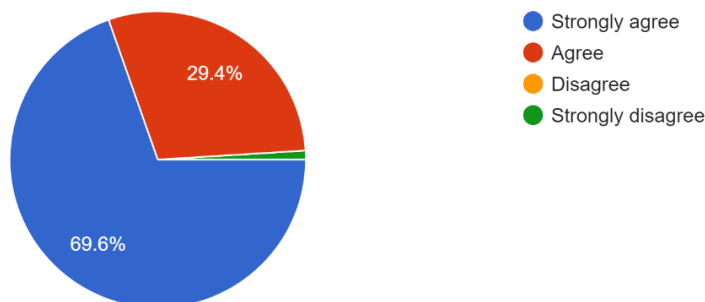


Figure 14

69.6% of respondents strongly agree that women who had been sexually harassed may develop symptoms of PTSD, and 29.4% agree with the previously mentioned statement. 0% disagree and 1% respectively strongly disagree.

Figure 15: Sexual harassment does not affect women's well-being.

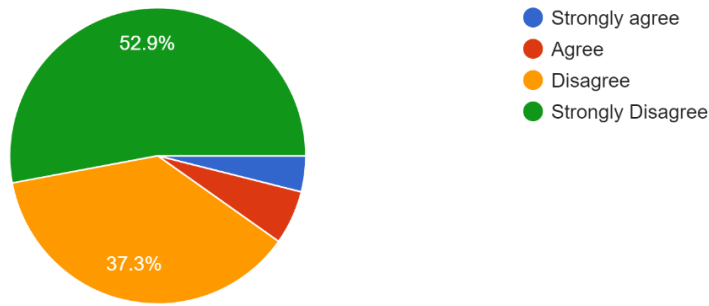


Figure 15

According to the pie chart above, 52.9% strongly disagree and 37.3% disagree which signifies that they believe sexual harassment does indeed affect a woman's well-being. 5.9% agree and the last 3.9% strongly agree. They express that sexual harassment does not affect a woman's welfare.

Figure 16: Sexual harassment can result in a decline in a woman's overall life satisfaction.

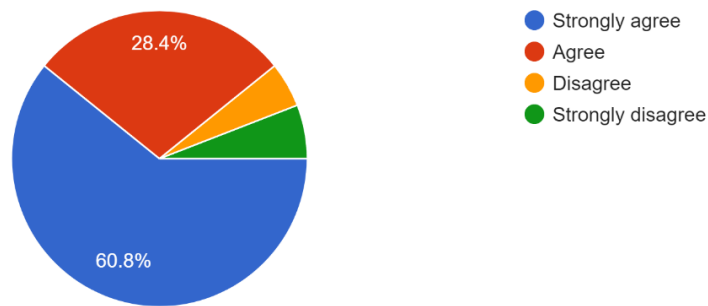


Figure 16

When it comes to the likelihood that sexual harassment can lower a woman's overall life fulfillment, 60.8% strongly agree and 28.4% agree. 4.9% disagree and 5.9% strongly disagree.

Figure 17: If women dress more modestly, they would not be a victim of sexual harassment.

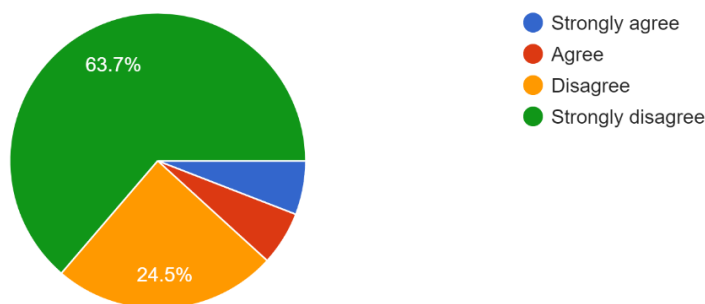


Figure 17

According to the pie chart above, 63.7% strongly disagree and 24.5% disagree with the statement that sexual harassment can still happen to women who wear modestly. 5.9% of respondents share the opinion that women who dress modestly are less likely to be the target of sexual harassment.

Figure 18: sexual harassment can impact a women's physical and sexual well-being.

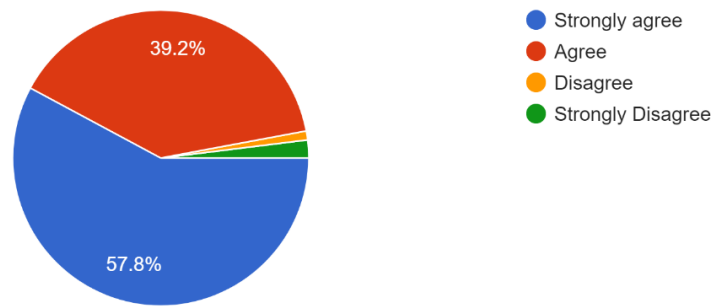


Figure 18

Figure 18 suggests that 57.8% of those respondents strongly agree that sexual harassment can have an effect on a woman's physical and sexual well-being. 39.2% of respondents agree the previously stated claim. The remaining 1% of respondents and 2% of respondents strongly disagree with the stated statement.

Figure 19: sexual harassment can hinder a woman's ability to pursue and achieve her goal.

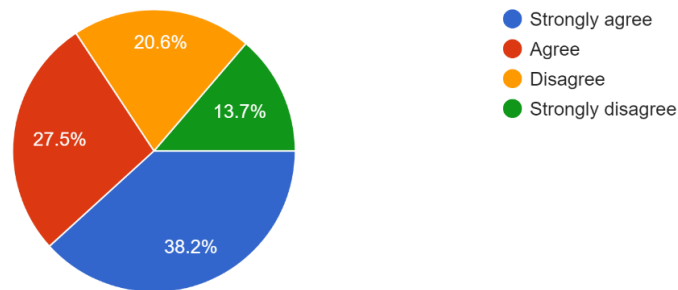


Figure 19

38.2% of respondents strongly agree that sexual harassment can prevent women from setting and accomplishing their goals. In addition, 27.5% of respondents agree with the previous statement. As stated by 20.6% of respondents who disagree and 13.7% who strongly disagree, sexual harassment has no impact on a woman's ability to pursue and accomplish her goals.

Figure 20: Sexual harassment can lead to a loss of trust in societal institutions for women.

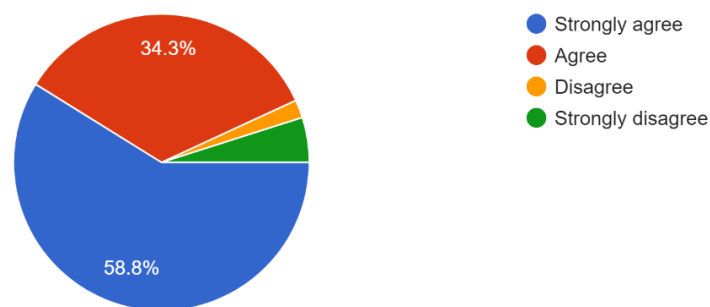


Figure 20

58.8% of respondents agreed that sexual harassment may cause women lack trust in the structures of society. 34.3% of respondents agree with the statement, 4.9% strongly disagree, and 2% disagree, believing that victims of sexual harassment will not experience any issues with any part of society.

Conclusion

To combat sexual harassment incidents effectively, a collaborative effort involving the government, parents, and school authorities is essential. Here are some clear strategies they can implement: Government can arrange regular police patrols and increasing police presence in public spaces can act as a deterrent to potential harassers and enhance women's safety. Furthermore, it installs adequate lighting. Well-lit areas, especially in shady alleys or poorly lit places, can reduce opportunities for harassment and create a safer environment. Not only that, enforcing harsher penalties for perpetrators of sexual harassment can serve as a stronger deterrent and send a clear message of zero tolerance. In addition, schools can conduct anti-sexual harassment lectures to raise awareness about sexual harassment, consent, and respect can empower students to combat such behavior. Moreover, parental guidance is also crucial. Parents must teach their children about consent, boundaries, and respect for others, fostering healthy attitudes toward relationships and interactions. Parents can create a supportive and caring home environment that allows children to feel comfortable discussing their experiences and seeking guidance. By adopting these proactive measures, sexual harassment incidents can be effectively reduced, granting women a sense of security and contributing to their overall satisfaction and well-being. The collaboration between different stakeholders plays a crucial role in fostering a safer and more respectful society for everyone.

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