



ARTEMIS

preventing sexual harassment & abuse among primary school
Students



NO HARASSMENT ZONE

An Essential Guide for Primary School Teachers



Co-funded by
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Project Number: 2023-1-FR01-KA220-SCH-000152428

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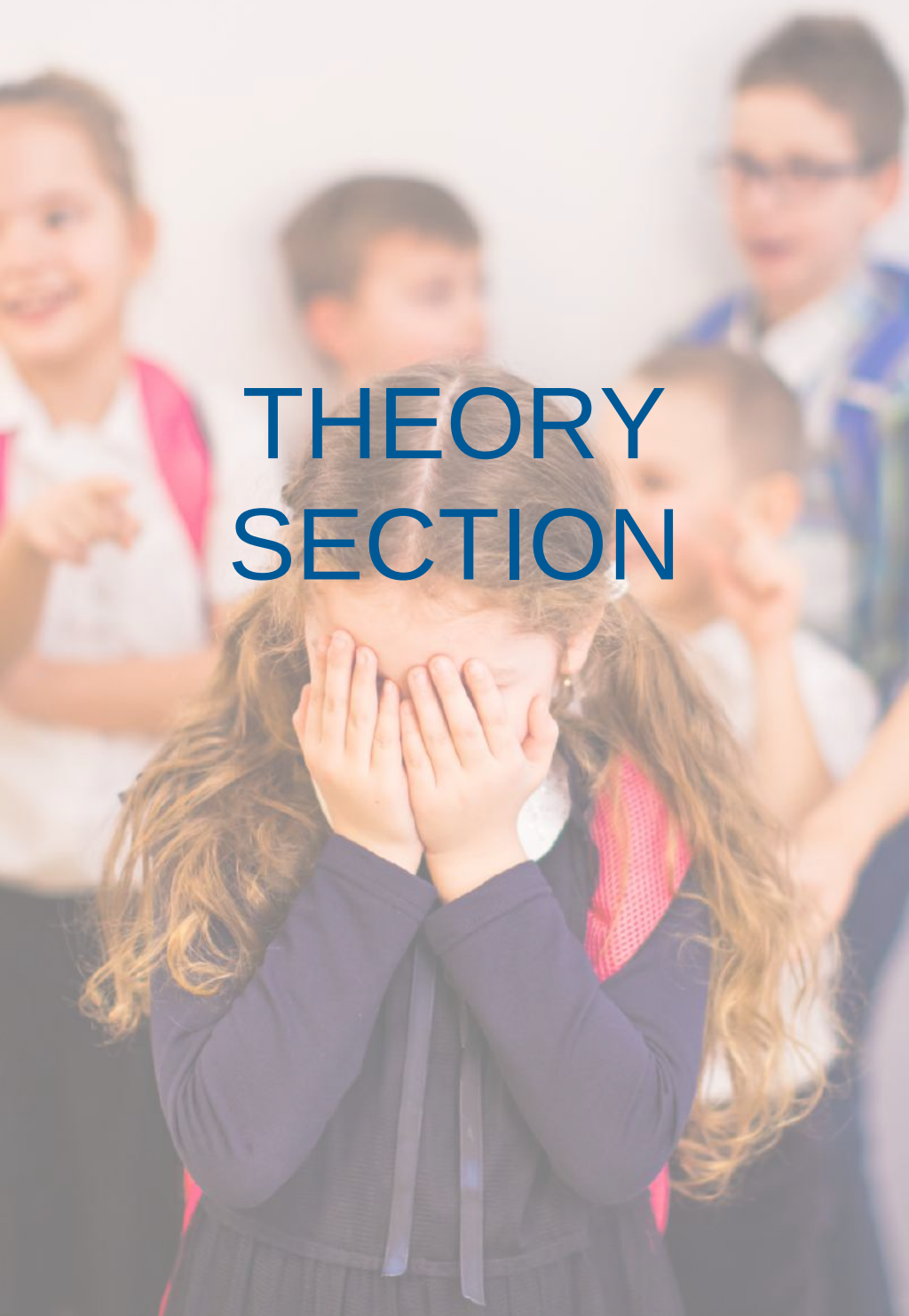
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THEORY SECTION



THEORY SECTION

Introduction to the theory section

The theoretical part of the guide is an important source of information and awareness-raising material on the issue of peer-on-peer sexual harassment. Sexual harassment in schools is a serious challenge that needs to be addressed effectively. This guide is offered as a practical tool to teachers and aims to provide a holistic approach to the existing knowledge on the sexual harassment phenomenon, to aid educators in understanding, identifying, and addressing sexual harassment behaviours within the school settings. The theoretical part of the guide examines in depth the main components of sexual harassment. Specifically, the guide focuses on the causes that contribute to the escalation of the phenomenon, the impact it has on the victims and finally the types and expressions of the behaviour.

Through the subjects related to the causes of sexual harassment, teachers will become aware of the factors that lead to the expression of sexual harassment in the school environment, even when these causes are not physically visible. Therefore, reference is made to normalised stereotypes and dynamic networks of interactions that fuel the phenomenon, but also to gaps in contemporary education that lead to its rise. In the second thematic section of the guide, teachers will find in-depth research on the effects of sexual harassment on victims. This section covers all areas of a child's life that can be affected such as the emotional-psychological, academic-cognitive, physical, and social domains.



The last theoretical section is a guide to identifying the types of sexual harassment a student may be subjected to. In this section, readers will realise that many behaviours which may be justified based on certain normalised stereotypes are forms of sexual harassment that can occur both inside and outside the school context. Through this guide, teachers will gain valuable insights into the significance and the complexity of the problem. Additionally, the guide will be a practical tool for identifying and addressing the multiple and varied types of sexual harassment to create safe learning environments.



CAUSES

Introduction to Causes

The first theoretical segment of this guide focuses on the key factors that contribute to the enhancement of the sexual harassment problem in schools. Reference is made to invisible factors that cannot be easily identified, such as the normalisation of stereotypes that are reproducing sexual harassment behaviours. Then pathogens that are identified in the education system such as the lack of awareness and training for teachers and the absence of relevant educational material for students, are described. Finally, factors such as the influence of the media and peer pressure on the occurrence of the phenomenon are presented.

CAUSES

Normative Masculinity

Introduction to the topic

Many social scientists, psychologists and anthropologists have tried to analyse, define and explain the reasons why people adopt certain patterns of behaviour. Abbot Davit (2020), in his article: The Role of discourse in Social Theory: the work of Michel Foucault, highlights the main points of the French theorist's work. Although Michel Foucault's work is quite complex, it can serve as a starting point for the definition of normative masculinity. According to Foucault, the structures that contain a form of authority produce a certain knowledge that the members of society reproduce. Take school, for example: school is a structure that shapes the individuals of a society.

In the Middle Ages, according to Abbot Davit (2020), education was mainly about religion and philosophy, also known as 'mediaeval scholasticism'. In the Renaissance era, education began to take a more human-centred approach that also incorporated human needs, which led to a change in social practises. The result is that the different behaviours in society are learned. Although there is no universal definition of masculinity.

A term to be used here comes from Reidya, Leone, Bogenb, & Swahna (2022), who describe masculinity as a set of cultural traits and behavioural tendencies. Masculinity varies from culture to culture, geographic location, socioeconomic status, and religion. It has more to do with the demands society places on men regarding their behaviour in certain environments.

NORMATIVE MASCULINITY

How It Causes Peer-on-Peer Sexual Harassment

As mentioned earlier, masculinity is linked to socially constructed expectations of how men and boys should look, behave and express themselves within the social stereotype of “boys will be boys”. According to Reidya et al. (2022), boys and men should cross pain boundaries and not externalise their feelings. They must be “tough men” who reject anything feminine in their behaviour. They are also expected to be dominant towards other men and women and behave in a way that demonstrates power. Dominance and sexual harassment are related to the male gender developing a sense of superiority that gives them access to positions of authority; in the same article, this behaviour is referred to as “hegemonic masculinity”.

All people are at risk of being sexually harassed at some point in their lives, even the most stereotypically 'privileged' such as white, western, male and able-bodied, but people belonging to vulnerable social groups are even more likely to be harassed in both school and non-school contexts as students and adults; these groups include LGBTQ+ people, girls, women, migrants and indigenous peoples (Wikstrom, 2019). The root of the problem does not lie entirely in the adult lives of men who exhibit behaviours of normalised toxic masculinity. Rather, it is a gender performance that is gradually built up from school days onwards. A very specific example of behaviour that is instilled in both boys and girls from an early age is mentioned in Wikstrom's article: when boys treat girls badly, it's because they like them.



NORMATIVE MASCULINITY

This stereotype teaches girls to view bad behaviour as interest. This behaviour is generally not addressed as toxic masculinity and prevents boys from continuing this behaviour in later adulthood. The normalisation of masculinity and violent behaviour and the failure to view conformity to these behaviours as harmful leads to an increase in the phenomenon of sexual harassment in the school context.



How It Can Be Addressed

Wikström (2019) mentions that the deeper causes that embody masculinity essentially through acts of violence should be explored. It is important to identify the behaviour and then understand the reasons why it happens. According to Barr and Javed (2021), Christopher Muwanguzi, the CEO of the charity "Working with Men", describes the main characteristics by which normative toxic masculinity, dominance and aggression can be identified. Both are part of a narrative that is instilled in boys from an early age: the narrative of 'being a man'.

At this point, it is important to emphasise that the male gender is not a target. Masculinity in itself is not a bad thing, it includes qualities such as courage, being a protector and being strong, however there are aspects of masculinity that have negative consequences for all genders. Barr and Javed (2021), in the article: What is toxic masculinity and how can it be addressed, also mention that one of the characteristics of normalised masculinity that is oppressive for boys and men is that someone has difficulty asking for help. "Being a man" means being strong and independent. There is no room for sentimentality and weakness in this narrative, it means that they are not capable enough. Another characteristic is the rejection of anything feminine. Boys are taught from an early age that heteronormality is absolute and that anything feminine in their behaviour makes them less of a man. For this reason, we often observe aggressive behaviour from boys towards girls or boys with more feminine characteristics in both school and extracurricular contexts. Men who fit the characteristics of toxic masculinity are more likely to sexually harass women. This is because in the ideology of toxic masculinity, women are subordinate to men, they are his property and can be treated however he wants.

NORMATIVE MASCULINITY

But how can normative masculinity be addressed and combated? According to Irvine (2021), toxic masculinity is imperative as it can lead to internal and societal turmoil that manifests itself in problems such as bullying, assault and risky behaviour. To curb this, a key step is to challenge outdated gender roles and encourage people to change their perceptions of masculinity. The aim is to initiate a process in which qualities such as emotional intelligence, kindness and vulnerability are encouraged. On the path to a more fulfilling life, individuals are encouraged to educate themselves about authentic masculinity, reject the outdated notion of a "macho" image and actively intervene when they encounter harmful behaviours such as sexism and aggression in others.



Conclusion

In summary, it can be said that there is no "good" and "bad" gender, only behaviours that lead to conflicts between the genders. It would be helpful to perceive these behavioural patterns as social constructs in order to be aware of them. It is not helpful to address men about stereotypes that they learned to reproduce as children. Similarly, it is problematic not to encourage girls and women not to accept these behaviours. The most important point is to recognise that all of these patterns are learned. Education is the fundamental solution to the problem of sexual harassment, which of course can also be due to stereotypes of normalised masculinity. The content of this guide is our springboard for building societies with stronger and healthier relationships between its members. The school is our first port of call for change. It will not always be easy for a teacher to recognise when a child is interacting based on normalised masculinity, but now that we have explained what that is, he or she can start by reflecting on whether he or she is acting on those stereotypes. Awareness is extremely important because, as we mentioned earlier in this section, these are normalised behaviours, so we may behave this way without realising it.

CAUSES

Lack of Awareness & Education for Teachers

According to the Sexuality issues website, sexual harassment can be defined as words or behaviours of a sexual nature that are repeatedly imposed on someone and affect their dignity. According to the French guide “Comportement sexistes et violences sexuelles”, published in 2019 by the Ministry of Education and Youth, sexist behaviours and sexual violence are considered social facts that affect people of all ages and classes and affect all types of spaces, including schools.

As Pellegrini (2001) found in a longitudinal study of heterosexual relationship violence and sexual harassment during the transition from elementary to middle school, school is a place that provides many opportunities for children and adolescents to interact with peers of the same and opposite sex (Blatchford, 1998). School is also the place where children should be protected, and the Unesco publication “Behind the numbers: ending school violence and bullying” (2019) states: “School violence in all its forms is a violation of children’s and young people’s rights to education and to health and well-being. No country can achieve inclusive and equitable quality education for all if learners experience violence and bullying at school” (p. 4). However, the Unesco Guide (2019) highlights data collected through surveys such as the Violence Against Children Survey (VACS) and the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) (Chiang et al., 2016). According to these surveys, one in three students has been bullied at school at least once in the past month, and sexual harassment is in second place. In Europe, sexual bullying plays a smaller role than in other parts of the world, but still occurs (11%). In general, the majority of bullying at school is carried out by other students. It includes physical, psychological and sexual violence. The latter includes: non-consensual sexual acts, unwanted touching, sexual bullying and harassment. Are teachers aware of and trained in those facts and how do institutions respond?



LACK OF AWARENESS & EDUCATION FOR TEACHERS

The guide “Comportement sexistes et violences sexuelles: Prévenir, repérer, agir”, published in 2019 by the French Ministry of Education and Youth, states that violence is linked to persistent gender inequality based on sexual stereotypes. These stereotypes, which are embedded in society from an early age, reinforce the system of norms that organises a hierarchy between the genders and can trigger violent behaviours, including sexual harassment. In some countries, the facts seem to be underestimated. In France, for example, the French media outlet *20 Minutes* exposed the problem in the article “They don’t want to see the problem... Sexual violence among children, a blind spot of the Ministry of Education”, noted that the proportion of cases of sexual violence involving children, including very young ones, is increasing at an alarming rate. Between 1996 and 2018, cases of rape involving minors as perpetrators increased by 279% and cases of sexual assault in the general sense (including harassment and sexual exhibitionism) by more than 315. For weeks, *20 Minutes* has been dealing with this violence, which is currently underestimated and not specifically addressed by the French Ministry of Education, which focuses on the fight against bullying in schools. According to the report, the institution denies the facts of sexual harassment: Old prejudices and fears about such a sensitive subject cause many teachers, head teachers and even inspectors to play things down.



INTRODUCTION

An introduction to the No Harassment Zone Guide

The No Harassment Zone Guide is an essential resource for primary school teachers, dedicated to preventing sexual harassment and abuse among students. The Guide provides educators with the knowledge and tools that are necessary to tackle this sensitive issue within the school environment.

Sexual harassment in schools is a significant concern that can profoundly impact the emotional, psychological, and academic well-being of students. Despite the serious nature of the issue, there is often a lack of awareness, educational material, and training for teachers, which can lead to inadequate responses and the perpetuation of harmful behaviors. So, this guide aims to offer comprehensive theoretical insights and practical strategies for creating a safe and supportive environment for students in primary schools.

The Guide is structured into several sections elaborating on the causes, effects, and types of sexual harassment. It explores cultural and societal factors, such as normative masculinity and peer pressure, that contribute to the prevalence of harassment in schools. The impact of these behaviors on students, including emotional distress, social isolation, and academic difficulties, is thoroughly examined to help educators understand the full scope of the problem.

Finally, the Guide includes a range of activities, case studies, and prevention strategies tailored to primary school settings. These resources are designed to support teachers in fostering a culture of respect, consent, and safety among their students.



LACK OF AWARENESS & EDUCATION FOR TEACHERS

In France, Law No. 2016-297 of March 14 aims to ensure that children's fundamental needs are met, to support their physical, emotional, intellectual and social development and to protect their health, safety, morals and education while respecting their rights.

In England, legislation is also very active, for example with the:

- Children Act 1989
- Children Act 2004
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 (Act to Protect Vulnerable Groups)
- Education (School Teachers' Appraisal) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended)
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
- Data Protection Act 2018 Statutory guidance
- DfE (2018) 'Working Together to Safeguard Children'
- DfE (2019) 'Keeping children safe in education' Non-statutory guidance
- DfE (2015) 'What to do if you're worried a child is being abused'
- DfE (2018) 'Sharing information'
- DfE (2018) 'Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges'
- Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Board website

One may wonder why sexual harassment is regularly witnessed in schools when children are supposed to be protected. Is it due to a lack of awareness and education among teachers?

Fize (2003) says that sexist acts in school are difficult to record and notice because victims prefer to remain silent due to the distress they feel, and that the education system does not take adequate measures to prevent sexism and sexual harassment. Rather, the focus is placed on other forms of violence.



LACK OF AWARENESS & EDUCATION FOR TEACHERS

In fact, Unesco (2019) notes that in many countries there is strong political leadership and a solid legal and policy framework to combat violence in general. However, the same article also points out that in some countries, programmes and policies only cover part of the picture and not all teachers have been trained to prevent and respond to school violence and bullying. Furthermore, school violence is not always monitored, although this fact is very important to change the situation. The availability of data on school violence or bullying and the systematic monitoring of interventions are mentioned as success factors. Unesco (2019) recommends for countries that have succeeded in reducing bullying in their country to train teachers to implement measures set out in national strategies and plans on school violence and bullying. The training highlights the importance of improving teachers' understanding of school violence and bullying and ensuring that they have the skills to prevent, recognise and respond to incidents.

The sensitization and training of teachers is all the more important as some teachers unconsciously promote inequality through their pedagogical practise. This fact is summarised in "Intégrer l'égalité dans les enseignements du premier degré" ("Integrating equality into primary school teaching"), published by CANOPE (n.d.), an institution that develops resources for teachers. It describes the attitude of primary school teachers on this point:

'When teachers are asked about this aspect of their work, they are often surprised because they sincerely believe that they make no distinction and do not discriminate between girls and boys in their professional practise. Most of the time, they only raise this issue when there are problems between girls and boys, especially in common areas such as the playground or the toilets ("no girls playing football, no girls mumbling, no boys talking to girls, etc."). For this reason, teachers are advised to question their professional practise and classroom routines: to treat boys and girls equally and to ensure that they themselves do not convey sexist stereotypes.



LACK OF AWARENESS & EDUCATION FOR TEACHERS

According to CANOPE (n.d.) in “intégrer l'égalité dans les enseignements du 1er degré”, educational sociological research shows that one of the main reasons for the unequal treatment of girls and boys is precisely that the underlying mechanisms are not recognised.

According to the French Ministry of Education and Youth (2019), adults must help to guide relationships between students. They must pay attention to them while being strict in order to respond to, enforce and enforce notions of dignity, equality and mutual respect.

In addition, the role of the school is considered essential for coexistence and the education system must promote reflection on the role of men and women in society, stereotypical representations, mutual respect and, more generally, all forms of discrimination and violence against women.

Education must be provided primarily through: the civics curriculum, sex education, educational projects for the prevention of sexual violence and abuse, media or parenting skills.

In terms of prevention, Collet (2016) advocates egalitarian pedagogy among teachers.

Teachers must be aware of the fact that gender is everywhere, including in classrooms and educational practises.



LACK OF AWARENESS & EDUCATION FOR TEACHERS

The French Ministry of National Education and Youth (2019) also specifies that, beyond the necessary awareness-raising of society as a whole, the educational establishment must promote the development of skills for living together, respect for gender equality and the fight against stereotypical representations of any form of discrimination.

Similar recommendations are also being made outside the European Union. The Ontario Common Rights Commission, for example, recommends the following proposals:

- Unambiguously adopt an attitude of intolerance towards sexual harassment and harassment based on gender;
- Adopt an unequivocal stance of intolerance towards discrimination based on sexual orientation, including homophobic bullying;
- Adopt an effective policy against sexual and gender-based harassment and ensure that all students are aware of it;
- Make clear to students the consequences of all forms of sexual and gender-based harassment, including online sexual and gender-based harassment;
- As well as the online harassment prevention measures in the school's policy against online sexual harassment and harassment;
- Raise student and staff awareness of sexual harassment, including harassment based on gender, gender role stereotypes, and sexist comments and behaviours;
- Use role-playing and educational exercises to make students aware of the impact of sexual and gender-based harassment on others;
- Have students read media articles to sharpen their critical thinking skills and ask pertinent questions about what they see, hear and read;
- teach students how to protect themselves from sexual and gender-based harassment online;
- respect the confidentiality of students who report sexual harassment, gender-based harassment and related bullying. This may encourage other students to report harassment;
- ensure that staff has sufficient resources, knowledge, and tools to recognize behaviours that constitute sexual harassment and to report incidents when they occur.



LACK OF AWARENESS & EDUCATION FOR TEACHERS

Conclusion

Many cases of sexual bullying are listed in the statistics. The problem needs to be addressed now and action from elementary school onwards may be one way to change the situation.

Measures according to guidelines are suitable to act on 3 levels:

- Pupils
- Teachers
- Institution.

Prevention can only be successful if teachers act as role models for equality, which must also be reflected in the school project. This means that educational staff must be trained accordingly in order to achieve this. Pedagogical staff must be made aware of this issue and, according to CANOPE (n.d.), teachers must question their professional practise and also the school as a system (the way lessons are organised, the materials used, the subjects taught, etc.). Learning about equality and equal treatment of girls and boys takes place both in the everyday routine of the classroom and in/through all subject areas.

One of the most important aspects of teaching equality between girls and boys is dealing with stereotypes: The aim is to identify how some of these stereotypes may be barriers to students' development as fulfilled human beings. And as Debarbieux, Alessandrin, Dagorn and Gaillard (2018, p.90) note, "while school is a place where sexist stereotypes are constructed and sometimes reinforced, and even if the rejection of the feminine can sometimes be observed, it is also a place where many professionals try to contribute to the deconstruction of these stereotypes in order to offer models other than the dominant ones".



CAUSES

Absence of educational material for learners

Sexual harassment by peers in elementary school is a very complex issue that is influenced by several social factors. It is important to recognise the causes so that teachers and educators can address the problem effectively.

The general lack of appropriate educational resources for learners is a major challenge in promoting a safe and inclusive learning environment on the topic of sexual harassment. Teachers often find it difficult to talk to their students about issues related to promoting healthy relationships and respectful or clearly appropriate behaviour. Teachers, especially elementary school teachers, can play an important role in raising awareness of issues related to peer harassment by developing more inclusive curricula that address these concerns. Working with institutions and school authorities to integrate age-appropriate content into existing curricula can ensure a more holistic approach.

Encouraging an open dialogue between teachers and students can help identify specific concerns and issues that need to be addressed. This dialogue, aimed at finding potential conceptual issues that may underlie inappropriate behaviour, can assist in the development of instructional materials that meet the specific needs of and are identified with students.



ABSENCE OF EDUCATIONAL MATERIAL FOR LEARNERS

Providing training opportunities for teachers that focus on the development of teaching materials can enable them to fill gaps, both in terms of the concepts and approaches to be used and in terms of the creation of specific materials. Workshops, training courses and collaboration with experts in the field can enhance teachers' and educators' skills in developing resources that are both informative, engaging and meaningful for students.



The involvement of parents, caregivers and the wider community is key to solving the problem of the lack of educational materials. Joint efforts between schools and communities can lead to the production of resources that reflect local interests and ensure cultural relevance and greater effectiveness. In addition, close collaboration between all stakeholders can better identify and address deviant or inappropriate behaviour.



Therefore, recognising the root causes of sexual harassment by peers, especially the lack of educational materials for students, is the first step in promoting a safer learning environment. Addressing these issues requires a multi-faceted strategy involving teachers and educators responsible for curriculum development, as well as the rest of the community, to ensure the development and implementation of age-appropriate resources that provide students with the knowledge they need to know how to behave in relationships.



Addressing this issue at an early age allows for appropriate cognitive and spiritual development in conjunction with the proper development of a personality that respects the rights of peers.



CAUSES

Influence of media

The media have a major influence on shaping the social attitudes and behaviours of children and young people, including in relation to gender issues, affectivity and relationships. The role of the media in issues of sexual harassment by peers in elementary school is complex and can contribute to the distortion of pupils' perceptions and behaviour.

The media often perpetuates stereotypical portrayals of gender roles, reinforcing traditional norms that can contribute to power imbalances and the development of maladjusted personalities that perpetuate old stereotypes and use "harassment as a coping mechanism" (Wikström, 2019, p. 32). These portrayals can affect how students perceive appropriate behaviour in relationships, potentially normalising aggressive or disrespectful actions.

On the other hand, the widespread sexualization of media content can lead to students being exposed to explicit and age-inappropriate content. This can reduce students' sensitivity to the seriousness of sexual harassment and lead to a culture where inappropriate comments, actions or gestures are seen as acceptable.

The media's influence on body image can also lead to a general feeling of inadequacy and insecurity among students. Sexual harassment among peers can be related to body image-based power dynamics, where students use inappropriate behaviour as a means of asserting control or conforming to social expectations.



INFLUENCE OF MEDIA

The democratisation of social media is leading to new dimensions of sexual harassment by peers. Cyberbullying, fueled by online platforms, can amplify the negative effects of harassment by reaching a larger audience, faster and completely uncontrolled. The massive use of smartphones with direct access to various instant communication platforms also has serious consequences when, for example, photos or videos with sexual content are disseminated without consent. For Budde et al. (2022), this practise, referred to as sexting, is the starting point for the violation of sexual boundaries. Online media platforms can also be a means of distributing inappropriate content, contributing to an unhealthy online environment for students.

Unhealthy relationship dynamics are often romanticised in the media, including elements of control, domination, and disrespect. Students exposed to these narratives can internalise these behaviours as acceptable and even appropriate, influencing their interactions with peers and contributing to an environment that fosters bullying.

Addressing the misinformation spread by the media about the characteristics of healthy relationships and combating sexual harassment among peers requires action on multiple levels:

- Promote media literacy education: integrate media literacy education into the curriculum to help students critically analyse and deconstruct the messages disseminated by the media. This will enable them to engage responsibly with media content and recognise harmful stereotypes.
- Invite speakers and organise workshops: Invite experts who study media influence or psychologists to host workshops for teachers on the impact of media on student behaviour. Understanding these dynamics will enable teachers to proactively address the influence of media in the classroom.



INFLUENCE OF MEDIA

Use of media in the classroom. Using media content in the classroom as a basis for debates about gender stereotypes, healthy relationships, and consent. This interactive approach allows educators to guide students in deconstructing media narratives and understanding their influence.

Involve parents or guardians. Have open communication with parents or guardians about the role of media in shaping opinions. Provide resources and offer workshops for parents to regulate access to media use at home to encourage a collaborative effort to mitigate negative influences.

Create positive media narratives. Encourage students to produce their own media stories that break down stereotypes and promote positive relationship dynamics. In this way, they can actively contribute to media culture and develop a sense of initiative in creating narratives.

Finally, it is important to recognise that managing the influence of media is key for teachers trying to create a classroom environment that counteracts the negative effects of media on peer sexual harassment. By promoting media literacy and critical thinking, teachers can empower students to navigate the complex media landscape and develop healthy behaviours around relationships and respect.



CAUSES

Peer pressure

Peer pressure is a powerful social influence that contributes significantly to the occurrence of peer sexual harassment in elementary schools. Understanding the dynamics of peer pressure is critical for educators who want to create an environment that discourages inappropriate behaviour and fosters respectful relationships.

Peer pressure usually stems from a desire to conform to the social norms of a group of peers. In the context of peer sexual harassment, students may engage in inappropriate behaviour in order to be accepted and fit into a group or to avoid social exclusion. Teachers need to recognise the influence of social norms on student behaviour.

Hierarchies and power imbalances within peer groups can exacerbate peer pressure dynamics. Students may feel compelled to adopt inappropriate behaviours in order to maintain or increase their status within the group. Educators should be aware of these power dynamics and work to create an inclusive and supportive classroom climate.

Peer pressure related to sexual harassment often results from a lack of understanding or disregard for personal boundaries. Students can engage in inappropriate actions without realising the potential harm they are causing. Teachers and educators play a key role in teaching healthy boundaries and promoting empathy among students.

Fear of social consequences such as humiliation or isolation can cause students to participate in or tolerate inappropriate behaviour. Teachers must create a culture that encourages open communication and ensures that students feel safe to report instances of harassment without fear of retaliation.

Gender norms in peer groups can contribute to pressure on students to conform to stereotypical roles. For example, boys may feel pressured to show dominance or aggression or to hide their feelings in order to conform to traditional masculinity. Teachers and educators need to challenge these gender norms and promote a broader understanding of individual expression to combat stereotypes that are sometimes passed down from generation to generation.

PEER PRESSURE

In order to counter the peer pressure that is perpetuated by stereotypes in many societies, measures must be taken at various levels:

Promote individuality. Encourage students to express their individuality and not accept stereotypical gender roles. Promote diversity in the classroom to create an environment where students feel accepted for who they are and not who others expect them to be.

Build positive relationships between peers. Fostering positive relationships between peers, encouraging teamwork, collaboration and essentially mutual respect. Emphasising the importance of empathy and understanding, creating a culture where students support each other rather than pressuring their peers to behave inappropriately.

Create role-play scenarios. Use role play to simulate situations where peer pressure is exerted. This interactive approach allows students to practise assertiveness and refusal and to intervene as a witness. Teachers and educators can lead discussions on how to effectively resist negative peer pressure.

Encourage open dialogue about boundaries.

Encourage open dialogue about personal boundaries, agreements, and mutual respect in the classroom. Create a safe environment where students can share their thoughts and concerns so teachers can clear up misunderstandings and foster healthy relationship dynamics.

Encourage peer mentoring programmes.

Implement peer mentoring programmes where older students can offer guidance and support to younger peers. This creates a positive influence within the peer group and helps bridge communication gaps between students and teachers.

Therefore, in order to create a safe and inclusive learning environment, it is imperative to recognise and address the impact of peer pressure on peer sexual harassment. Teachers can use proactive strategies and open, healthy communication to help students resist negative peer pressure and contribute to a culture of respect and understanding in the classroom, positively shaping the personalities of their students.



CAUSES

Lack of education about age-appropriate relationships, boundaries & consent

Healthy relationships are necessary for a good and happy life. It is widely recognized that the quality of relationships with peers, friends, parents, siblings, classmates, boyfriends, girlfriends, etc. is a strong and important predictor of an individual's development and well-being. Indeed, the ability to have positive relationships is central to good physical, emotional and mental health (Biddle & Asare, 2011). Over the past two centuries, the institution of the family has changed dramatically, yet our views and expectations of relationships within the family and society in general have not kept pace with these changes.

Most importantly, we continue to rely primarily on our instincts to recognize and develop healthy relationships. This is especially problematic in our attempts to address the inappropriate behaviors we see and experience in relationships, and we are often content to only look at whether the people in the relationships are safe.

No longer is our ability to find the healthiest relationship, with our family and friends, only based on who is close to the ideal with the greatest survival skills. It is no longer only based on who can suit our basic needs for security and satisfaction, while also being the most fun, comfortable, interesting, and exciting to be with. To ensure healthy relationships move beyond the dangers, with respectful, honest, equal, fair, and caring involvement by those who are physically and emotionally present, we all need to be well educated on what to look for in self and others, when to draw the lines, and how to react to those who disagree with our behavior lest we contribute to the many instances of unhealthy relationships we experience – avoiding a potential threat rather than enjoying a mutual benefit (Ai et al., 2021; Hadar et al., 2020).

We also need relationships to enhance our living, work, play, and worship. To ensure these benefits, society needs wellness education, in its most basic physical, mental, emotional, and social contexts to unravel its many benefits, threats, and tools.

LACK OF EDUCATION ABOUT AGE-APPROPRIATE RELATIONSHIPS, BOUNDARIES & CONSENT

Understanding Age-Appropriate Relationships

To help students develop healthy and respectful relationship skills, it is helpful to understand what age-appropriate relationship skills are. The following are relationship skills for various age groups that can be turned into age-appropriate lessons. When we refer to young students here, we are referring to them in the context of elementary school (Ball et al., 2024).

Age-appropriate relationship skills for young elementary students include demonstrating control, sharing, showing respect, waiting and taking turns, showing empathy, showing kindness, cooperating, and communicating effectively.

These social-emotional skills should be acquired. It should be noted that these skills are not unique to young elementary students, but the way in which these skills develop varies with age (Malti & Noam, 2016).

Skills begin to expand in pre-puberty. These include young student skills, but also the ability to work independently and in a group, understanding conflict, the ability to recognize what is acceptable and what is unacceptable, and making positive choices. As students enter pre-puberty, self-esteem should foster these skills as they become stronger.

Adolescent students expand age-appropriate social-emotional skills, including understanding different types of relationships, dealing with relationship termination, and strategies and coping skills for effective intervention. This is when students can anticipate what might happen in a situation before it occurs, consider the immediate and future consequences of their actions and the actions of others, know how to recognize negative, abusive behaviors, and refrain from participating in such behaviors. Finally, students who suspect abuse dare to seek the support of an adult (Madany et al., 2016).

Establishing Boundaries and Consent

Promoting healthy relationships teaches children to set boundaries and helps them recognize when contact is drifting into unhealthy territory (Flecha et al., 2021). By encouraging open communication, children can feel empowered to express discomfort or concerns. For example, in a healthy environment, children can disclose cases of abuse to trusted adults. Consent, whether physical, emotional or digital, is crucial. Teaching consent in various areas of life, including digital content and personal, emotional, financial and medical situations, is important. This education empowers teens to recognize and respect boundaries, which leads to safer relationships overall.



EFFECTS

Introduction to Effects

The second theoretical part of the guide contains a detailed description and analysis of the effects of sexual harassment among students. In particular, the thematic section on impact is divided into five subsections that also reflect the areas of students' lives that are impacted by sexual harassment behaviour. The theoretical section discusses issues of emotional and psychological distress, the ways in which harassment can cause long-term trauma to underage students, and what signs educators can look for to recognise such behaviours. It describes the difficulties the victim may face at the learning level as a result of the harassment and how a teacher can practically help. It answers questions such as whether bullying can lead to physical harm or social isolation, how it affects the student's wellbeing and what happens to their lives in the long term. How can a teacher create a safe space to interact with students? In this module, teachers will be fully informed about the effects of sexual harassment on their students based on current literature and learn how to practically help victims of such behaviour.

EFFECTS

Emotional and psychological harm

It has been postulated that sexual harassment has extremely negative consequences for the emotional health of victims. The residual effect is a diminished sense of self-worth that results in the functioning of everyday activities being severely impaired. Victims' experiences bring with them low self-esteem and impaired body image, resulting in low self-worth.

Stress and depression are among the predominant emotions, and victims tend to lose themselves in the incidents. This means that even the simplest actions are extremely stressful, so much so that their lives can be described as purgatory. Said fears and mistrust are the result and affect their interpersonal relationships.

Notions of guilt and shame are also common, as the person being harassed usually feels that they deserve the harassment in some way. Stress can be triggered by events reminiscent of the harassment, which in turn causes stress. In addition, temper can rise due to the victim's exposure to aggression and stress, which is reflected in their interactions with others and their overall mental state.



EMOTIONAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL HARM

Negative effects on the development of the brain and nervous system are also observed when the victims are young. These have certain consequences that make a person more prone to anxiety, depression and various other mental problems such as drug addiction, personality disorders and even suicidal thoughts and gestures. Another sad reality is the self-mutilation of victims and the search for methods to cope with their increasing feelings and mental suffering.

Thought disorder and depersonalization, a form of psychological defense, can develop and lead to impairment of the mind, personality and environment.

This alienation can be a major problem for victims, especially in terms of healing, as they are unable to interact appropriately with their environment because their emotions and mental state are also impaired.

Some physical abnormalities are also observed in victims, such as loss of bowel control, weight changes such as extreme obesity or extreme emaciation and some other associated impairments. Nightmares and poor concentration are other common symptoms that inevitably occur in victims, affecting their sleep and normal activities. These signs and effects give a clear picture of the severity and complex impact that sexual harassment can have on victims.

Sexual harassment has serious consequences that can ultimately affect the rest of a person's life. On the one hand, the general consequences include exclusion from good performance at school, internships and other educational endeavors. On the other hand, there are people who go to extremes to cope with the situation. Adapting to school becomes difficult, and those affected suffer from distractibility, truancy and strained student relationships, for example by bullying their classmates or being bullied themselves and becoming frustrated and restricted as a result.

Pathological withdrawal can also be observed, with victims either seeking adult supervision or, on the contrary, avoiding it. This behavior is an adaptation mechanism that has a negative impact on the child's socialization, including interaction with caregivers. Sexual harassment has devastating effects on children's mental health over a long period of time. It affects their ability to lead a fulfilling life because they cannot have confidence in themselves and their feelings. Many of them are in constant fear of being exploited again and therefore withdraw from home and school.



EMOTIONAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL HARM

The impact on their love or sex life is profound, as victims struggle with major intimacy and trust issues. This also affects their social relationships: Many of the victims feel lonely, lack trust in other people and have problems forming close bonds. This leads to isolation, especially in social settings, and can result in some of them being at risk of attacking themselves or others psychologically or physically as they have no respect for themselves or other people.

This has significant short-term consequences for victims, including loss of identity, particularly because victims do not recognize their needs and do not know how to meet them. When they do not address their personal needs, their emotional and psychological problems worsen, making healing a slow and arduous process.

Sexual harassment affects the decision making of students, teachers and anyone in the affected area, leading to unpleasant consequences such as suicide, substance abuse and running away in students. These behaviors indicate problems with affect modulation and resilience.



Signs for teachers

Teachers should be aware of these possible signs of sexual harassment:

- Reluctance to go to school
- Poorer grades
- Unjustified absences from class
- Eating alone or very little
- Frequent loss of objects
- Falling asleep in class
- Frequent headaches or stomach aches
- Difficulties with homework
- Fear of being alone on the street
- Changes in behavior: quiet, cheeky or anxious
- Sudden mood swings: distant or sad
- Flinching at movements
- Refusal to participate in sports activities
- Self-destructive tendencies.

Sexual harassment has a serious impact on children's mental health and therefore on their self-esteem, self-confidence and relationships. It is therefore important to recognize these warning signs in order to help a child and prevent negative consequences for their development.



EFFECTS

Academic difficulties

How peer-on-peer sexual harassment can affect a student's academic performance and engagement

Sexual harassment is a distressing aspect of school-based gender-based violence that significantly affects students' academic performance. The Global Education Monitoring Report team and the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (2015) emphasise in their seventeenth policy paper that SRGBV can seriously damage children's health and ability to learn, and hinders attendance and learning. However, there is little data on sexual harassment in the school environment, either due to a lack of research efforts or because victims remain silent. Consequently, there is insufficient information on the actual impact of this phenomenon on school participation and students' academic performance. In particular, 61% of girls who experienced sexual harassment had a negative impact on their school performance or dropped out of school (Global Education Monitoring Report Team & United Nations Girls' Education Initiative, 2015, p. 11).

Sexual harassment is considered an integral part of the educational process at all levels, from elementary school to university, as Diema Konlan and Mavis Dangah (2023) state. The victim experiences agitation, pressure, trauma and stress, resulting in a reluctance to attend school and a decline in interest in education, learning and extracurricular activities. Gradually, the victim's academic performance declines (ibid.).

An American survey shows that 8 out of 10 students between the ages of 13 and 17 have been sexually harassed in some way during their school years. Students reported feelings of anger and shame, which are directly related to the impact of harassment on academic performance. 2 in 10 students reported unwillingness to participate in class and difficulty concentrating, particularly among those who had experienced physical harassment (Sexual Harassment – Safe Learning Environments for All Students - IDRA, 2018).

ACADEMIC DIFFICULTIES

Challenges that harassed students may face in their studies

Very often students get the feeling that their complaint is not heard or that sexual harassment is considered normal (Bannister Dean, 2019). When it comes to verbal violence, it is often seen as a joke among peers, and when girls report inappropriate behaviour, teachers' response may be limited to a stereotypical statement such as "boys will be boys" (Moorhead, 2019). In each case, the girls who experienced some form of harassment reported feeling objectified and disrespected, which impacted on their general wellbeing ('We Don't Tell Our Teachers' Experiences of Peer-On-Peer Sexual Harassment among Secondary School Pupils in Wales, 2021).

Sexual harassment can lead to anxiety and depression, forcing the student to withdraw from the school environment (Ginestra, 2020). In most cases, sexual harassment has a long-term impact on students' self-confidence, their participation in the educational process and their relationships with others (ibid.). It is a situation that forces victims to skip school and isolate themselves, can trigger thoughts of self-harm and generally affects the wellbeing of the individual (ibid.). A fundamental problem faced by students who are sexually harassed at school is that they do not report the behaviour to their teachers as it either occurs frequently or is ignored by school staff (Everybody's affected peer on on-peer sexual harassment among learners - Senedd Commission, 2022).



ACADEMIC DIFFICULTIES

Insights into how teachers can identify and support students facing academic challenges due to harassment

Institutions and teachers should be aware that sexual harassment is a phenomenon that can occur between two or more children of any gender and age inside and outside school. Be vigilant to recognise behaviours that fall within the spectrum of sexual harassment and can be addressed because they are physical in nature, such as pulling down a child's trousers, lifting a skirt, putting on bras, or grabbing breasts and genitals. As mentioned earlier, victims of sexual harassment experience a decline in academic performance due to stress and painful feelings, which is solid evidence to further investigate the child's situation. Even if there are no reports of such incidents, it does not mean that they do not exist, they may just not be reported. (Part Five: Child-on-child sexual violence and sexual harassment, n.d.)

School policies should no longer just react to sexual harassment, but take a proactive role. A monthly mental health evaluation of students should be mandatory because, as mentioned above, it can take a long time for a harassed student to report an incident. In addition, teachers need to create a sense of "community" in classes that creates both a friendlier environment for students and a relationship of trust between teacher and student. In addition, students' families are usually a force to be reckoned with.

Schools should organise educational events for parents to educate them about bullying patterns, both from the perspective of the victim and the perpetrator. Here, too, a relationship of trust between parents and teachers is essential in order to report the incident in good time and act accordingly. Teaching staff should be as discreet as possible so that both parents and students feel safe if they need advice or want to make a complaint (Everybody's affected peer on on-peer sexual harassment among learners - Senedd Commission, 2022).



EFFECTS

Physical harm

Victims of sexual harassment may suffer different types of physical injuries as a result of the aggression, and the severity of these injuries will depend on the specific nature of the harassment. According to a study carried out by Vega-Gea et al. (2016), sexual harassment between peers manifests itself differently between boys and girls. While girls are more prone to verbal aggression, physical aggression is more prevalent and more serious among boys. Prevention of sexual harassment and adequate support for victims are essential to minimise the physical impact of this form of violence. Teachers and educators should be able to recognise when they are dealing with physical harm resulting from sexual harassment between peers in a school context.

The physical injuries can be diverse and have different consequences:

Injuries due to physical aggression by others. Physical aggression can result in contusions, scratches, cuts or even more serious injuries, depending on the nature of the aggressor's attack. These injuries not only cause immediate pain, but can also have long-term impacts on the victim's physical health. These can include fractures, soft tissue damage or other injuries that require medical attention and rehabilitation. Victims can sometimes react physically to defend themselves against harassment, leading to a cycle of retaliatory behaviour. This escalation can result in harm to both the victim and the aggressor.

Self-harm. Victims of sexual harassment can sometimes resort to self-destructive behaviour, such as self-harm, as a way of dealing with the trauma.

Health problems that are an immediate consequence of mental complications. Stress and anxiety resulting from sexual harassment can manifest itself physically, through frequent headaches, gastrointestinal problems, muscle tension, fatigue, sleep disorders or cardiovascular problems.

Injuries resulting from performance expectations. In certain societies, boys are expected to display certain behaviours, which Wikström (2019) calls toxic masculinity. This expectation can result in risky behaviour that can cause acute physical injuries, such as muscle strains, sprains or fractures, which occur, for example, due to pressure for athletic performance or risky activities.

PHYSICAL HARM

It is crucial to recognise the importance of challenging and changing harmful gender norms, which are often perpetuated from generation to generation, in order to promote a healthy and safe environment for all children. Interventions that promote a broader understanding of masculinity and femininity, allowing emotional expression and discouraging harmful behaviour, are essential to prevent short- and long-term damage.

In order to tackle sexual harassment between peers, it is essential to adopt multi-level measures:

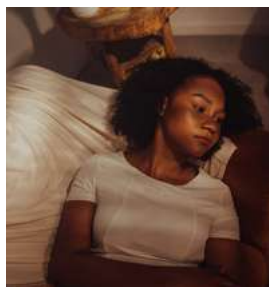
Educate for gender equality. Use educational materials that promote gender equality from the early years, by including materials that question gender stereotypes and highlight the diversity of competences, abilities and interests of children, regardless of their sex.

Promote emotional expression. create environments that stimulate all children to freely express their emotions in a positive way. To do this, it is important to discourage the idea that certain emotions are exclusive to a given gender.

Promote diversity inclusion. Present a variety of role models and stories that highlight the diversity of gender identities, family structures and social roles. This will allow children to understand that there is no single "right" way to be a boy or a girl.

Implement conflict resolution programs. Implement programs that allow training conflict resolution skills from childhood. This helps children develop healthy strategies for dealing with conflict, reducing the propensity for aggressive or harmful behavior.

Create support groups. Establish support groups or school clubs that promote gender equality and provide a safe space for discussions about mutual respect, healthy relationships and preventing harassment.



PHYSICAL HARM

In conclusion, the prevention of sexual harassment from an early age involves a multilayered approach that tackles harmful gender norms and fosters the establishment of healthy and respectful relationships. Schools should focus on creating an environment that is propitious to the development of children who are able to build relationships based on mutual respect. By adopting the recommended procedures, it is possible to create a solid foundation for the promotion of gender equality and the prevention of sexual harassment, enabling children to develop respectful and healthy relationships throughout their lives. To this end, it is essential to ensure investment in educational programmes and resources that promote a positive and inclusive understanding of gender identities, empowering new generations to challenge harmful stereotypes and contribute to a more equal and safe future for all.



EFFECTS

Social isolation

Sexual harassment among peers can have detrimental effects on students' social and emotional domains. Of particular concern is the impact it can have on social isolation. This phenomenon, resulting from the traumatic experience of harassment, can trigger a number of negative consequences that affect not only social interaction at school, but also the emotional and psychological well-being of the students involved.

Victims of peer sexual harassment may find themselves forced to withdraw from social interactions and friendships, which has a significant negative impact on their emotional well-being and social development. This separation can occur in the following ways, among others:

-Self-imposed isolation: in this type of isolation, it is the victims themselves who avoid going to certain places that they consider favourable for sexual harassment and consciously distance themselves from potential sources of harassment. This isolation can expose the victim to moments of loneliness, resulting in a lack of emotional support and impaired development of social skills. It is sometimes easier for students to submit to this isolation than to feel compelled to seek help for their problem.

-Loss of trust in interpersonal relationships: Experiencing sexual harassment can shake the victim's confidence in social interactions, making them less willing to form new friendships or trust others. As a result, the harassed person is less willing to trust others in their relationships, which can lead to significant psychological barriers to building positive and lasting relationships.



SOCIAL ISOLATION

This issue is due to the victim's predisposition to extend a problem with a specific person or group to the whole sphere of relationships they may have or develop.

Fear of Judgement and Stigmatisation. The risk of being judged or being stigmatised by peers can make victims move away from their close friendship circle in an effort to avoid discrimination and scrutiny. In this case, as in the previous case, there is an extrapolation of a specific, identified problem to the whole range of friendships they may have. This risk of being the target of judgement by other colleagues can cause social anxiety and a decline in participation in social activities, with consequent social isolation.

Generalised distrust. Victims can develop a generalised distrust of others, including colleagues and friends who are not responsible for any type of harassment, due to traumatic experiences with other colleagues. Mistrust can damage existing relationships, prevent new friendships from forming and contribute to feelings of alienation. The fear that harassment could become widespread among friends and colleagues leads the victim to trigger a process of mistrust, in which they impose social self-isolation.

Mental health effects with repercussions on social activities. Sexual harassment can trigger mental health problems such as depression and anxiety, which in turn affect the willingness to participate in social activities. Poor mental health can be a significant obstacle to social engagement, leading to isolation and emotional distress.

Refusal to go into certain spaces. The fear of meeting the aggressor in specific spaces, such as school corridors or common areas, can lead the victim to avoid going into certain areas of the school. This can limit the victim's participation in school and social activities, further contributing to their isolation.

Decline in family relationships. The experience of sexual harassment can create tensions in family relationships, leading the victim to distance themselves from family members. Detachment from family relationships can deprive the victim of a crucial source of support and understanding and prevent the problem from being detected early.



SOCIAL ISOLATION

The recognition of these mechanisms of social distancing is key to the detection of the problem and the development of strategies to provide effective support, promoting the victims' reintegration into a healthy and supportive social environment, i.e. their full social reintegration.

Teachers play a fundamental role in promoting students' emotional well-being, especially when it comes to helping them overcome social isolation resulting from sexual harassment. As well as being able to detect the source of social isolation when it is associated with problems of harassment, it is also imperative to know strategies to combat the problem at its source and support students in rebuilding healthy relationships. To this end, it is important to:

Create a secure atmosphere in the classrooms and on the school grounds. The creation of a school environment in which students can feel safe and in which they can be confident in voicing their worries and experiences free from fear of judgement is important. This is essential if the problem of isolation is to be avoided from the beginning.

Individualised support. After identifying students who may be facing social isolation due to sexual harassment, it is important to provide individualised support to ensure that the victim feels they have someone they can trust to whom they can reveal their problems and concerns.

Referring to specific professional support. When these services exist in the school, it is important to make the most of them to help students who are showing problems of social isolation as a result of harassment.

Carry out confidence (re)building activities. Develop activities that promote the building or rebuilding of confidence and social skills, such as team-building exercises and cooperative activities. Strengthening self-confidence ends up having repercussions in terms of re-establishing previously existing social relationships.



SOCIAL ISOLATION

Promoting anti-bullying campaigns. The promotion of anti-bullying awareness campaigns that tackle not only sexual harassment but also prejudicial behaviour in general, are ways of building a culture of mutual respect and peer support and discouraging unsuitable behaviour on the side of pupils.

Intervene immediately. In cases of sexual harassment between peers, the speed with which the problem is detected and acted upon is crucial to guaranteeing the quality of the intervention or response.

The above orientations are key to building significant, safe and supportive school environments, which respond to the needs of all students. Only in these favourable environments will students be able to develop lasting and healthy relationships, in which everyone sees diversity in a positive perspective.



EFFECTS

Disruption of normal cognitive & emotional development

Sexual harassment, especially peer harassment in schools, hampers the cognitive and emotional development of children and adolescents. Their learning, growth and relationships are affected by this disruption. To address this pervasive problem, educators and policymakers need to understand how sexual harassment affects cognitive and emotional development.

Cognitive impact

Sexual harassment can severely impact the cognitive development of children and adolescents. Stress, worry and anxiety increase in victims of harassment.

Negative emotions can impair concentration, memory and academic performance. Sexual harassment can reduce academic performance and motivation, leading to truancy and lower educational attainment, according to research.

Sexual harassment also affects perceptions outside the classroom. Victims can internalize shame and worthlessness and develop a poor self-perception, which can lower their self-esteem.

Internalizing negative thoughts can inhibit cognitive development and limit potential.

Victims of sexual harassment can suffer emotional and cognitive damage. Adolescents who experience sexual harassment can develop despair, anxiety, PTSD, and feelings of isolation and loneliness. These emotional problems can affect their mental health and their ability to build trusting relationships and navigate social interactions for years to come.

Emotional impact

The psychological effects of sexual harassment on young victims can be severe and long-lasting. They often experience intense and profound feelings of shame, guilt, and embarrassment that penetrate their very core. These overwhelming emotions worsen their distress, perpetuating a never-ending cycle of silence and self-blame that imprisons their fragile psyche. The weight of this burden can become insurmountable, crushing their ability to regulate the tumultuous storm of emotions that swirl within them, leaving them vulnerable and defenseless against the relentless waves of stress that crash upon their fragile shores.

DISRUPTION OF NORMAL COGNITIVE AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In response to this emotional turmoil, victims may seek solace in unhealthy coping mechanisms, such as the dark abysses of substance abuse or the dangerous path of self-harm. These escape routes offer them a temporary reprieve, a fleeting sense of control in the midst of chaos, and a brief moment of relief from the incessant torment engulfing their fragile souls. However, these temporary reliefs are only an illusion, hiding deeper psychological wounds that require immediate attention and unwavering support. Furthermore, the emotional impact of sexual harassment goes far beyond the personal suffering of those affected and reaches into the depths of their social relationships. Victims are trapped in a maze of mistrust and struggle to form meaningful relationships with peers and authority figures. The walls they erect as a shield against potential harm only further isolate them, increasing their emotional distress and exacerbating their feelings of loneliness and alienation. With each passing day, they slip further into the abyss of isolation, separated from their former support networks and cut off from the vibrant web of human relationships that produce joy and fulfillment. This deep loneliness intensifies their emotional pain, erodes their self-esteem and suffocates their flickering hope, leaving them drowning in a sea of despair. Left untreated, these people run the risk of being sidelined and overlooked by a society that does not recognize the depth of their emotional wounds. Their cries for help, often hidden behind the masks they wear, go unheard and unanswered, leaving them stranded in a bleak landscape where healing and personal growth become impossible goals. It is imperative that we intervene quickly and carefully to ensure that no young victim falls prey to neglect and indifference, for their emotional well-being and future success are at stake. In summary, the disruption of cognitive and emotional development caused by sexual harassment is a serious and urgent problem that requires urgent attention. It is the responsibility of educators, policy makers and stakeholders to come together and find a way to create a safe and nurturing school environment that is free from the pervasive threat of harassment and abuse. We must address the profound cognitive and emotional effects head on, with a comprehensive arsenal of prevention and intervention strategies at our disposal. Through these concerted efforts, we can foster a culture that upholds the pillars of respect, empathy and inclusivity, not only protecting each student's emotional well-being, but also nurturing their potential for future success and personal growth.



TYPES

Introduction to Types

The third theoretical part focuses on the types of sexual harassment that can occur in the school environment. Reference is made to verbal, non-verbal, visual and physical harassment. At the beginning of the analysis of each type of harassment, a description of what behaviours belong to each category is provided to raise teachers' awareness of these behaviours. The second part of the discussion of each type of harassment explains the reasons why these behaviours fall within the spectrum of sexual harassment and contribute to creating a hostile environment for victims. The final part of the analysis of each type of behaviour will focus on the effects that sexual harassment has on students, whether psychological, social, or in terms of long-term effects that may impact their well-being.

TYPES

Verbal Harassment

Sexual harassment often takes a verbal form if we refer to the website "[Question Sexualité](#)". Its limits with sexual violence are not always visible. However, the verbal forms of sexual harassment may be the first form of its emergence. The definition of gender-based or sexual violence is the fact that a person imposes a sexual statement (oral or written), behaves in a sexual way or makes a sexual contact on another person.

According to this same website (n.d), "In harassment cases this violence is recurrent: remarks or behaviour with a sexual connotation are imposed on a person, repeatedly)".

According to the European Council (n.d.), the following statements are identified as verbal sexual forms:

- making sexual comments about a person's body;
- making remarks or innuendoes of a sexual nature;
- asking questions about sexual fantasies, preferences or history;
- asking personal questions about a person's social or sexual life;
- making sexual comments about a person's clothing, anatomy or appearance;
- repeatedly trying to date a person who is not interested;
- telling lies or spreading rumours about a person's sex life or sexual preferences.

These insults are frequent in school environment and classes in high schools, middle schools and primary schools even if for the latter level, there is not a good body of statistics.

In 2001, 1400 cases of sexual violences were reported in schools thanks to the app "SIGNA" from the French education board.

They may occur in the playground or in class or even in the toilets where some boys may enter. This form of sexual Harassment is often under the form of sexist remarks, for example comments on clothes.

Sometimes, they are said to be hardly visible and unrepeatable (Fize, 2003).

In France, sometimes the verbal language of boys towards girls goes beyond the levels of good manners that are desired for healthy coexistence in society.

Indeed, according to Mojdehi (2018), talking about street harassment, mutual insults between boys and girls of a sexual nature end up being too serious in terms of the language used.

VERBAL HARASSMENT

There is a hyper-sexualisation of young girls. The injunction to heterosexuality, where women's sexuality is controlled and limited to the strict framework of a stable couple, weighs more.

Women are reduced to their sexuality: they are "first and foremost and sexually [women]" (Henry 2011). For this to happen, they have to be physically desirable, hence the insults about their clothes, for example.

How rumours about sexual activity can be a form of verbal harassment.

In "les pièges de la mixité scolaire" on p. 161, it is stated that because of reputation, relationships between girls and boys from the same housing estate must be avoided they can make you look like an easy mark. The risk is that you'll have problems with your reputation, and even if the relationship is based on rumour, that rumour is enough to establish a bad reputation.

In "Les violences sexistes à l'école", Debarbieux, E., Alessandrin, A., Dagorn, J, and Gaillard, O. (2018) gave us another testimony that echoes the first one: "some boys told my mother that I was sleeping around. She was very strict and believed them... After that I was punished, she hit me.

No matter how much I defended myself, how much I shouted my innocence, nobody believed me. To such an extent that this reputation followed me everywhere. The girls in 3rd grade hit me, knocked me down and made fun of me thinking I was having sex with their friends. Some thought I was ugly, that I was a slut... Of course, I didn't have any friends, I wasn't good company."

So rumours may be a pretext to be sexually harassed, this fact can lead women to impose self-limits if we refer to a young girl testimony in "les pièges de la mixité scolaire": girls have to calculate everything : their itinerary, the way they dress, the way they talk, the way their walk (Le monde, 2003, p. 162).



TYPES

Nonverbal Harassment

Nonverbal harassment encompasses a wide range of behaviors that express hostility, intimidation or disrespect without the use of words. Even when it is not explicit verbal communication, nonverbal harassment can be just as harmful and disruptive, creating a toxic environment that undermines an individual's sense of safety and well-being.

Understanding nonverbal harassment

Nonverbal harassment manifests itself in various forms, including gestures, facial expressions, body language and physical proximity. These behaviors are often subtle and can be easily dismissed or overlooked, making them insidious and difficult to combat.

For example, persistent stares, leers or suggestive gestures can convey sexual objectification and undermine a person's sense of autonomy and dignity. Invading personal space, blocking a person's path or aggressive gestures can also evoke feelings of fear, powerlessness and vulnerability.

In addition, non-verbal harassment can be particularly pronounced in digital environments, where individuals may experience cyberstalking, unwanted explicit images or invasive monitoring of their online activities. These forms of harassment can invade privacy and undermine an individual's sense of safety, both online and offline.

To recognise and combat this pervasive form of misconduct, it is important to understand the nuances of nonverbal harassment.

By recognizing the impact of nonverbal cues on victims' psychological well-being and social dynamics, educators and policymakers can develop proactive strategies to effectively prevent and respond to nonverbal harassment.

Dealing with nonverbal harassment

Dealing with nonverbal harassment requires a multifaceted approach that includes raising awareness, promoting empathy and setting clear boundaries. Educators play a critical role in promoting a culture of respect and inclusion in which all forms of harassment are unequivocally condemned and addressed.

Training programs and awareness initiatives can help individuals recognize the signs of nonverbal harassment and understand its impact on victims. By empowering bystanders to intervene safely and supportively, we can create a community where harassment is not tolerated and where everyone feels empowered to speak out against injustice. In addition, it is important to establish clear policies and procedures for reporting and addressing non-verbal harassment. Victims need to feel supported and able to seek help without fear of retaliation or dismissal. By providing reporting and support options, schools can create a safe and responsive environment that prioritizes the well-being of all students.

NONVERBAL HARASSMENT

Cultivating a Culture of Respect and Accountability

Establishing a culture of respect and accountability is critical to effectively addressing nonverbal harassment in school communities. It is important that schools take proactive measures to promote empathy, solidarity and assertive intervention to create an environment where any form of harassment is not tolerated. By empowering both students and teachers to intervene and providing unwavering support to victims, schools can significantly disrupt harmful behaviors and instill a deep sense of responsibility within the community. This creates a climate in which the rights and wellbeing of all people are protected and a safe and inclusive learning environment is promoted. Encouraging open dialog and facilitating meaningful discussions about the consequences of such actions helps to promote understanding and empathy and ultimately challenge harmful attitudes and behaviors. By engaging students and teachers in conversations that promote awareness and advocate for respect, schools can cultivate a positive social climate that fosters peer support and shared responsibility. Through these exchanges, individuals can develop a deeper understanding of the impact of their actions and words, leading to greater accountability and a willingness to stand up to nonverbal harassment. In addition, ongoing evaluation and refinement of school policies and practices is critical to ensure that they meet the changing needs of students and teachers. Schools should regularly evaluate the effectiveness of their anti-harassment initiatives and solicit feedback from students, parents, teachers and staff to identify areas for improvement. Thorough evaluations help schools identify gaps in their policies and practices and allow for necessary adjustments that promote a safer and more inclusive learning environment for all. Comprehensive training for teachers will ensure that they have the tools and knowledge necessary to actively recognize, address and prevent nonverbal harassment. Training programs should focus on raising teachers' awareness of the various forms of nonverbal harassment and provide strategies for effective intervention. By giving teachers the skills and confidence to respond appropriately, schools can address incidents promptly and support victims throughout the resolution process. In addition, comprehensive training enables teachers to act as role models for students and teach them the importance of empathy, respect and responsible behavior.



TYPES

Visual Harassment

Description of what constitutes visual harassment in primary school settings

Zambeta et al. (2017) highlight the diverse manifestations of school harassment among students, which can take various forms and unfold in different settings. Within this spectrum, visual harassment has emerged as a contemporary issue in primary school settings, notably characterised by the circulation of sexual content or rape scenes through smartphones.

A comprehensive definition of visual sexual harassment is provided in the blog post "WHAT IS VISUAL SEXUAL ABUSE?" (2021) by America's leading sexual abuse law firm Manly, Stewart & Finaldi. The post specifies that visual sexual harassment involves compelling an individual, whether adult or child, to witness sexual content without their consent or desire. This includes the exposure of reproductive organs, exhibitionism, dissemination of sexual content in images or videos, gestures, facial expressions, signs or posters, emails, text messages, airdrops, website links, or printed materials like books or magazines containing sexual content (WHAT IS VISUAL SEXUAL ABUSE?, 2021).

In the realm of school violence, Zambeta et al. (2017) emphasize the increased risk posed by cyberspace through online communication.

Harassment can occur in various school settings, such as classrooms, hallways during breaks, and on the playground. Notably, there is limited research on peer-on-peer visual harassment in primary school settings, possibly due to restricted mobile phone use among younger students, as is commonly discouraged in many countries. Existing research primarily focuses on visual sexual harassment among adolescents, college students, and employees.

Data on peer-on-peer visual harassment in primary schools is sparse, but surveys like the one conducted by Gámez-Guadix et al. (2022) shed light on the issue. Their study, which included a sample of 1820 adolescents aged 12 to 17 in central Spain, identified two primary types of visual sexual harassment: sextortion and non-consensual sexting. Sextortion involves threatening victims with the distribution of sexual images to coerce specific actions, while non-consensual sexting entails the unauthorized dissemination of sexual images without the subject's consent.

VISUAL HARASSMENT

How the display of sexual images and offensive web content can be a form of visual harassment?

The display of explicit images and offensive online content can constitute visual harassment, especially when it regards exposure to explicit material that is unfitting for certain audiences, including minors. In the European Union, there are vigorous legal frameworks in place to address the issue, aiming to protect individuals, especially children, from exposure to inappropriate content. Directive 2011/93/EU on combating sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and child pornography serves as a foundation in this regard (2011 O.J. (L 335) 1). This directive establishes rules in regard to the definition of criminal offences and sanctions related to the production, distribution, and possession of child pornography. Article 20 of this directive specifically criminalises offences related to the production and dissemination of child pornography, emphasising the need to protect minors from explicit content (2011 O.J. (L 335) 5). EU laws make it explicitly illegal to show pornography to minors, recognising the potential harm and negative impact it can have on the well-being and development of children. Furthermore, Directive (EU) 2018/1808 amending Directive 2010/13/EU on audiovisual media services provides additional measures to protect minors from harmful content in audiovisual media services, reinforcing the commitment to protect them from inappropriate material (2018 O.J. (L303/69) 1). These laws emphasise the responsibility of adults and entities to prevent the dissemination of explicit material to minors.

Moreover, EU member states typically have laws that specifically prohibit minors from owning or possessing pornographic material. An extensive 123-page article crafted by INHOPE, funded by the EU, offers in-depth insights into the legal landscape across member states.



VISUAL HARASSMENT

This comprehensive resource presents detailed tables for each country, outlining the various forms of visual harassment deemed illegal according to the legislative frameworks of the respective member states (National CSAM Legislation - European Focus, 2022). By imposing legal restrictions on the ownership of pornographic material by minors, EU countries contribute to creating a safer online and offline environment for children, aligning with broader child protection initiatives and standards.



Impact on students and the consequences of exposure to such content

Visual harassment can have profound and lasting effects on primary school students, influencing their emotional well-being, academic performance, and overall development (Gender-based violence in and around schools prevents millions of children worldwide from fulfilling their academic potential 2015). Children at this stage are particularly vulnerable to the negative consequences of exposure to inappropriate visual content, which can range from explicit images to offensive gestures or materials (Protection of children from the harmful impacts of pornography 2021). The impact extends beyond the immediate discomfort, often leading to heightened stress, anxiety, and a sense of insecurity among young students (Perry, 2015).



In the educational context, visual harassment can create a hostile learning environment, hindering the concentration and focus of primary school students (Crowley & Cornell, 2020).



VISUAL HARASSMENT

The exposure to explicit or offensive materials may interfere with their ability to engage in the educational process, potentially affecting academic achievement and overall school experience (Gender-based violence in and around schools prevents millions of children worldwide from fulfilling their academic potential 2015). Additionally, visual harassment can contribute to the erosion of a child's self-esteem and confidence, potentially leading to social withdrawal, diminished participation in classroom activities, and a reluctance to express oneself (Núñez et al., 2021).

Furthermore, the emotional toll of visual harassment can impede the development of healthy interpersonal relationships among primary school students (Pathmendra et al., 2023). Exposure to inappropriate content may contribute to the normalisation of harmful behaviours, affecting the way children interact with their peers (Pathmendra et al., 2023). This can lead to strained relationships, increased instances of bullying, and a negative impact on the overall social dynamics within the primary school environment (Adarsh & Sahoo, 2023). Consequently, addressing visual harassment becomes paramount in fostering a safe and supportive atmosphere conducive to the well-rounded development of primary school students.



TYPES

Physical Harassment

In the school context, physical harassment can assume a range of manifestations, depending on the level of maturity of the pupils, but all equally seen as unacceptable and unhealthy for normal child development and children's well-being.

Some manifestations of physical harassment in a school context may include:

Non-consensual touching, including any type of unwanted or unsolicited physical contact such as hair-pulling, squeezing, abusive touching or any other type of contact that causes discomfort, unease or anxiety to the student.

Inappropriate hugs are considered to be hugs that go beyond the friendly hug so common at these ages. They may have a sexual connotation or leave the child in an uncomfortable situation, feeling that their personal space or boundaries have been crossed.

Pinching of clothing or parts of the body, which is made to cause pain or discomfort or which disturbs the child because they feel the action was inappropriate. These pinches can cause pain or physical discomfort, and can even leave physical scars if done with force or too often.

Undressing or taking clothes off without consent is considered a serious violation of personal boundaries and can cause emotional damage that lasts over time.

Stalking or physical intimidation, which can be done in school areas, can lead to fear and anxiety in the child. In addition to stalking or blocking spaces, this form of harassment can also include violence or non-consensual physical contact.

Teachers, educators, school staff, parents, guardians and the whole family should be on the alert for any signs that the child may show up. It is important that the school environment is always seen as healthy, safe and free from violence. Quick identification of the problem and prompt action are essential if the damage caused by these situations is to be minimised.

Physical harassment can cause emotional damage in addition to physical damage, which is more obvious. Physical damage can occur:

Direct physical injuries, resulting from the contact itself. These injuries can include scratches, cuts, bruises and, in more serious cases, fractures. Depending on the injuries caused, their duration and intensity, some physical problems can last over time and manifest as chronic pain, muscle and bone problems.

PHYSICAL HARASSMENT

- Impairment of physical development, which may manifest itself in delays in motor development or difficulties in carrying out physical activities appropriate to the child's age group.
- Bodily reactions triggered by stress, which can manifest themselves whenever the child is subjected to a situation of fear associated with repeated harassment. These reactions can include increased heart rate, excessive sweating or muscle tension.



Emotional disturbances resulting from physical harassment can occur:

- Anxiety and fear, caused as a reaction to threatening behaviours or the fear of a repetition of episodes of harassment.
- Depression, as a symptom of constant and unnoticed physical harassment.
- Low self-esteem, as a result of a feeling of personal devaluation, responsible for the harassment they have suffered or are suffering.
- Social isolation and loneliness, resulting from the victim's need to withdraw and minimise their social contacts as a way of avoiding the aggressors and other potential aggressors they think may exist.
- Behavioural problems, frequently shown by aggressiveness or irritability, as a consequence of an incapacity to handle one's own emotions.
- Compromised school performance due to concentration problems and lack of motivation to study.
- Long-term emotional trauma, when the consequences of harassment become a psychological and emotional scar on children's lives.
- Self-destructive thinking and behaviour, which in the most severe cases can include the occurrence of suicidal thoughts.



PHYSICAL HARASSMENT

Immediate recognition of the problem, effective action and appropriate support for the victim are essential to minimise the consequences of bullying. The physical and psychological damage is manifold and can be of varying duration. The involvement of all guardians and the family is the key to success. Only through decisive and holistic action can we ensure that the school environment is always a safe place where children have time to be children.



PREVALENCE PER EU COUNTRY

Introduction to Prevalence per EU country

This guide is the result of the collaboration of six partners from five different countries: France/Martinique, Italy, Greece, Portugal and Spain. The section Prevalence by EU country contains a detailed report on specific indicators of sexual harassment by country. It presents surveys and research data that reflect the situation of sexual harassment in each country. It then identifies the factors that lead to the occurrence of the phenomenon in each country, such as the education system, cultural norms and social dynamics. Finally, the initiatives and measures taken in each country to reduce harassment are presented.

PREVALENCE PER EU COUNTRY

France

According to [Infos Violences Femmes Bordeaux site](#), $\frac{1}{4}$ of insults directed at girls are sexist in nature, compared with $\frac{1}{7}$ for boys according to a survey on the school climate and violence in state secondary schools carried out in 2012.

However, according to the same site, the risk of harassment is greater at the end of primary school and in secondary school. Certain forms of violence can also be trivialised in pupils' games (touching genitals, buttocks, etc.).

Figures are summarised in the official framework site [Eduscol](#) which reflects the government's involvement in the present prevention campaign launched in 2020.

According to Eduscol, 40% of female victims of sexual violence were under 15 at the time of the incident, and 16% were teenagers over 15 (source, VIRAGE INED survey, 2016).

In 2019, minors accounted for more than half (55%) of the victims of sexual violence (rape, assault and sexual harassment) known to the security forces. This represents more than 30,000 children and teenagers. Of these minor victims, 80% are girls (Lettre de l'Observatoire national des violences faites aux femmes, 2020).

The prevention campaign is probably a reaction to the prevalence of the phenomenon which tends to grow with the emergence of the internet and social media (Publication of intimate photos, insults, humiliation or harassment on the Internet). The site recognises that young people are particularly exposed to new forms of violence through their daily use of the internet and social networks.

Children have to face sexism very early in life, as society is overwhelmed by stereotypes, for example with the toys they play with (dolls for girl or fire trucks or super hero outfits for boys).

[Question sexualité](#)

Besides, in society, it seems that this sort of violence is rooted in a hierarchical construction of sex: for example, women have lower wages than men, and earn on average 25.7% less than men. Moreover, differences persist in the choice of pathways: girls make up 75% of students in the humanities, and 25% in the basic sciences, which are more prestigious and more lucrative. As far as everyday life is concerned, the distribution of tasks according to their nature is also unequal: men do the gardening and DIY, possibly the shopping, and women do almost everything else...

So, it is stated that inequalities within couples are bound to have a deep influence on the socialisation and education of children. As far as school life is concerned, it turns out that the classroom is not a "neutral" space, and teaching practices are still marked by the differentiated treatment of girls and boys. Through naturalisation habits or as a continuation of family socialisation, schools co-produce the differences and hierarchies between girls and boys.

PREVALENCE PER EU COUNTRY

France

Sociological research since the 80's clearly shows the gendering of interactions at school (Sirota, 1988).

The school experiences of girls and boys show specific characteristics from the age of 5 (Boissieu, 2009). These incipient specificities are then reinforced in primary school and in secondary education. Around the age of 5, pupils already belong to a gendered group.

In everyday primary school life, Sirota (1988) shows that teachers favour and encourage boys' answers, even when they are wrong. An OFCE (L'Observatoire français des conjonctures économiques) (The French Observatory of Economic Conjunctions) study showed that teachers devote around 44% of their time to girls, compared with 56% to boys. At the same time, every boy and girl is forced to construct their personal identity by taking a stand in relation to social expectations traditionally specific to their sex. According to "les pièges de la mixité scolaire", the omnipresence of sexual harassment or violence may come from an academic lack of success for boys and the burden of traditions and culture in some communities. Besides, it is stated that this sort of violence persists as sexuality is omnipresent in society (on tv, radio, magazines, fashion and in advertisement).

So, it is hard to put this aside. According to this book released in 2003, an inquiry revealed that half of year 6 students had already viewed a pornographic film. We can suppose that the situation may not have positively evolved because of the internet now which multiplies temptations:

in Les violences sexistes à l'école Martin and Ruiz (2002) and Sanz Gonzalez (2006) point out that new technologies help to perpetuate machismo and all forms of sexism online: for example, Finkelhor, Turner, Shattuck and Hamby (2013) show that one in six young people are victims of sexual harassment every year in the USA. It is added that girls are particularly victimised in certain ways, with forms of sexism being reproduced online. What happens in France may be compared to this.

One of the other reasons for the prevalence of sexual violence examined in "Les violences sexistes à l'école, une oppression viriliste", is that there is a kind of normal "socialisation" of boys and their "ordinary" behaviour is to fight to test and build their virility. This would be a kind of "natural law" that would first be applied in the playground and what strikes all primary school observers is the segregation of the sexes and the gendered nature of the games: "Girls play skipping rope, go for walks and chat, it's 'I'll talk to you and talk to you some more' and 'I love you and I do not love you any more'. Boys play fighting and football". It's a question of asserting one's sexual identity through a process of differentiation.

Moreover, according to "les pièges de la mixité scolaire", the band pressure must be considered knowing that school favours group sexism.

PREVALENCE PER EU COUNTRY

France

In France, sex harassment prevention is now enshrined in law:

- Article L 121 relatif à la mixité et à la mission d'information des écoles, collèges et lycées sur les violences et à l'éducation à la sexualité.
- Circulaire N° 2018 du 12 septembre 2018
- Convention interministérielle pour l'égalité entre les filles et les garçons. (2019- 2024)
- 2 aims of sustainable development goals (5 and 10) also promote gender equality

Besides, if you are a victim or witness of sexual violence, there is a portal for reporting sexual and gender-based violence, available on [site service-public.fr](http://site.service-public.fr). The procedures are detailed on this page, which explains that "any person, minor or adult, victim or witness" can call this police chat room, with the great advantage that you will be dealing with people specifically trained in this type of violence.

A new program is being implemented now to deal with general harassment cases in French schools. Launched in 2021, "pHARE is a plan to prevent and deal with harassment in all French schools. It intervenes as early as possible, relying on a protective community of professionals and staff for pupils. It promotes two emergency numbers: "3020 and 3018 in case of cyberbullying. One of the flagship measures of the programme is the appointment of a local contact person in each school: the headteacher, ten trained student ambassadors and 5 resource persons (teachers, psychologists, counsellors, nurses, etc.). Martinique was one of the pilot departments, with 15 pilot schools. F.A.13

PREVALENCE PER EU COUNTRY

Greece

Although sexual harassment is an issue of major importance, according to UNICEF's Greece statement about publicly reported cases of violence against children (2022), there seems to be a big gap in data collection on the subject. UNICEF (2022) underlined the need for a centralized information collection hub to be established in the country. One of the largest surveys that we currently have in our hands is the epidemiological study (BECAN) on the abuse and neglect of children in Greece. The survey was carried out in 9 Balkan countries from September 2009 to January 2013. Undoubtedly much of the data will have changed since the implementation of the survey, but it does give us important tendency indicators. Firstly, the scale of sexual assault with physical contact was the only scale in which there was a significant increase parallel to grade, 2.90% is found among primary school children and reaches 16.73% in vocational high school environments. A percentage of 27.2% of all participants (boys and girls) stated that they had felt bad about someone talking or writing sexual things about them in a sexual way once or twice a year, from a total sample of 5% of the student population of all Greece 330,508 students, 16,526 are girls (Petroutaki et al., 2013).

According to Martin (2023), many teachers serving in the Greek education system most of the time do not have the appropriate training to deal with issues of harassment in the school setting. She points out that the main problems are, firstly that practically educators are in a legal grey area on the issue, and secondly, ignorance passed on by teachers to children, who lack basic knowledge of sex education which often exposes them to dangerous situations and contributing to the prevalence of the phenomenon of sexual harassment. In addition, the country's deeply Christian background adds another level of challenge. Articles such as: "Greek sex ed program teaches sexual pleasure for children and gender fluidity" from an Orthodox newspaper (2021) provide views that link sex education to children are more likely to be victims of psychological and physical abuse or that abortion is a product of overpopulation reduction policies.

PREVALENCE PER EU COUNTRY

Greece

One of the main initiatives that Greece has created is the NATIONAL ACTION PLAN FOR GENDER EQUALITY (2021-2025) established by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. We could outline the four main objectives of the plan as: 1) preventing and combatting gender-based and domestic violence, 2) equal participation of women in the labour market, 3) equal participation of women in decision-making and leadership and 4) mainstreaming the gender perspective into sectoral policies, (General Secretariat for Demography and Family Policy and Gender Equality, 2021). There is the Diotima Centre which often carries out awareness-raising campaigns, the Network of Structures for Women Victims of Violence which has both counselling services and shelters for battered women, the Centre for Research on Gender Equality which actively promotes gender equality. Indeed the list of assisting organisations is long, however, one realisation to be made is that Greece focuses mainly on correcting the problem after it happens, and not on preventing it.

PREVALENCE PER EU COUNTRY

Italy

In Italy, just like in many other countries, addressing the issue of sexual harassment is of utmost importance when it comes to the well-being and safety of children and adolescents. However, obtaining comprehensive data on sexual harassment can be somewhat challenging. One way to gain insight into this issue is through reports from organizations like the Italian Institute of Statistics (ISTAT). Although these reports may not exclusively focus on sexual harassment, they often offer valuable information on broader trends of violence against children and adolescents, which may encompass instances of sexual harassment (Alonso et al., 2023; Barbara et al.2020).

Furthermore, academic research plays a pivotal role in enhancing our understanding of sexual harassment in Italy. Studies carried out by universities or non-profit organizations delve deeper into the complexities of the issue by examining factors such as prevalence rates, characteristics of perpetrators, and the impact on victims. These studies employ various methodologies – including surveys, interviews, and case studies – to directly gather data from individuals. For example, a study conducted by the University of Bologna may analyze the extent of sexual harassment among school-aged children and adolescents in different regions of Italy. By considering factors like gender, age, and socio-economic background, researchers can identify patterns and discrepancies in experiences of sexual harassment (Ben et al.2020; Mameli et al.2022; Tosi & Rettaroli, 2022; (Tossani et al., 2022).

Additionally, international surveys and reports, such as the "Violence Against Women: An EU-wide Survey" by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), provide useful comparative data. Although these surveys primarily focus on violence against women, they often shed light on the prevalence of sexual harassment as well, thereby offering a broader European context for understanding Italy's situation.

PREVALENCE PER EU COUNTRY

Portugal

Data on the incidence of peer-on-peer sexual harassment, including any available surveys or research findings

The prevalence of cases of sexual violence or harassment in Portuguese schools is a difficult topic to deal with, given the lack of public studies that support the issue. Despite admitting its existence, as stated by Marta Santos Pais, the former United Nations High Representative for Violence against Children, in an interview with Rádio Renascença (a radio station with a broad spectrum and national representation in Portugal), there are no known official figures, as mentioned by Chagas (2023). Despite the lack of official data to back up her assertions, the interviewee says she recognises that the problem exists and that it needs to be combated, not least because the country is part of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It should be noted that when schools are confronted with cases of sexual harassment between peers, and depending on the degree of seriousness, they can resolve the cases through in-house psychology services and student support offices, or refer the case to the police and the Commission for the Protection of Children and Young People. However, few cases appear in the public sphere of the media, almost all of which are safeguarded by the right or duty of secrecy, which explains the lack of a national study on the subject.

Factors contributing to the prevalence, such as cultural norms, educational systems, and social dynamics

The main factors that explain the existence of cases of sexual harassment in schools are related to the country's own cultural issues, although there has been a great deal of progress in this regard in recent years. New social dynamics may also explain some of the existing cases, namely the uncontrolled exposure of young people at increasingly tender ages to inappropriate content on social networks.

Initiatives, policies, or interventions aimed at reducing harassment in this country

Portugal's Minister of Justice, Catarina Sarmento e Castro, in an interview with Rádio Renascença on 25/03/2023, said that the National Statistics Institute is developing two studies on sexual crimes. One of the studies is in partnership with Eurostat and the other with the National Commission for the Promotion of the Rights and Protection of Children and Young People. The Minister also said that the government is developing a National Strategy for the Protection of Victims of Crime. At the same time, a law proposal is being developed to transpose a European directive on combating the sexual abuse of children, which increases the statute of limitations for these offences, although it is not only in the context of schools, as recognized by Lusa (2023).

A person with dark skin is sitting on a light-colored couch, reading an open book. They are wearing a white long-sleeved shirt and blue jeans. The book is open to a page with text. The word "REFERENCES" is overlaid in large, bold, blue capital letters across the center of the image. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light beige color.

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ACTIVITY SHEETS

The background of the page is a blurred photograph of a classroom. Several students are visible, with their hands raised in the air, suggesting an interactive activity or a Q&A session. The focus is on the hands in the foreground, which are out of focus, while the text 'ACTIVITY SHEETS' is sharp and centered. The overall tone is educational and positive.

ACTIVITY SHEETS

Introduction to Activity Sheets

This guide aims both to raise teachers' awareness of sexual harassment in the school environment and to enhance students' education on the phenomenon. This chapter contains ten activity sheets designed to encourage teachers to create an environment where respect for other people's boundaries and kindness are core values.

Understanding that sexual harassment is a difficult and complex issue for victims, but also for teachers who are looking for ways to approach the issue in school classrooms, the activities presented in the guide focus on raising awareness on peer-on-peer sexual harassment, with a dose of creativity. These activities enhance interest in learning as they take the form of interactive games and are adapted to multiple learning styles. Additionally, they enhance understanding and promote the participation and active involvement of students.

The steps to implement the activities are described in detail as well as, the learning objectives that can be achieved, the materials that may be needed to complete the process and some indicators to measure the success of the activity. Through the activities, students explore the different aspects of human relationships safely, understand the value of respect and open communication, realize what healthy patterns of emotional connection are and learn how to deal with sexual harassment, whether it happens to themselves or others, through interactive games that replicate real-life situations.

ACTIVITY SHEET 1

How equal is my gender equality?

Small quiz to help primary school pupils understand if their attitudes support gender equality.

One version for boys to be adapted for female students.

Learning Objectives



Make students aware that they may reproduce sexist attitudes in daily life and carry on gender inequality, even unconsciously.

Materials needed

A 10-question quiz which is colour coded for evaluation: blue- orange- green

ACTIVITY SHEET 1

How equal is my gender equality? For boys

1. Having fun

I am invited to a birthday party, what should I wear?

- A. Any shirt, I don't mind
- B. A dark blue shirt
- C. A light pink shirt I really like

2. Career

Later in life, I would not mind becoming:

- A. A midwife
- B. A nurse
- C. A truck driver

3. Periods

At your older sister's school, they have decided to set up a pad dispenser (a product girls use for their periods). You find it:

- A. Shocking
- B. Useful
- C. Interesting as it will allow people to better understand girls

4. School life

At school, there are 3 boys who are always loud and impose their rule over others. How do you react?

- A. No worries, boys will be boys
- B. It would be a good idea to move their seats so that they no longer interact
- C. They should be made to develop responsibility by helping newcomers to feel integrated at school

5. Activities

A mixed gender football match will be organized at the end of the school year. How do you react?

- A. You would prefer a match with boys only
- B. No problem, it will be fun
- C. It might help boys to be more tolerant with girls

6. Your temper

Which adjective best describes you?

- A. Sensitive
- B. Calm
- C. Energetic
- D. Rowdy

ACTIVITY SHEET 1

How equal is my gender equality? For boys

7. Friendship

Which phrase best describes your attitude?

- A. My best friend will always be the same sex as me
- B. It doesn't matter if my best friend is a boy or a girl

8. Prejudices

It's your cousin's birthday and your Mum has bought him a toy kitchen as he likes cooking with his Grandma.

- A. You feel ashamed because toy kitchens are for girls
- B. It's a good idea, he will be happy
- C. Why not buy him a board game?

9. Collaborative work at school

Which option do you agree with more?

- A. Groups should be always made up of boys and girls
- B. People should work according with whoever they want to
- C. I feel more comfortable working with boys

10. Games at school

Which activity would you choose from the following?

- A. Volleyball
- B. Dance
- C. Football

Evaluation

- **Orange:** 1A-2B-3B-4B-5B-6A-8C-9B-10A
- **Green :** 1C-2A-3C-4C-5C-6B-7B-8B-9A-10B-
- **Blue :**1B-2C-3A-4A-5A-6C-7A-8A-9C-10C
- Mostly orange: your gender equality is under progress
- Mostly green: well done, things have positively evolved
- Mostly blue: you still need to work on your gender equality

ACTIVITY SHEET 2

My body is my body, respect, privacy, consent

Raising awareness about the topics of respect, intimacy, and consent.

General objective: to prevent sexual abuse and learn how to say “no” in uncomfortable situations

Learning Objectives



Specific objective: Identify and name one's intimate body parts

Draw a table with four columns: two columns labelled “boys” (one for euphemisms and the other for exact terms); two columns labelled “girls” (one for euphemisms and the other for exact terms).

Ask the children to name their intimate parts.

At the end of the task, all the children should know how to name their intimate parts.



Specific objective: Knowing who can touch them; learning how to wash themselves

Ask the children who they think can touch their intimate area and make any necessary corrections (mum to help with washing, doctor, spouse at the adult's home)

Explain how to wash intimate parts for girls and boys so that they can be autonomous.

It is necessary to teach children that their body belongs to them and that no-one can touch them without their permission. Clear and direct communication from a young age with children about their sexuality and their “intimate parts”—while employing exact terms to designate the genital organs and other body parts—will help them to understand what is not permitted. Children have the right to refuse a kiss or being touched, even from a person they love. Children must be taught how to say “No” immediately and firmly at any physical contact that is not the norm, how to get out of dangerous situations, and how to open up to a trusted adult. It is important to tell them that they must insist until someone takes them seriously.

Source: <https://www.coe.int/fr/web/children/kiko-and-the-hand>

ACTIVITY SHEET 2

My body is my body, respect, privacy, consent

Materials needed

Computer

Video projector

ACTIVITY SHEET 2

My body is my body, respect, privacy, consent



Specific objective: Knowing how to say “NO”

Dramatise the story “Kiko and the hand” (an educational tool issued through a campaign by the Council of Europe) with the support of video projection.

Video link “Kiko and the hand” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3BqSGSmQ-ow>

Link to the pdf “Kiko and the hand” (English version) <https://rm.coe.int/eng-kiko-book/1680a22b15>

“Kiko and the hand” teaches the rule “We don’t touch here”, which constitutes a simple guide created to help parents to explain to their children where they should not be touched, how to react, and to whom they can go for help. It’s simple: children should not be touched by others where they are normally covered by underwear. They should not be touching others around these same parts either. This guide also helps children to understand that their body belongs to them, that there are good and bad secrets, and good and bad ways of touching a child. This material, which is aimed at children between three and seven years old, will help parents and educators to explain to children that their body belongs to them, that there are good and bad secrets, and good and bad ways of touching a child.

Source: <https://www.coe.int/fr/web/children/kiko-and-the-hand>



Specific objective: Knowing what to do if something happens. Destigmatising speaking out and taboos

When an adult touches (a child’s) intimate parts, they place sadness in their heart which grows and increases as it grows...

Children might ask, how do you get rid of this sadness in your heart?

The teacher will explain that sadness can be alleviated and even disappears once a trusted person is found to talk to (parents, teachers, nurses...).

ACTIVITY SHEET 2

My body is my body, respect, privacy, consent

Steps

1. Draw a table with four columns: two columns labelled “boys” (one for euphemisms and the other for exact terms); two columns labelled “girls” (one for euphemisms and the other for exact terms). Ask the children to name their intimate parts. At the end of the task, all the children should know how to name their intimate parts.
2. Ask the children who they think can touch their intimate area and make any necessary corrections (mum to help with washing, doctor, spouse at the adult’s home). Explain how to wash intimate parts for girls and boys so that they can be autonomous.
3. Dramatise the story “Kiko and the hand” (an educational tool issued through a campaign by the Council of Europe) with the support of video projection. Video link “Kiko and the hand”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3BqSGSmQ-ow> Link to the pdf “Kiko and the hand” (English version): <https://rm.coe.int/eng-kiko-book/1680a22b15>
4. When an adult touches (a child’s) intimate parts, they place sadness in their heart which grows and increases as it grows... Children might ask, how do you get rid of this sadness in your heart? The teacher will explain that sadness can be alleviated and even disappears once a trusted person is found to talk to (parents, teachers, nurses...).

Evaluation

According to the bias of a questionnaire

ACTIVITY SHEET 3

The Jar of Emotions

This activity involves students engaging with brief scenarios to express their emotions in response to each situation. The goal is to foster an awareness of personal boundaries, encouraging students to recognise not only their own but also those of their peers. Additionally, the activity aims to promote an understanding of what behaviours are considered appropriate within peer interactions.

Learning Objectives

- ✓ Identify boundaries
- ✓ Contrast which behaviours are acceptable, and which are not
- ✓ Critique their behaviour
- ✓ Reproduction of healthy behaviours

Materials needed

A jar, or a box

Coloured pieces of paper with a feeling written on them

Small scenarios that should be printed and cut

ACTIVITY SHEET 3

The Jar of Emotions

Steps

- 1. Cut out the scenarios and put them in the jar
- 2. Split students in mixed groups
- 3. Ask one of the students in the group to pull out a scenario
- 4. Ask them to read the scenario or read it for them
- 5. Ask them to place the coloured paper that represents their feeling in front of them
- 6. If students in the same group have contradicting colours, ask the students why they think that their peer feels the way they do
- 7. If students in the same group have similar colours, ask the students to explain their feelings and ask their group peers if they feel the same way or have something to add.

Suggested scenarios

Scenario 1: A classmate calls you embarrassing names.	Scenario 2: A classmate invites you to play with him like you are husband and wife.
Scenario 3: A classmate pulls your skirt up.	Scenario 4: A classmate touches you on your chest.
Scenario 5: A classmate tells you that if you don't do something they want, they'll tell everyone you're doing something embarrassing, even if it's a lie.	Scenario 6: During craft time, a classmate wants you to make a friendship bracelet together.

ACTIVITY SHEET 3

The Jar of Emotions

Evaluation

To evaluate if the learning objectives have been achieved, the teacher can employ a combination of observation, discussion, and reflection. Here's a suggested evaluation process:

Observation during the Activity:

- Observe how students engage with the scenarios and express their feelings.
- Note if students demonstrate an understanding of personal boundaries and emotions through their words and actions during the activity.
- Pay attention to how well students listen to each other and whether they show respect for diverse perspectives.

Individual Reflections:

- Have students individually reflect on the activity, asking them to consider what they learnt about boundaries and acceptable behaviours.
- Encourage students to think about whether their feelings align with those of their peers and if they were able to express themselves effectively.

Scenario Analysis:

- Discuss each scenario separately, exploring why certain emotions were chosen for each situation.
- Assess whether students can critically analyse the behaviours presented in the scenarios and determine whether they are acceptable or not.

Classroom Behaviour and Relationships:

- Over the following weeks, observe classroom behaviour and peer interactions.
- Look for signs of improved communication, increased empathy, and a better understanding of personal boundaries among students.

Feedback and Communication:

- Encourage open communication with students. Ask them how they feel about the activity, what they learnt, and if they feel more comfortable expressing their boundaries.

ACTIVITY SHEET 4

The Personal Boundary Shield

In this activity, students will create "Personal Boundary Shields" to visually represent and understand their own personal boundaries. Through drawing and decorating, they will express elements that make them feel comfortable and safe.

Learning Objectives

- ✓ Explain their personal boundaries to their peers
- ✓ Propose ways to communicate their personal boundaries
- ✓ Justify the choices made in creating their "Personal Boundary Shield"

Materials needed

Printed Shields (examples
can be found here)

Markers

Stickers

Magazines

Safety Scissors

Glue

ACTIVITY SHEET 4

The Personal Boundary Shield

Steps

1. Distribute a printed shield and the materials to each student.
2. Instruct students to create their "Personal Boundary Shield" by drawing and decorating it with symbols, images, or words that represent things making them feel comfortable and safe.
3. Facilitate a class discussion about personal boundaries, asking students to share their shields and explaining why they included specific elements.
4. Emphasise the importance of respecting each other's boundaries and creating a safe classroom environment.
5. Encourage students to use this shield whenever a peer makes them feel uncomfortable at school.

ACTIVITY SHEET 4

The Personal Boundary Shield

Evaluation

Observation during the Activity:

- Assess students' ability to articulate their personal boundaries clearly during the class discussion.
- Look for evidence that students can express why certain elements in their "Personal Boundary Shields" represent their comfort and safety.

Peer Interaction:

- Encourage students to share their shields with a peer and explain the significance of the chosen elements.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of their communication in conveying the concept of personal boundaries to their peers.

Role-Play Activity:

- Organize a role-play scenario where students practice communicating their personal boundaries using the shields.
- Assess their ability to propose effective and respectful ways to express their boundaries in various situations.

Individual Presentations:

- Have each student present their "Personal Boundary Shield" to the class, justifying the chosen symbols, images, or words.
- Assess the clarity and depth of their justifications, ensuring they connect their choices to feelings of comfort and safety.

Class Discussion:

- Initiate a discussion on the importance of individuality in expressing personal boundaries.
- Evaluate students' ability to participate in a meaningful conversation, defending and explaining their creative decisions.

ACTIVITY SHEET 5

Consent Carnival

Students will engage in a "Consent Carnival" activity, moving through different stations to practice requesting and granting consent in different situations. By participating in interactive role-plays, they will grasp the significance of honoring personal boundaries and identifying various ways to express and acknowledge "no."

Learning Objectives

- ✔ Teach students the concept of consent in a fun and engaging way.
- ✔ Help students practice asking for and giving consent in various scenarios.
- ✔ Foster a culture of respect and understanding around personal boundaries.

Materials needed

Carnival station signs
(e.g., "Hug Booth," "High-Five Stand,"
"Borrow Booth")

Stickers or stamps

Scenario cards with consent-related
questions

Prizes or certificates for participation

ACTIVITY SHEET 5

Consent Carnival

Steps

1. Explain the concept of consent and why it's important to ask for permission and respect others' boundaries.
2. Discuss examples of when and how to ask for consent.
3. Arrange different stations around the classroom or playground, each with a sign indicating the activity (e.g., Hug Booth, High-Five Stand, Borrow Booth).
4. Prepare scenario cards with consent-related questions for each station.
5. Divide students into small groups and assign each group to a starting station.
6. At each station, students draw a scenario card and role-play asking for and giving consent. For example, at the Hug Booth, one student might ask, "Can I give you a hug?" and the other can respond with "Yes" or "No."
7. If consent is given, they proceed with the action (e.g., hug, high-five). If not, they respect the answer and move to the next scenario.
8. After completing the scenario, students get a sticker or stamp as a reward.
9. Rotate groups through all stations so every student gets a chance to practice different scenarios.
10. Gather students together to discuss their experiences at the carnival.
11. Ask questions such as: How did it feel to ask for consent? How did it feel to say or hear "no"? Why is it important to respect someone's "no"?
12. Emphasize the importance of asking for consent in all interactions and respecting the responses.
13. Award certificates or small prizes to students for their participation and understanding of consent.
14. Encourage students to share what they learned with their families.

Evaluation

- Observe students' participation and engagement during the carnival.
- Assess their ability to ask for and give consent appropriately.
- Review their reflections to ensure they understand the importance of consent and respecting boundaries.

ACTIVITY SHEET 6

Heroes Against Harassment

Students become "Heroes Against Harassment" in this activity by gaining the ability to recognise different types of harassment and hone their skills to safely intervene and support their peers. Through role-play and guided conversations, they develop strategies to confront harassment and create a supportive atmosphere.

Learning Objectives



Help students recognize different forms of harassment.



Empower students to become "heroes" who can stand up against harassment and support their peers.



Develop strategies for safely intervening and seeking help.

Materials needed

Hero capes or masks (optional, for fun)

Harassment
scenario cards

"Hero's Guide" handouts with steps to
intervene and support

Certificates or badges for "Heroes
Against Harassment"

ACTIVITY SHEET 6

Heroes Against Harassment

Steps

1. Discuss what harassment is and provide examples of different forms (e.g., verbal, physical, cyber).
2. Explain the importance of recognizing harassment and knowing how to respond to it.
3. Explain that students will become "heroes" who learn to stand up against harassment.
4. Introduce the "Hero's Guide," a handout that outlines steps to intervene safely and support peers (e.g., tell the harasser to stop, seek help from a trusted adult, support the victim).
5. Divide students into small groups and provide each group with harassment scenario cards depicting different situations (e.g., name-calling, unwanted touching, online bullying).
6. Instruct the groups to discuss the scenarios and decide how they would recognize the harassment and what actions they would take to respond as heroes.
7. Rotate the scenario cards among groups to cover multiple situations.
8. Have students role-play the scenarios in front of the class, demonstrating how to recognize harassment and the appropriate heroic responses.
9. Encourage students to use the steps from the "Hero's Guide" and practice different responses.
10. Gather students together for a discussion about the activity.
11. Ask questions such as: How did you recognize the harassment? What actions did you take to respond as a hero? Why is it important to speak up and seek help?
12. Emphasize the importance of supporting peers and seeking help from trusted adults.
13. Award certificates or badges to students for becoming "Heroes Against Harassment."
14. Encourage students to share what they learned with their families and continue to be heroes in their daily lives.

Evaluation

- Observe students' participation and engagement during the hero training and scenario practice.
- Assess their understanding of harassment and appropriate heroic responses through their role-playing and discussions.
- Review the "Hero's Guide" to ensure it includes effective strategies for intervening and supporting peers.

ACTIVITY SHEET 7

Puppet theatre

As a group, the students should create several puppets of both sexes. They should discuss the issues of underwear and the correct names of the genitals in a large group with the teacher. After this stage, a narrative/theatre should be created by the teachers, in which the puppets interact with the students watching. These interactions should provide opportunities for pupils to respond and reflect on the appropriate or inappropriate touching of certain areas/zones of other pupils' bodies.

During the course of the theatre, there should also be time for students to ask the puppets questions about sexuality and peer touching.

At the end, the pupils should create three different coloured posters: in red, the unacceptable behaviours; in yellow, the behaviours that might be upsetting for some children, depending on their origin or religious beliefs, for example; and in green, the behaviours that are accepted by everyone.

Learning Objectives



Addressing issues related to sexual harassment of children



Involve students in thought-provoking activities with a playful slant

Materials needed

Puppet material

Pens/markers

Posters
(red, yellow, green)

ACTIVITY SHEET 7

Puppet theatre

Steps

1. Create the puppets
2. Make the theatre
3. Create the posters
4. Put the posters up in the classroom or another visible place.

Evaluation

- Assessment will be formative and based on student observation and commitment.

ACTIVITY SHEET 8

My emojis

The children should create several cardboard emojis in different colours that express various emotions. Then they should all gather in a circle and the teacher should say several sentences relating to acceptable and unacceptable sexual behaviour. With each sentence, the students should choose an emoji to raise, according to the feeling the sentence arouses in them. The teacher should give a short reflection on each sentence and the students' reaction.

Example sentences to use:

- My friends can hug me.
- Strangers can hug me.
- My friends can pinch me.
- My friends can pull down my trousers or skirt.

Learning Objectives

-  Reflect on behaviours that should be accepted and those that should not be tolerated
-  Involve students in reflection activities in a playful way

Materials needed

Cardboard

Markers

ACTIVITY SHEET 8

My emojis

Steps

1. Start by asking the students to create different emojis
2. Place the students in a circle so that everyone feels integrated and can see each other.
3. Start saying each sentence out loud, after explaining the activity to the students
4. Ask the students to hold up their emoji
5. Reflect with the students on each phrase and their reaction.

Evaluation

- Teacher: Involving students in the activity.
- Students: Each student should raise an emoji that reflects their evaluation of the activity.

ACTIVITY SHEET 9

My Body Belongs to Me

This activity focuses on teaching children about body autonomy and the importance of recognizing when something is inappropriate or uncomfortable. It empowers them to assert control over their bodies and seek help if necessary.

Learning Objectives

- ✓ Understand the concept of body autonomy.
- ✓ Identify appropriate and inappropriate touches.
- ✓ Learn strategies for responding to uncomfortable situations.

Materials needed

Paper

Markers/crayons

ACTIVITY SHEET 9

My Body Belongs to Me

Steps

1. Debate (10 minutes): Start by discussing the concept of body autonomy, explaining that each person has the right to decide what happens to their body. Emphasise that no one should touch them in a way that makes them uncomfortable.
2. Body map activity (15 minutes): Give each child a large sheet of paper and markers/crayons. Ask them to trace their body or draw an outline of themselves on the paper. Ask them to identify the parts of their body that can and cannot be touched. Encourage them to use different colours to distinguish between the two. Encourage them to discuss whether the situation is right or not and what they would do in that situation. As they work, discuss why it's important to keep certain parts of our bodies private and how clothing helps protect our privacy.
3. Recap the key points of the activity, stressing the importance of bodily autonomy and recognising inappropriate behaviour. Remind the children of the trusted adults they can turn to if they ever feel uncomfortable or unsafe.

Evaluation

Observe children's participation and engagement during discussions and activities. Review body maps and scenario responses to assess understanding of body autonomy and appropriate boundaries.

ACTIVITY SHEET 10

Safe Zone

This activity aims to reinforce the concept of personal boundaries and provide children with practical strategies for staying safe in different situations. Through role-playing and discussion, they will learn how to identify potential risks and assert their boundaries confidently.

Learning Objectives

- ✓ Recognize personal boundaries in various contexts.
- ✓ Develop assertiveness skills to communicate discomfort or refusal.
- ✓ Understand the importance of seeking help from trusted adults when feeling unsafe.

Materials needed

Chairs/cushions

Scenario cards

Timer

CASE STUDIES

A close-up, slightly blurred photograph of a person's hands writing in a notebook. The person is holding a blue pen in their right hand and writing on a white page. Their left hand is resting on the notebook. The background is out of focus, showing another person's arm and a white shirt. The overall tone is professional and focused.

ACTIVITY SHEET 10

Safe Zone

Steps

Introduction (10 minutes):

- Explain that in this activity, they will explore different scenarios and learn how to assert their boundaries to stay safe.

Setting Up Safe Zones (5 minutes):

- Arrange chairs or cushions in a circle to create a safe zone.
- Explain that this area represents a safe space where they can express their thoughts and feelings without judgment.

Scenario Role-Playing (20 minutes):

1. Prepare scenario cards with various situations that may challenge personal boundaries (e.g., someone asking for personal information online, a stranger offering candy).
2. Divide the children into small groups and provide each group with a scenario card.
3. Instruct them to role-play the scenario, focusing on how they would assert their boundaries and respond to the situation.
4. Encourage them to use assertive communication techniques such as saying "no," walking away, or seeking help from a trusted adult.
5. Rotate the scenario cards among groups until each one has had a chance to address multiple scenarios.

Discussion and Reflection (15 minutes):

6. Bring the groups back together and facilitate a discussion about their experiences during the role-plays.
7. Ask questions such as: How did it feel to assert your boundaries in the scenarios? What strategies did you find most effective? Why is it important to seek help from trusted adults when feeling unsafe?

Encourage children to share any additional thoughts or questions they may have about personal safety and boundaries.

Wrap-Up (5 minutes):

- Summarize the key points of the activity, emphasizing the importance of recognizing and respecting personal boundaries.
- Remind children that it's okay to assert their boundaries and seek help if they ever feel uncomfortable or unsafe.
- Encourage them to continue practicing assertive communication skills in their daily lives.

ACTIVITY SHEET 10

Safe Zone

Evaluation

- Observe children's participation and engagement during the role-playing exercises.
- Assess their ability to identify potential risks and assert their boundaries effectively.
- Encourage feedback and reflection to gauge their understanding of personal safety concepts.

CASE STUDIES

Introduction to Case Studies

To provide teachers with an in-depth understanding of how sexual harassment can occur and the serious consequences for victims, the guide includes five case studies that highlight the complexity and different aspects of the phenomenon. Each case study describes an incident of sexual harassment that took place within the school setting, offering a lucid insight into the challenges faced by student victims of sexual harassment. Each case study is structured to provide a clear description of the incident, including information such as when and where the incident occurred, who the parties involved are, what their age is, what behaviours took place that are included in the category of sexual harassment if there is a pattern of repetition in the abuse and how the victim copes with the situation. Through each case study it is observed whether there are people who support victims and gaps in the prevention of sexual harassment and support for victims in the education system, are identified. At the end of each case, there is a stocktaking of the situation, where the lessons learned are mentioned. Each case has happened and is irreversible, however, by thoroughly examining the events, ways are sought for future changes.

You will find each case has the following structure: title, description, context, key persons, and lessons learned. The cases are described and analysed with the greatest possible objectivity that the sources of information can offer since the material usually includes excerpts from interviews of some of the persons involved or third parties.



What treatment should victims and their aggressors receive?

Martinique

At a glance

Rebecca is nine years old, and her aggressor is only eight; they both go to the same primary school in Martinique. The most pressing issue in this case is the sexual nature of the attacks endured by Rebecca.

CONTEXT

Rebecca's mother meets with the headmistress, who suggests seeing a psychologist and promises to be vigilant. A month later, the headmistress informs her that a boy has again lashed out at Rebecca and touched her chest. Despite some measures, the headmistress admits she can't guarantee Rebecca's safety and advises filing a formal complaint. Rebecca sees a psychologist after being called in by the juvenile squad.

A month later, the headmistress calls again: the boy has attacked Rebecca once more, this time touching her intimate area. Deeply shocked, Rebecca's mother returns to the police and contacts the local education authorities.

DESCRIPTION

In January 2023, as the little girl goes to the toilets during lesson time, the boy wants to go inside with her. "She wanted to close the door, he kept pushing it to go inside, she spent long minutes shouting for help." She managed to flee and ran to safety in the arms of a staff member at the nursery, recounts Virginie, her mother. Rebecca cried for the rest of the day. The school didn't call her mother, instead contenting themselves to a message in Rebecca's diary to outline what had happened.

KEY INDIVIDUALS



Rebecca



Headmistress and authorities



Rebecca's mother

LESSONS LEARNT

1

Do Not Ignore the case

Don't belittle the aggressor's behaviour

2

Act immediately

Act immediately when the first complaint arises



SOURCES

[Article on France-Antilles Newspaper. Date: 27th Sept 2023, Journalist: Ericka Morjon.](#)

Sexual harassment of a 7-year-old by primary school boys in Crete, Greece

Greece

At a glance

This is a case that was solved in the island region of Greece and specifically in Crete. It concerns a group of boys who harassed a seven-year-old girl in the school toilets.

DESCRIPTION

In March 2023, in Crete, Greece, a distressing incident involving a seven-year-old girl was reported in local media. While the girl was using the school bathroom, a group of four to five boys engaged in inappropriate behaviour, prompting the young girl to protest in discomfort. (In.Gr, 2023)

CONTEXT

In the articles addressing the issue and featuring excerpts from the mother's interview, it is consistently highlighted that this incident is not an isolated occurrence for the girl. During her school time, her classmates frequently kick her bag and cast disapproving looks at her. Her mother reveals that the girl experiences anger outbursts, nightmares, and has started sessions with a child psychologist to navigate the aftermath of the incident. Feeling unsafe at school, she is reluctant to attend classes, particularly because of the persistence of bullying from older children. The mother has taken the matter to the police station, where another case is pending for this particular school (Cretalive, 2023).

KEY INDIVIDUALS



7-year-old girl



11-year-old boys



girl's mother

LESSONS LEARNT

1

For some children violence is an everyday occurrence

It sheds light on the unfortunate reality that some children endure harassment as part of their daily routine, significantly impacting various aspects of their lives.

2

School harassment has a serious impact on physical and mental health

The girl's absence from school due to fear, coupled with nightmares and anger outbursts, takes a toll on her overall well-being, academic progress, and socialisation.



SOURCES

[Crete: Bullying and sexual harassment in a 7-year-old girl by primary school pupils - "Let me go, I'm in pain!"](#)

[First grade girl in a school in Crete, harassed in the toilets](#)

Resilience in the Face of Adversity: Diana Gini's Journey Through School Bullying

Italy

At a glance

Diana Gini faced severe bullying in middle school. With no support from staff, she changed schools, sought therapy, and now encourages victims to seek help.

CONTEXT

Diana Gini became a target due to her appearance, hobbies, and family situation, particularly the mistreatment involving her disabled sister. Over time, the bullying escalated to cyberbullying, exclusion, and intensified abuse, peaking in eighth grade. She faced incidents like being locked in bathrooms, having her belongings stolen or destroyed, and physical threats, including one with a box cutter. Despite the severity, the school's response was inadequate; one teacher dismissed her concerns after her jacket was cut. Feeling unsafe, Diana's family transferred her to a new school and arranged for counseling, which was crucial in helping her recover and rebuild her confidence.

DESCRIPTION

Diana Gini, 14, faced severe bullying in middle school, including verbal and cyber abuse, physical threats, and harassment about her appearance and her disabled sister. Despite reaching out, the school did not support her. With her family's help, Diana sought therapy, changed schools, and began rebuilding her confidence. Now, she shares her story to encourage other victims to seek help.

KEY INDIVIDUALS



Diana Gini



School Principal



Diana's Schoolmates

LESSONS LEARNT

- Importance of School Intervention**
Diana's story highlights the need for schools to have clear policies and support systems to address and prevent bullying.
- Family Support**
Family support played a crucial role in Diana's recovery by providing emotional support and helping her switch schools and get therapy.
- Advocacy**
By sharing her story, Diana empowers victims, raises awareness, and advocates for change.



SOURCES

[INSIEME CONTRO IL BULLISMO: LA STORIA DI DIANA](#)

Sexual photographs shared online

Portugal

At a glance

A student believed a fake profile on a social network. After several conversations, she shared sexually orientated photos of herself and ended up being upset by the stranger.

CONTEXT

The case was caused by the student using social networks without taking the necessary precautions. She believed that the fake profile she was messaging was of someone who existed and was genuinely interested in a more serious relationship.

DESCRIPTION

In northern Portugal, a secondary school student became a victim of online abuse after accepting a friend request from a stranger posing as a teenager. Their messages quickly turned intimate, and the student was pressured into sending photos, which escalated under threat. Unable to tell her parents, the student sought help from the school, which then involved the police. Authorities found the stranger had targeted other teenage girls. The case went to court, but the outcome is still unknown.

KEY INDIVIDUALS



The student



The school



Parents and police

LESSONS LEARNT

1

The student

The student has certainly learnt one of the greatest lessons of her life about the dangers of using the Internet and how easy it is to create and use fake profiles that could lead to cases of sexual harassment.



SOURCES

Interview to the headmaster of the school



Dating violence

Portugal

At a glance

Micaela and Francisco (not their real names) seemed to have a perfect relationship, but it was marked by violence that left Micaela deeply scarred.

CONTEXT

Francisco (15) attends Agrupamento de Escolas dos Pombinhos in Year 9 and Micaela (13) is a student at Agrupamento de Escolas do Bairro in Year 8.

The two of them meet frequently and their parents know about the relationship.

The situation was identified at Agrupamento de Escolas do Bairro after Micaela's constant inattention in the classroom, growing disinterest and continued isolation. The teachers presented this situation to the Inclusive Education Support Team and, in conjunction with the psychology service, it was concluded that this was a situation of dating violence that was getting worse day by day.

DESCRIPTION

After school, the two spent the afternoons together at Francisco's house where they maintained intimate relationships. She never said no. Back home, Micaela would lock herself in her room, which her parents didn't find strange since she was a teenager. In her room, they had virtual sex, which he recorded without her consent.

After one aggression, she wanted to end the relationship, but he used the videos as blackmail.

Soon the videos were circulating all over the school, which forced her to tell her parents. They told the police and the family moved.

KEY INDIVIDUALS



**Diana Micaela
& Francisco**



**School and
family**



Authorities

LESSONS LEARNT

1

Zero Tolerance for Violence

Violence should never be accepted in a relationship. Recognizing this is crucial for maintaining safety and respect.

2

Seek Help Early

Victims should reach out for support at the first signs of abuse to prevent further harm and receive necessary protection.



SOURCES

Interview to the headmaster of the school

Project Partnership



**Collège Joseph
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DI TORINO**

**UNIVERSITA DEGLI
STUDI DI TORINO**

KAINOTOMIA



**KAINOTOMIA & SIA
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Project Number: 2023-1-FR01-KA220-SCH-000152428



**preventing sexuAl haRassmenT &
abusE aMong prImary school Students**

NO HARASSMENT ZONE

An Essential Guide for Primary School Teachers



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Project Number: 2023-1-FR01-KA220-SCH-000152428