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A Critical Review of Literature on Communication Strategies and Awareness of Sexual Harassment in Schools in Uganda and Beyond

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Abstract

This study was a critical review of literature related to communication strategies and students' awareness of sexual harassment in secondary schools. The purpose of the review or the main objective of the review was to assess various research on the effect of communication strategies in creating awareness of sexual harassment in secondary schools. More specifically, the review explored literature in order to determine studies that examine the effect of communication messages on awareness of sexual harassment amongst students in secondary schools, studies that assess the effect of audience mapping on the students' awareness of sexual harassment in secondary schools, and finally analyze studies that examine the effect of vehicles (media) used on creating students' awareness about sexual harassment in secondary schools.

Keywords: Communication Strategies, Awareness of Sexual Harassment, Uganda

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1.0 Background

The use of communication strategies to combat sexual harassment has taken forms in different phases of global development. The patriarchal nature of different societies initially obscured the problem of sexual abuse and sexual harassment for many years. The prevailing imbalances between men and women whereby men were elevated in power relations between the two genders made it difficult for different societies to focus on sexual harassment, which was considered a women's problem. From the third to the second millennium BCE (Lerner, 1990), women were blamed for any sexual predicament they faced because they were by nature considered to be promiscuous (Hooks, 1981).

Gradually as the mass media emerged as a platform for public discourse, various issues

concerning society and not the least, sexual violence and sexual harassment began to make its way into the news and public commentary. Whereas there was no deliberate attempt to use the mass media as a communication strategy at this point, to fight sexual harassment and sexual violence against women, media coverage about incidents of sexual harassment began to surface and were mainly informative in nature. For example, during the days when slavery was legal in the United States, abolitionist through *the abolitionist press* communicated to the public accounts of the sexual abuse of female slaves by their masters (Hoganson, 1993).

In 1878, a physician of forensics from France, Ambroise Tardieu documented hundreds of sexual abuse cases comprising primarily of children, and published their

effects on children (Bourke, 2012). In the 19th century, feminist movements levied campaigns against sexual violence against women, e.g., the social purity and temperance campaigns which hoped to encourage male constraint against brutality including sexual violence against women (Bourke, 2012; Tyson, n.d.).

The 20th century saw a surge in opposition to and speaking out against sexual violence against women, especially in the movements within the United States. Hence between the 1900s and 1940s, the coverage of sexual abuse and harassment cases, which was facilitated by the news wire services and a newspaper called the Hearst Empire, pushed debate about sexual harassment to the forefront of public discussions. Journalists, playwrights, novelists, and movie makers all took the cue from such coverage and began

talking about sexual harassment more than it was spoken about before (Keire, 2019). In the British Press, increased attention was according to sexual abuse and harassment cases, particularly about children who were the focus of media coverage. In the period after 1918, such coverage offered brief and euphemistic (or indirect) reports of court proceedings about sexual harassment, which create awareness in the society that this had evolved into a big ‘social problem.’ The press undertook more explicit coverage of these abuses from the 1950s and 1960s and in the mid-1970s it began to highlight these issues as a serious social problem. However, beyond publicizing incidents of sexual abuse and harassment, the press did not do anything more than this (Bingham, 2019). The movement to make known cases of sexual harassment continued throughout the 1970s, when the Anti-rape movement was created to speak against sexual the

legalization and institutionalization of sexual violence against women (Center for American Studies, 2021).

However, although it is as old as civilization itself, the first reference to the term sexual harassment emerged in Mary Rowe's report in 1973 titled "The Saturn's Rings Phenomenon", which documented a litany of sexist glass ceilings in corporations, non-profit organizations, and educational institutions that precluded the activation of affirmative action in the United States (Kamberi & Gollopeni, 2015; Rowe, 1973). A grassroots movement of women's activities spread quickly and inspired many other women's movements in other countries of the world. These movements mainly evolved around women's groups that were based at universities either as staff or students. They began to make frequent and

sporadic references to sexual harassment, a terminology that began to appear in the mainstream news media in the USA from 1975 (Jackson, 2021).

Rowe's reference to institutionalized sexism as such was seminal because thenceforth, the term sexual harassment made its way in English lexicons and in public discourses (Kamberi & Gollopeni, 2015). The 1970s therefore, may be inferred to have been a sexual renaissance (Siegel, 2003) to the extent that a once fringe idea (gender and sexual equality between men and women) became mainstream. The above belief is fortified by the fact that a large number of historians writing about women concur that action that was effective in discrediting violence targeting women was only achieved in the 1970's (Ryan, 1975), resulting in the enactment of laws and the

creation of agencies in the United States and England, which broke the legal and institutional perpetuation of male privilege (Fox, 2002).

Moreover, given achievements against violence against women were scaled throughout the world through the enactment of U.N. Conventions and Declarations on the Elimination of Violence Against Women and the U.N. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (Fox, 2002). Further, as a result, the Declaration and Platform for Action of the 4th World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, went further in acknowledging women's sexual rights as human rights;

“The human rights of women include their right to have control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their

sexuality, including sexual and reproductive health, free of coercion, discrimination and violence”, Cited in (Ramtohul, 2019).

The document proved beyond reasonable doubt that the international community was on par with the fact that sexual freedom is a right that women are entitled to (Petchesky, 1995).

Africa has followed suit to recognize and protect the rights of women including sexual rights and prohibitions against sexual violence and harassment, including through the African Charter on Human and People's Rights, the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (the Maputo Protocol) and the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (Ramtohul, 2019). Similarly, coverage of sexual harassment in the African media has been

consistent since the 1990s. In South Africa, newspapers were used in the period between 1999 to 2004 to particularly highlight the harassment of female learners in schools in the country. The coverage evoked a widespread condemnation of the practice, although little is yet to be done (Prinsloo, 2006).

The realization that combating sexual harassment requires more than media coverage, the United States, in 2001, April month was designated as “Sexual Assault Awareness” month, and this period is used to undertake a series of activities intended to publicize issues of sexual harassment and abuse for the eventual aim of reduce occurrence of sexual harassment (Bishop, 2018). During the Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM), the National Sexual Violence Resource Centre (NSRV) renders

resources to anti-sexual harassment advocates in the US, to campaign against sexual harassment. These resources consist mainly of communication materials such as publications (e.g. booklets, directories and newsletters), prevention materials (e.g. online resources and palm cars), and products to raise awareness, such as posters, pins, postcards and stickers (University of Minnesota, 2023).

1.1 Communication Strategies and Awareness of Sexual Harassment in Schools: The Context of Uganda

In Uganda, the global movement against sexual violence and in particular, sexual harassment, led to the accession to and ratification, whatever the case, of international human rights instruments e.g. the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

(United Nations, 2009), including those of the African Union (e.g. the Maputo Protocol) (FIDH, 2010) that relate to the prohibition of sexual violations.

Moreover, Uganda has enacted several laws against sexual violence in general and in particular, the country has specific laws

against sexual harassment and regulations intended to fight sexual harassment, including the Employment Act of 2006, and the Employment (Sexual Harassment) Regulations of 2012. It is noteworthy that sexual harassment in Uganda is understood within the meaning of Section 7 (1) of the Act, to constitute the following (Parliament of Uganda, 2006):

Figure 1. Legal Conception of Sexual Harassment in Employment in Uganda

7. Sexual harassment in employment

(1) An employee shall be sexually harassed in that employee's employment if that employee's employer, or a representative of that employer—

(a) directly or indirectly makes a request of that employee for sexual intercourse, sexual contact or any other form of sexual activity that contains—

(i) an implied or express promise of preferential treatment in employment;

(ii) an implied or express threat of detrimental treatment in employment ;

(iii) an implied or express threat about the present or future employment status of the employee;

(b) uses language whether written or spoken of a sexual nature;

(c) uses visual material of a sexual nature; or

(d) shows physical behaviour of a sexual nature.

Source; Republic of Uganda 2006

It is important to observe that the above policy and law relate to sexual harassment in workplaces only, not in educational environments. And, a literature survey has revealed that there is no dedicated law or policy requirement for the prohibition and punishment of sexual harassment which occurs among students within secondary schools in Uganda. In this regard, the Education (Pre-primary, primary and Post primary) Act is reticent on sexual harassment in secondary schools. The National Gender Policy (2007), too, is silent on sexual harassment in secondary schools, although it commits to “increase the knowledge and understanding of human rights among women and men so that they can identify violations, demand, access, seek redress and enjoy their right” (cited in FAO, 2007).

Nonetheless, the prohibition of sexual harassment that occurs among students attending secondary schools in Uganda may be implied from the Children Act (Parliament of Uganda, 1997), which bars sexual abuse of children (under 18 years including those in school). From the above background, it is clear that sexual harassment of students in secondary schools is not explicitly covered by any legal framework. Yet, it is also axiomatic that there are several negative voices in Uganda’s policy and legal frameworks against sexual harassment generally, which may undergird the assumption that sexual harassment is an outlier for students in school environments. Therefore, not only is sexual harassment of students in secondary schools in Uganda discouraged, students are also made aware of its dangers.

At the school level, there have been some attempts made to emphasize ‘talking compound’ that have messages that can promote the education of girls e.g. Sexual Reproductive Health is your right, Be proud of your Virginity, it is a virtue, early marriage blocks your future, and many others (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2013). These messages are all designed and geared towards promoting a school environment that is friendly for children especially for girls (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2013). Some schools have also taken it upon themselves to communicate the ills of sexual harassment in secondary schools, through films, to shine a spotlight on the vice. A case in point is the film (Never Again) by St. Augustine’s College, Wakiso, spearheaded by a member of staff of the school (Daily Monitor, 2018). A non-Profit organization has also stepped in to create more awareness of the sexual

violence that are against young women in secondary schools in Uganda through story telling whereby victims of sexual violence are encouraged to share their experiences (UTNU, n.d.).

1.2 *The Problem and Its Significance*

In normal circumstances, communication strategies may create awareness about different issues being communicated by individuals and organizations. There have been various campaigns targeted at tackling sexual violence in some or several secondary schools in Uganda: from school-initiated “talking compound” awareness campaigns, cinema, as well as storytelling by victims of sexual harassment. Such campaigns are aimed at creating awareness of the problem or the gravity of the problem so as to reduce the prevalence of or to root the vice out of secondary schools through awareness.

Nonetheless, despite evidence of some efforts by schools (and assuming all schools in Uganda do likewise), 82% of secondary school students in Uganda have experienced sexual harassment while at school; 8% of female students under 18 (the legal age of consent) have been exposed to defilement; 24% of female students over 18 have been talked to in a sexual way, 18% have received a marriage proposal, 25% have been stroked in a sexual manner and 29% have been exposed to electronic sexual materials (Kebirungi, 2021). Magaji et al. (2019) have stated that female learners suffer from sexual harassment twice more than male students.

In Central Uganda, which also contains Wakiso district, sexual harassment in schools is reportedly prevalent. This was

evidenced by a decision by students in the region to take matters in their hands to petition the Minister of Education in 2014 about the vice (Daily Monitor, 2014). Similarly, in 2018, a head teacher of Kibuli Secondary School was reported to have been in the habit of sexually harassing or abusing female students (Ndyabahika, 2018). In 2017, the media was awash with allegations leveled against the proprietor of elite (St. Lawrence) chain of schools, at his funeral by his former female students (Matooke Republic, 2017), which is a pointer to the prevalence of sexual harassment and even abuse at the schools in the central part of Uganda. The gravity of the problem has been indicated in several media reports and official submissions to the Ministry of Education and Sports.

There is, therefore, evidence that sexual harassment in secondary schools is alive in spite of some efforts to sensitize students. What is not known is whether the communication strategies employed succeeded to create awareness of sexual harassment among students in secondary schools in Uganda, and/or its grievous harm.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this review, therefore, is to assess literature published on the effectiveness of communication strategies in creating awareness of sexual harassment in secondary schools.

1.3.1 Objectives of the Study

1. To examine studies that examine the effect of communication message design in creating awareness of sexual harassment amongst students in secondary schools.

2. To assess literature that investigate the effect of vehicles [media] used to communicate on the students' awareness of sexual harassment in secondary schools.
3. To examine literature that surveys the effect of evaluation of communication strategy to create students' awareness about sexual harassment in secondary schools.

1.4 Research Questions

1. What literature is available on the effect of communication message design in creating awareness of sexual harassment amongst students in secondary schools?
2. How do studies on vehicles [media] used to communicate sexual harassment show the effect of such vehicles on the students' awareness of sexual harassment in secondary schools?

3. How does the literature present the evaluation of communication strategy used to create students' awareness about sexual harassment in secondary schools?

1.5 Overview of Concepts

A communication strategy is a plan designed to disseminate designed messages to a particular audience, using specific vehicles of communication intended to achieve an objective that is evaluated during and at the end of the communication program. USAID (Senegal) (2017) identifies the main components of communication strategy as objectives, implementers, message, audience, channels and monitoring. In this particular study, communication strategy comprises the messages related to sexual harassment that are disseminated to the students, the vehicles used to create awareness about sexual harassment and the

vehicles (media) used in this communication.

Sexual harassment is not a new phenomenon in all societies – if it may be defined as unwanted cases of sexual relations are imposed by superiors on their subordinates (Siegel, 2003), but it has received considerable attention in fairly recent times. Yet, even today, sexual harassment continues to rear its ugly head in almost all sectors of society (Action Aid, 2022); whether that be in the political, social, professional, religious, and more unfortunately, in educational spaces.

Sexual harassment means a kind of unwanted sexual behavior that put individuals both male and female in a disadvantaged position (Kamberi & Gollopeni, 2015). Sexual harassment

consists of sexual advances that are unwelcome, requests to subordinates for sexual favors, and where there are other verbal that are sexually harassing or physical harassment that is of a sexual nature at the place of work or at an environment of learning, according to the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (RAINN, n.d.)

2.0 The Findings from the Literature

2.1 Effect of Message Design on Awareness of Sexual Harassment

Different studies demonstrate that how the message is designed could have an effect on how awareness is created or how the message impacts on the intended audience beneficiaries. Over time, there may be a need to modify the messaging strategy depending on how the audience changes (for example: the message may be changed from creating awareness amongst the recipients to

another message that is intended to make them intervene in certain ways against sexual harassment). Based on research and experience, some messages may be the most effective messaging strategies against sexual violence (National Sexual Violence Resource Center, 2015).

In order to have effective messaging against sexual harassment in schools, there must be identification and understanding of the target audience. This understanding must focus on the audience's education, diversity, culture, experiences and knowledge. The audience should be to be able to relate to or identify with the type and content of the message (Potter et al., 2010). For example, framing a bystander campaign for a college-aged audience may include information on how to be an engaged bystander at a party, while a campaign focused on the workplace

may include how to intervene when you witness sexual harassment (National Sexual Violence Resource Center, 2015). This argument is valid and I concur that without ensuring that the message is designed in such a way that the audience can identify with it, it may be difficult for the audience to be impacted by the message.

Secondly, it is important to structure the message in such a way that it connects with the core values of the target audience (National Sexual Violence Resource Center, 2015). When the message is connected with the values of the target audience, there are higher chances of the audience supporting the issue that is being promoted in the message (Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation & Movement Advancement Project, 2008). Furthermore, one other study established that when a message appeals to

compassion, the public is moved by it (FrameWorks Institute, 2013). Based on the approaches to message designed by the three studies, I do acknowledge that indeed it is necessary to carve the message so that it can relate to the values of the audience that is targeted and is also compassionate so as to appeal to them.

Thirdly, it is important to state facts and statistics than myths and conjecture (Cook & Lewandowsky, 2012). Available studies demonstrate that when messaging is evidenced based in a bid to demystify or debunk a myth, the evidence makes the audience targeted to remember the myth and discard the facts that are presented (O'Neil & Morgan, 2010). In messaging, therefore, it is necessary to present information that is factual so as to reinforce the skills, the action and knowledge that the

communicator is intending to mobilize among members of the audience (National Sexual Violence Resource Center, 2015). The idea that the message must be factual is valid because without facts, messages may not be treated as convincing by the audiences.

Fourthly, the messages need to be nonbiased, emotionally compelling and positive, since people are more attached to something that gives them hope, and they want to become part of a solution that is found (National Sexual Violence Resource Center, 2015). In my view, the messages should indeed be impartial in nature. Biased messages tend to be accepted by those they favor and rejected by those that are not favored by the messages.

Moreover, recent studies have established that when a full story is made shorter and concise, it tends to be more effective in taking messages to audiences (O'Neil, Simon, & Haydon, 2014). Therefore, an impactful message should state the problem, identify its issues that are underlying, or the factors that contribute to them, and provide solutions to address the problem (National Sexual Violence Resource Center, 2015). These findings by the two studies above present an accurate account of how the message should be designed. Complete messages that give different aspects of it are important for effective communication to take place.

In addition, sexual violence may occur because of some cultural dimensions. Here social norms in the community may actually be in support of such behavior, which is then

encouraged by the people's awareness of their culture. To address this in messaging, there is need for the communicator to identify the social norms that are positive, and promote them. These can include respect, equality, intolerance of violence, and safety, all of which help to prevent sexual violence (Davis, Parks, & Cohen, 2010). Therefore, to create more impact, media campaigns should be structured to carry messages that foster behavior that is healthy and condemn behavior that is not health and which may destroy the norms of society (World Health Organization, 2009). The cultural aspect of communication is key to getting messages accepted. In my perspective I agree with the findings of those studies that state that communication must take into account the cultural context of the communication.

In addition, anti-sexual harassment campaigns should be presented as a problem that affects the whole community, not a problem that is restricted to or should be a burden of the individual survivors. There tends to a disconnect or a knowledge gap between the issues, things and people that the advocates against sexual violence know and the knowledge that the public has about who is affected by sexual violence. The latter believes it is the individuals who have been subjected to sexual violence (National Sexual Violence Resource Center, 2015). In general, from the perspective of the public sexual harassment is a burden or problem for the individual who is a victim to carry. It is seen as a problem that is not affecting the whole community. It is assumed to be solely the result of an individual's actions and another individual's experiences (O'Neil & Morgan, 2010). In actual sense, sexual harassment is a problem that affects the

whole community, has an impact on everyone who is within a given community and if the social norms that are positive are applied, it can be prevented (National Sexual Violence Resource Center, 2015). I concur that to have effective messages, the messages should be designed to present sexual harassment as a bigger problem than just a problem of the victims.

2.2 Effect of Vehicles (Media) on Awareness of Sexual Harassment

Several studies have examined the efficacy of different vehicles or media used in creating awareness of sexual harassment. One of the communication strategies for raising students' awareness about sexual harassment in secondary schools is by the use of collegiate speech and debate programs. These provide a kind of methodology that administrators and students can utilize to develop and

implement policies against sexual harassment (Christensen, 2013). This view has been supported by Hogan, et al. (2016), who have argued that speech and debates enable students to acquire adequate knowledge about some controversies that are important, in conjunction with the confidences and skills they need to be able to engage in civic life. Indeed, based on different cases I have observed, I do agree that debates can be a strong approach to fighting sexual harassment.

Cox (n.d.) has expounded that speeches on college or school campuses target students with information about a problem and that such speeches may be impromptu, whereby topics are derived from quotations; informative—entailing an original and factual speech by a student on a subject to fulfill the aim of informing the audience;

dramatic duo which entails acting out a cutting that is derived from a play or plays that has literary recognition, serious or humorous, involving two or more than two characters acted out by two individuals; extemporaneous speaking. The speaker is given topics that belong to a general area of an event that is current and then he or she can select one, and then speak persuasively with an original speech by a student that is designed to reinforce, change attitudes, values, actions or believes, and inspire the audience.

It is important to observe that the literature on collegiate speaking by students provides descriptions of what the speeches entail (Cox, n.d.); audience analysis by the speaker (Lawrie, 2021); public speaking disfluencies (Montes, et al., 2019). From the above studies that recommend speeches as

effective tools for fighting sexual harassment, I share the same perspective that they are effective.

Another communication strategy is what has been termed as “Theatre of the Oppressed”. Techniques of Theatre of the oppressed have shaped several prevention programs against sexual assault (Christensen, 2013) The strategy has been reported to have been used in many universities which are in the United States. It is used to engage students in an experience of active learning in ways how to prevent possible sexual assault. Some of the universities where this has taken place have included University of Oregon in Eugene, the University of Texas at Austin, University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill and California State University at Long Beach. These universities have implemented these theories into practice (Christensen,

2013; Rodr  guez, Rich, Hastings, & Page, 2006).

The strategy is peeled off from Augusto Boal's (1985) Theatre of the Oppressed theory, which urges the use of public theatre for the purposes of creating social change. Boal's main aim is to convert a spectator that is passive into one that is a performance that is active inside the space of theatre and eventually for these performers to perform their daily lives (Christensen, 2013). Boal, believes that all human beings are all actors who performing to scripts that oppressive systems have written for us (Christensen, 2013). The assumption then is that we all perform a variety of roles, which are dependent on the type of audience we do engage and the various situations that we go through (Christensen, 2013). Boal is of the conviction that all human beings are capable

of being creative if their consciousness about oppressive forces has been stimulated and raised. When creativity is utilized for social change, it is beneficial to the community. This notwithstanding, most people do not take up their creative responsibilities or at least they defer them and rely on outside forces to do it for them (Babbage, 2004; Boal, 1985). Hence, using public theatre, not only sensitizes, but also evokes emotion and sets into motion the spectator and participant to take action against an issue.

In a study of sexual assault prevention, the National Institute of Justice concluded that "theatrical presentations can simultaneously educate and entertain, adapting concerns to the interests, vocabularies and attention spans of their audiences" (Epstein & Langenbahn, 1999, p. 80). Several studies

highlight that interactive methods provide more effective learning than instructive methods (Grey, Boland, Davidson, Li, & Tamborlane, 2000; Margalit, Glick, & Benbassat, 2004). This is based on the assumption that the interactive format made possible by theatre, for instance, results in a level of processing that is deeper and a change of attitude than if people were subjected to structured presentations or lectures (Milhausen, McBride, & Jun, 2006).

Nonetheless, it is important to note that the evidence of the effectiveness of theatre as a communication strategy in creating awareness of an issue, was done in universities, according to cited literature above. It is not clear whether theatre can have a similar effect on secondary school students, given that students at universities and in secondary schools are

demographically different. It is also not given that the strategy is better than other competing strategies in creating awareness among secondary school students of sexual harassment. Therefore, there is a knowledge gap that this study will fill. Nonetheless I do also subscribe to the view that theatre or drama are vital tools for creating awareness of sexual harassment amongst students or other victims of sexual harassment and they should be embraced.

Another communication strategy is mass media in facilitating awareness. The media performs a role that is significant because it helps to form and influence the attitudes and behavior of people (Saunders & Goddard, 2002). In a study on the role of the media in increasing society's awareness of and response to child abuse and neglect, Goddard and Saunders (2001) noted the role

of the features and news that do report about cases of child abuse. The attention from the media to such cases, significantly influences the public responses as well as the political and professional responses that may be made to the situation that children and young people are going through (Saunders & Goddard, 2002). Whereas I agree that the mass media can play a pivotal role in fighting sexual harassment through awareness campaigns, it is necessary to find out which type of mass media the students consume and which time is best to use to communicate to them using mass media.

A review of the literature on mass media campaigns indicates that there are many examples in which campaigns do impact the knowledge of the public about various issues such as drug and alcohol use, work safety, speeding, drink-driving, AIDS, obesity,

domestic violence and cigarette smoking (Saunders & Goddard, 2002). Attitudinal and/or behavioural change can also be influenced by campaigns although their results may not last beyond the campaign that is being implemented (Reger, et al., 2000).

Nonetheless, the literature cited above, which touts the awareness benefits of media campaigns is not calibrated to students in secondary schools. It is in reference to communities of adults outside the school environment.

The literature also says nothing about how this strategy stacks up with other strategies in terms of creating awareness, i.e., whether it is the best or not. This study is, therefore, needed to see if media coverage (news, features, opinion pieces produced within a

school environment) of an issue affecting and existing with the school can have a similar outcome on student, and whether it is better than communication strategies or not in doing so.

Social media networks such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram Pinterest etc have the potential of carrying a message to a very large audience. Indications from research are that social networking sites are being used by 73% of adults. The most popular of those sites is said to be Facebook, which has the largest number of users. Young people have a strong preference for Instagram and Twitter (Duggan, 2013).

2.3 Effect of Evaluation of Strategies in Creating Awareness of Sexual Harassment amongst students

Communication strategies used to create awareness of sexual harassment amongst

students need to be evaluated to determine whether they are effective or not and what modifications need to be made of them. The target of the messaging related to sexual harassment needs to be made very clear from the studies examined here. Sexual harassment is considered widely as one of the forms of violence that is gender based that is very common and known to affect girls in most cases (Berman, 2002). Nonetheless, there is a tendency for different stakeholders not to acknowledge that it exists and that it has harmful effects on girls. Because of this awareness about the vice has not been created. Although research has the prevalence of sexual harassment generally, very little attention has been accorded to the sexual harassment that takes place against adolescent females and young girls (Dahinten, 1999) affecting its awareness.

When behaviours that signify sexual harassment are seen, they are dismissed with the usual stereotypical language that normalizes them as the status quo. Boys are generally accepted to behave in a certain way as a sign of male power and control (Berman, 2002). These tendencies, weaken girls and makes them vulnerable, whereas boys are championed as a more powerful specie that can behave in whichever way they want against girls (Berman, 2002). Sexual harassment continues to take place despite the negative effects it has on girls, but there seems to be very little bother about it. As Rooney (1998) observed, through the because acknowledging the problem of sexual harassment has not been done, it has become a condonement of more explicit forms of violence.

Research has revealed that awareness of sexual harassment is generally low. Alizah Ali (2017) in one study about how much awareness about sexual harassment exists in the workplace found that there are different aspects that enhance or impede the awareness level, and these are shame, lack of knowledge about sexual harassment and fear etc. The study recommended that it government should take up the responsibility of organizing campaigns intended to stop sexual harassments from person to person (Berman, 2002). The findings of these studies demonstrate that sometimes communication strategies may be ineffective, and I do agree with their findings. The study also proposed that within institutions, the authorities need to fulfill their responsibilities to make sure that the employees that work in these institutions are given a safe environment that they can

work in without sexual harassment (Berman, 2002).

In a study by Berman (2002), there are considerable variations in awareness of sexual harassment amongst different age segments. Within younger groups such as those aged 8-10, they may have heard about sexual harassment but could not effectively define it. A slightly older age segment such as youth aged 11-14 are aware of sexual harassment, and can describe it more than the younger group (Berman, 2002). However, the data from the girls studied indicated that they accepted sexually harassing behavior as the norm rather than the exception. They say them as an expected part of growing up, or an integral part of a girl's life. This led them not to be surprised or disturbed whether it occurred (Berman, 2002).

For participants who were older, such as those of the age group 15-18 they were more aware about sexual harassment and were able to effectively describe some of its features and could identify sexual harassment behavior that was unwelcome, unwanted, and persistent (Berman, 2002).

2.4 Existing Gaps in the Literature on Communication Strategies and Awareness of Sexual Harassment in Secondary Schools

From the review of the above literature, the following gaps were identified. There is hardly any literature that shows that collegiate speaking creates awareness of students on sexual harassment; hence, there is a literature gap to fill—which is what this study did.

Secondly, it is not clear whether amongst the vehicles presented theatre can have a similar effect on secondary school students, given that students at universities and in secondary schools are demographically different. Therefore, there is a knowledge gap that this study filled.

The literature, which touts the awareness benefits of media campaigns is not calibrated to students in secondary schools. It is in reference to communities of adults outside the school environment.

The literature on message design of sexual harassment does not reflect the realities in Wakiso District, the studies having been done outside Uganda. Therefore, there is a gap to fill in terms of whether or not in Wakiso, students are aware of sexual harassment.

With regards to messages, there are several effective or impactful messaging strategies that are given. However, they do not specifically apply to school settings and the literature does not show which ones rank above which ones, and that is what this study is also about.

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