Street Harassment Experiences of Female Undergraduate Students at a State University in Zimbabwe

Mawere D., Moyo A.

Gender Institute Midlands State University, Gweru, Zimbabwe

Abstract: - The study examined street harassment experiences of female undergraduate students at a university in Gweru, Zimbabwe. Socio-cultural and socio-control theories informed the study. The research adopted a constructivist, qualitative approach. Interviews were carried out with 18 undergraduate female students between the ages of 19 to 24 years to find out the nature of street harassment they experienced, how they responded to the harassment as well as what could be done to make them move in the city without fear of harassment. The study found out that street harassment was prevalent in public transport and in the streets. Street harassment was attributed to how female students dressed as well as a general negative attitude towards them. The street harassment issue was attributed to male domination of the public space with the intention of keeping females in a subordinate position. What emerges from this study is that street harassment is a matter of concern to the female undergraduate students who feel that their freedom of movement is restricted due to consistent and persistent street harassment by men. Reporting to police does not seem to yield any positive results. If anything it brings further harassment of the participants. There is need to induct the police into the issue of street harassment by educating and empowering them about respecting girls especially those who come to report that they have been harassed. Furthermore, the participants believe that public education is a vital piece of the battle to eliminate street harassment.

Key terms: - Street harassment; female undergraduate students; public spaces; objectification

I. INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Street harassment is a barrier to equal accessing of public space by women and men, girls and boys. Whilst there are a few women and girls who read street remarks as a form of compliment, these street remarks are a barrier to realizing a world in which gender is not used as an implement to define, categorize and discriminate. Most girls and women subjected to street harassment on a daily basis are affected to the extent that they do change the time they get into the public space. They also alter the number of times they get into the public space. Ultimately this leads to their restricted inclusion into this shared space at the same time denying access to civil life. There is a common belief that street harassment is an insignificant fact of life, and yet it impacts negatively on girls and women’s lives. What is clear is that street harassment’s existence in public spaces is not inherent in human nature. Furthermore it is not a natural outcome of biological differences between women and men. By and large, street harassment can be viewed as a revelation of socially constructed gender norms and systems of patriarchal power. It should not be viewed as something that remains in place for ever.

II. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Harassment of women has been and is still a common feature throughout the world. Kissling, (1991:452) points out that women from Syria, Lebanon, West Germany, and Taiwan describe experiences similar to those of American women in so far as their street harassment experiences are concerned. Wise and Stanley (1987) in their writings on street harassment in the United Kingdom noted that women’s street harassment experiences in this country were similar to those of their friends from Singapore, Australia, Pakistan, Guyana, Iran and Malaysia.

In African countries like Tanzania, South Africa and Zimbabwe harassment of women and girls in the streets has also been reported. Street harassment therefore is an international issue that requires global attention. It also requires global solutions. Harassment of women and girls in Tanzania in the 1960s was by the Youth League. Women and girls were harassed for wearing mini-skirts, wigs, skin lightening creams, tight pants, dresses or shorts (Ivaska, 2002). In South Africa a lot of women and girls have been strip naked, frog marched and paraded around taxi ranks (Vincent, 1998). Reasons given for street harassment of women in these countries revolved around their dress. Street harassment was also done under the guise of preservation of African culture.

In Zimbabwe harassment of women and girls is rife especially in urban environments. In Bulawayo, a city in Zimbabwe, a rank marshal strip naked a woman wearing a mini-skirt in 2012. The woman was forced to walk naked (News DzeZimbabwe 5 November 2012). In Beitbridge, another town in Zimbabwe a rank marshal was slapped with a 40 days imprisonment sentence for indecently assaulting a woman in a miniskirt (Bulawayo News, 2013). In Harare, women have been subjected to harassment especially at bus terminuses for wearing mini-skirts, trousers or any other form of dress which rank marshals considered inappropriate. Reasons given for
Street harassment of women by men in Zimbabwe like in other countries in Africa also revolved around their dress. Similarly, like in other countries in Africa, street harassment was done under the guise of preservation of African culture. In the context of Zimbabwe, these street harassment behaviours are a violation of rights to human dignity, equality, personal security, freedom of movement and freedom of expression. Section 52(a) of the Zimbabwe Constitution provides for the right to freedom from both public and private sources.

Street harassment is a serious issue. However it is considered a trivial issue by the generality of society and yet women do not trivialize it. Interest in this particular study was generated by many incidents of street harassment of girls we witnessed. We saw the girls being traumatised sometimes in the presence of police officers who simply turned a blind eye to the incidents. Given the age range of 19 to 24 years for females in public spaces, it was prudent that understanding their street harassment experiences, their perceived effects of the street harassment they faced, coping with street harassment as well as interventions they felt could be instituted for them and others to feel safer when they were in public spaces was prudent.

III. STREET HARASSMENT MEANING AND PURPOSE

Street harassment is a form of sexual harassment which is rife globally but rarely discussed. Street harassment, as a term in research, takes on board a variety of names inclusive of street hassling (West, 1987), street remarks (Kissling, 1991), public harassment (Gardner, 1995), sexual terrorism (Nielsen, 2002) and stranger harassment (Fairchild and Rudman, 2008). Given that the term street harassment appears to be an encompassing term by most researchers it is therefore, of all terms above, the term that has been used in this study.

Street harassment has been defined severally by a number of authors. The term refers to harassment that is faced mostly by women from men who are strangers, in public spaces like streets, parks, modes of public transport and bus stops (Dhillon & Bakaya 2014:3). From these two researchers’ definition of harassment, the harassers are men and boys. The victims are women and girls. The harassment takes place in public spaces.

Although street harassment encompasses a wide variety of behaviours, gestures and comments, it has the following defining characteristics:

...the targets of street harassment are female; the harassers are male; the harassers are unacquainted with their targets; the encounter is face to face; the forum is a public one, such as a street, sidewalk, bus, bus station, taxi, or other place to which the public generally has access but the content of the speech, if any, is not intended as public discourse (Bowman 1993:524).

In this characterization of street harassment, male strangers are blamed for harassing women and girls. Verbal and non-verbal behaviour, frequently sexual in nature, prevails in the harassment process. The harassers’ harassment behaviours are many and varied. However, five defining characteristics of street harassment have been put forward.

A comprehensive definition of sexual harassment therefore would be that it is a range of non-verbal behaviours, such as staring, whistling, following and sexual gestures; verbal communication such as catcalls, greetings, sexist or rude comments; and physically aggressive acts such as groping and following. (Anti-Street Harassment, 2014; Bowman, 1993; Kearl, 2014; Kissling, 1991).

Men street-harass women and girls through insults, innuendo, stranger remarks, wolf-whistles, leers, winks, grabs, fondling, indecent exposure, pinches, catcalls and stranger remarks, among other forms of public humiliation. Persistent requests for someone’s name, phone number or destination are also ways in which men do street harass women and girls. The extreme ways of harassing women and girls in the street include sexual assault and rape (Bowman, 1993; Holla Back; Stop Street Harassment, 2015). The remarks are frequently sexual in nature and comment evaluatively on a girl or woman’s physical appearance or presence in public. The fundamental subtext of street remarks of men on women and girls, is the desire of the men to assert their sexual power over women through a public, unwanted intrusion into their private space. Street harassment reinforces spatial boundaries; it marks women as trespassers in public spaces that belong to men (McAllister, 1978). In other words street harassment reinforces the ubiquitous sexual objectification of women and girls in everyday life.

Street harassment is therefore a form of gender-based harassment occurring in public spaces. It is perpetrated by strangers who in the majority of cases are men. It is faced to a large extent by women and girls. Men want to dominate the public spaces by frustrating women and girls and confining them to the private sphere. It takes place in parks, streets, public transport and bus- and commuter- stops. In a fair and just world, public spaces ought to be equally accessed and enjoyed by men, boys, women and girls. However, when women and girls are made to feel uncomfortable for no other reason than their being female, then it becomes a society’s problem. It becomes very difficult to understand why and how male power and aggression manifest in the public spaces.

IV. STREET HARASSMENT RESEARCH

There is not much research carried out to determine the prevalence of street harassment. However street harassment is emerging to be a pervasive form of gender-based violence worldwide. There has not been a lot of theorizing on the street harassment issue. Therefore no single theory will sufficiently and comprehensively explain street harassment. Space is socially constructed by society. In view
of this, space is not necessarily egalitarian as men and women do not have equal access to the public space, let alone control over that space. Space in an urban environment has historically been inscribed as masculine and sexualized, prohibiting women’s use of and movement through this gendered space (Wilson, 1991; Massey, 1994; Koskella, 1999).

The sociocultural theory looks at the social construction of gender and the role that gender norms and expectations play in promoting male violence against women. Gender roles place males in a superior, dominant position to females. Women are objectified, sometimes to the point of blaming themselves for the behaviors to which they are subjected. Patriarchal culture socializes males to be aggressive, dominant, and sexual, and it socializes females to be more submissive. From this perspective, male aggression towards women is eroticized or romanticized (Gardner, 1995).

The social control theory argues that harassment is a “means of social control that serves to reproduce and maintain the status quo of male dominance” (Lenton et al., 1999, p. 520). Harassment forces some women out of the public sphere, which men consider their territory, and back into the private sphere. The authors suggest that harassment is likely related to the social control theory, with many women experiencing fear and limiting their activities as a result of being harassed. The two theories demonstrate the power that men hold. The views above imply that harassment is likely related to the social control theory, with many women experiencing fear and limiting their activities as a result of being harassed.

Objectification of women by men leads to their being harassed. Victims tend to passively respond to street harassment by pretending to ignore it, freezing up, attempting to avoid the harasser, or putting on a blank expression, instead of confronting the harasser or reporting the incident to the police (Bowman, 1993; Fairchild and Rudman, 2008; Logan, 2015). Women are treated as objects to be looked at and touched and not as intelligent human beings. Street harassment of women is all about power over and control of women’s sexuality. The unwanted sexual attention experienced in street harassment is another example of women being regarded as sexual objects. Women street-harassed, often feel compelled to stay at home – the private sphere, rather than enter public spaces. Other women experience shame, anxiety, depression, sleep disorders and other distresses (Livingstone, 2015; Logan, 2015). Street harassment therefore dehumanizes women and girls. It does so by reducing them to sexual parts and functions. The common thread running through all forms of sexual objectification is the women’s experience of being treated as a body, valued largely for its consumption by men (Fairchild & Rudman, 2008).

Most societies in the world are patriarchal. Street harassment is therefore symptomatic of a patriarchal culture bent on oppressing women (Logan, 2015). Male supremacy and female subordination characterize most of these societies. Given this set up, patriarchal societies share a discourse discouraging women and girls from leaving the private sphere, which is the supposed site of patriarchal protection. Over and above this, public space is imagined as inherently dangerous (Fregoso, 2003). Street harassment triggers a fear of male violence among the women traversing this space. Furthermore, the fear of rape literature suggests that women alter their behaviours by limiting how, when and where they travel to protect themselves from rape. Women therefore restrict their movement in public spaces.

Feminists on the other hand, view street harassment as a source of disempowerment of women. It is also viewed as part of women and girls systematic oppression. Street harassment is about power and control. It is a manifestation of societal discrimination like sexism, classism, and racism (Dhillon & Bakaya 2014). Given that everyone must be treated with respect, dignity and empathy it becomes incumbent upon society to interrogate street harassment and the negativity that goes with it in terms of how women and girls are handled in the public spaces with a view to making this space conducive to occupation by all.

The study therefore focuses on the nature of street harassment female students experience, perceived consequences of street harassment to them, the coping strategies they employ as well as changes needed for them to live in a harassment free city.

**Participants**

Participants were 18 undergraduate female students between the ages of 19 to 24 years. The undergraduate participants comprised year 1, year 2 and year 4 students. Year 3 students were excluded as they were out on work related learning. The participants were pursuing undergraduate degrees in Education, Human Resource Management and Film and Theatre Arts.

Participants were sampled through convenience and snowball sampling. Data was collected through face to face semi-structured interviews. The interviews were conducted in English. The interviews ranged from 20 to 30 minutes. Each of the interviews was audiotaped and then transcribed. The interviews were analysed using the interpretative phenomenological approach (Smith & Eatough, 2007). The interviews were read to understand their meaning and relevance. This was followed by noting similarities and differences across all interviews. Themes were then identified, arranged into clusters and checked against the data. Themes coming out were then put together as a narrative account of the whole research process. The researchers’ interpretations of the process was factored in.

**V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Themes emerging from the study’s analysis include; prevalence of street harassment, sources of street harassment, how participants responded to street harassment, perceived society’s response to street harassment by participants, ways
participants use to protect themselves from street harassment, and ways of reducing incidences of street harassment. These themes are presented below together with excerpts from interviews.

**Prevalence of street harassment**

Female students interviewed indicated that street harassment was prevalent among the students who frequently went into town. The female students residing within the university premises pointed out that they experienced street harassment as they moved from the university into town, as they moved in town and as they went back to university. Some of the interviewed female students who had accommodation outside the university campus experienced street harassment in similar places to the students in residence as well as in their residential areas outside the university. Street harassment experienced was in form of men staring, passing lewd comments, rubbing against the female students’ bodies. Harassment took place in crowded places, in buses and in commuter mode of transport as well as small vehicles that ferry passengers into town and from town. The street harassment took place in broad daylight as well as at night.

Verbal street harassment occurred if and when the undergraduate female students were perceived to be semi-naked. In other words when the harassers felt that the female students left parts of their bodies uncovered. The harassers would shout at the female students. Some of the exact words said to the female students as they were harassed were:

*You are a prostitute. How can you dress like you are in your bedroom?* (a year 1 Human Resource female student quoted the harasser as saying).

*You girl, you are almost naked. For how much can I sleep with you?* (A year 4 Film and Theatre student quoted the harasser as saying).

*Girl A is better dressed than Girl B. Furthermore Girl B is ugly. I would prefer to have sex with Girl A who is beautiful* (A year 2 student quoted the harasser as saying).

*These half-dressed girls should be coming from the female sex university in this town* (A year 4 Education student quoted the harasser as saying).

*You bitches get away from our streets!* (A year 2 Human Resource student quoted the harassers as saying).

The participants pointed out that they put on tights, jeans, shorts, skirts, back outs and sometimes bob-tubes. This wide array of dressing is fashionable to them. However, in the eyes and minds of the harassers they are naked.

Physical street harassment perpetrated on participants by harassers included fondling of breasts, rubbing of body parts in buses as standing passengers, being obstructed from movement, as well as attempted rape, among other experiences. A year 4 Film and Theatre participant observed that:

As a female university student, every male adult thinks you are a sex object. You are viewed as having a sexual mind. Whatever the guy says, he thinks you will agree.

The other 2 year Human Resource participant remarked that:

*If you have modest dressing you are seen as poor and desperate for money and better clothing. Therefore if you are approached, they tell you they want to have sex with you in order to give you money. You are harassed because of what you are wearing. Space out there is threatened and threatening.*

There is no doubt that being subjected to verbal shouts and physical street harassments as indicated above, adversely affects the victims psychologically. The personalities of the victims are affected as they face distressing situations. Their ego is deflated. There is no doubt that they feel the threat, the disgrace and the scare caused by the verbal shouts. Traumatization characterizes the street harassment experience. Overall victims may feel depressed, have high levels of anxiety and are likely to experience low self-esteem.

**Sources of street harassment**

On being asked about why street harassment was prevalent in Gweru, the female undergraduate students gave a number of reasons. Patriarchy was given as one factor that led to this phenomenon. Generally Zimbabwe was viewed as a male dominated society. Men being visible in the public sphere whilst women were confined to the domestic sphere. A year 4 Education student pointed out that:

*From the time the country was a colony up to the time of independence, men went to work in town and women remained in the rural areas to take care of the family. These women became dependent on men who were the bread winners. The proliferation of women in the city, especially female students, who when they graduate are likely to be working and therefore independent, threatens men’s bread winning status. This leads men to want to demean them.*

Absence of the knowledge of the law was one reason given as leading men to harass female students without fear of being arrested for exhibiting such behaviour. A year 2 Human Resource student stated that:

*There was no piece of legislation that prohibited street harassment or if it is there, the harasser and the victim lack awareness of that piece of legislation. Personally I am not aware of the existence of such piece of legislation.*

The metropolitan nature of the city leads to lack of close community ties and this was also cited as contributing to street harassment. A year 4 Film and Theatre student remarked that:
Those who see me being harassed in the street or in commuter omnibuses or in the small vehicles will not interfere as they feel they are not related to the harasser or to me as a victim of harassment.

How the participants responded to street harassment

When asked about how they responded to incidences of street harassment, participants gave quite a number of reactions. A year 1 Human Resource student indicated that when harassed she reacted by moving away from the harassers due to fear that if she were to remain in the place where she had been harassed, the situation would deteriorate further. A year 2 Education student indicated that when she was harassed she ignored completely the harassers. A year 4 Film and Theatre student also indicated that after being subjected to street harassment she left the place and shared this experience with her friends in their residences. You feel that your integrity, your dignity, your values are thrown away remarked the participant. The other response to this harassment according to a year 2 Human Resource student was that she cried as a way of venting her frustration with the traumatizing experience. You sooth yourself when you are harassed. You go to your room and console yourself – she further commented. Other reactions to harassment by the participants were characterized by negative emotions that included feeling angry about it, feeling embarrassed about it, feeling unsafe in the place of harassment, as well as feeling objectified and frustrated. This is in agreement with what was found out by Dhillon and Bakaya (2014:16) in their study on sexual harassment in Delhi, India.

Participants’ perceived response to street harassment by society

The participants felt that in the urban environment they were in, people in there did not care about the issue of street harassment at all. Perceptions of the female students about society’s responses to their being harassed came from their observations of the police, elderly women and other members of society in general.

The participants indicated that when they were harassed, they went to report to the police in the hope that the harassers would be arrested and brought to book. However their reporting experiences revealed that there was apathy toward their street harassment concerns. Street harassment, the students felt, was the natural order of things to the police who would be arrested and brought to book. However their reporting experiences revealed that there was apathy toward their street harassment concerns. Street harassment, the students felt, was the natural order of things to the police who would be arrested and brought to book. Instead of investigating on the reports of harassment made by the female students they worsen the situation for the students caused the harassment by the way they behaved or the way they were dressed. Police could also be a source of harassment. As law enforcement agents, the police are supposed to protect the female undergraduate students from street harassment. They are supposed to arrest perpetrators of violence without looking at the reason why their victims are being harassed because their duty is to maintain law and order in society. The arrest could be done as a deterrent measure. The police have the capacity to use the provisions of the criminal code to arrest the harassers.

The generality of the urban society inclusive of elderly women and other men who are not harassers are also apathetic about street harassment of female undergraduate students as well. Society as viewed by the harassed female students, is not very sympathetic to them. Members of society as viewed by the victims blame the students for putting themselves into harassment situations. The public views the semi-naked dressing of female students’ as improper. This is evidenced by the excerpts below:

When I went to the police to report after being harassed the male officer I reported to requested to have an affair with me instead of investigating the matter (Year 4 Human Resource student).

When I was harassed, I went to report to the police. Instead of pursuing the issue the male police officer asked me to have sex with him (Year 1 Film and Theatre student).

I reported my case of harassment to a female police officer who told me that I had invited the harassment as I was semi-naked. She did not pursue the matter further (Year 2 Education student).

It is not necessary to report to the police. I went to the police to report that I had been harassed then I was told by the police officer I had reported to that I should accompany him to the scene of the incident for me to show them the harasser. I knew that the harasser was not easy to identify given the congestion at the taxi rank. Even if I had identified the harasser, I had my doubts that the harasser could have been apprehended (Year 4 Film and Theatre student).

The above excerpts from the victims clearly show that the police officers do not want to protect the victims of street harassment. In other words, police protection is not guaranteed. The police force is viewed by the female students as apathetic. They do not show interest, enthusiasm or concern when the students report incidences of street harassment. They do not arrest harassers. This could be due to stereotypes and negative attitudes they have about women. Instead of investigating on the reports of harassment made by the female students they worsen the situation for the students by either proposing love to them or by telling them that they caused the harassment by the way they behaved or the way they were dressed. Police could also be a source of harassment. As law enforcement agents, the police are supposed to protect the female undergraduate students from street harassment. They are supposed to arrest perpetrators of violence without looking at the reason why their victims are being harassed because their duty is to maintain law and order in society. The arrest could be done as a deterrent measure. The police have the capacity to use the provisions of the criminal code to arrest the harassers.

Men in the city see sex objects in the female students. Trading money for sex is the perception of men in the city. What you offer is sex, what you need is money (commented a year 2 Education student).

I was harassed whilst I was walking with my boyfriend. He tried to intervene and he was almost beaten by the harassers (year 1 Human resource student).
Married women in the city, especially in residential areas where the female students reside, view these female students as threatening to take over their husbands. They think that we benefit from their husbands’ cash (remarked a 4 year Film and Theatre student). If the bystanders see a student being harassed in the street they do not intervene.

Ways used by participants to protect themselves from street harassment

Participants have come up with a variety of ways of protecting themselves from street harassment. One site of public harassment has been in commuter taxis. Female undergraduates devised ways of protecting their bodies. One way has been by putting on dressing covering the greater part of their bodies. Another way has been placing of apaperbag or aleather bag between them and the potential harassers to minimize chances of being in contact with would be harassers. In a situation where they were walking in a crowded place one way to protect their breasts from being touched was by covering their breasts using their hands. Yet another way was to avoid moving at night as nights were more scarring in terms of the possibility of being harassed. They would avoid night travel even if they would be accompanied by a male friend. Though many women report feeling safer when walking with someone (Kearl, 2014) that does not necessarily mean they are safe from street harassment.

Ways of reducing incidences of street harassment

Ways of reducing the prevalence of street harassment are many and varied. Knowledge of what street harassment entails ought to be imparted to all the female students as well as to male students. Empowerment is critical a strategy in this regard. Bystanders need to be empowered so that they can assist in reducing street harassment instead of just watching their female counterparts being subjected to the inhuman treatment. The police ought to be more active by apprehending those who partake in street harassment. The media should not been left out in conscientising the public about street harassment by way of publishing the incidences and the punishments meted out to those apprehended for indulging in such vices.

Victims of street harassment have shared their experiences. They have also explained how these experiences have impacted on their feelings of safety, self-worth and self-objectification.

VI. CONCLUSION

The fear of being harassed in the streets in town, in public transport and in private vehicles has led to female undergraduate students to alter their movements into public places. Those who have experienced street harassment are now travelling into town during the day. Given that dressing has been a source of street harassment, their choice of dressing as they go into town or moving in their residential areas has been altered. Responsibility of street harassment has not been blamed on the female students. Responsibility for street harassment has been placed on the men who harass them.

What emerges from this study is that street harassment is a matter of concern to the female undergraduate students. Of deep concern to the students is the portrayal of their university as a sex university. They believe this perception does contribute to their dehumanization in the public spaces. The perception of married women in the residential areas outside of the university that the female students are a threat to their husbands as they think that the students benefit from their husbands’ cash makes it worse for the female undergraduate students. The need to conduct awareness campaigns on what street harassment entails in this city cannot be overemphasized. The campaigns ought to be inclusive targeting a wide range of audience including people in the streets and in residential areas. Workshops on street harassment and how to intervene safely if you witness street harassment are also imperative. In other words public education is a vital piece of the battle to eliminate street harassment.

Given that male police officers ask for an affair with the female undergraduate students when they report that they have been harassed in the street or in public or private transport, as well as the police perception that the complainant has caused the harassment, it becomes imperative for the police to be proactive on this issue. Deployment of plain clothed female police personnel in public spaces as well as constantly training the police on how to handle cases of street harassment of women and girls in a gender sensitive way are strategies that could address this concern. Furthermore, information about functions of Police Victim Friendly Units should be disseminated since most female students who are harassed are not aware of the existence of this department. Therefore police need to be inducted into the issue of street harassment by educating and empowering them about respecting girls especially those who come to report that they have been harassed.

Women’s organizations should take a radical approach to challenge the power dynamics in society given that the harassment of female students is all about patriarchy(male dominance). The approach as done elsewhere, should include, mini-skirt marches and persistent advocacy for the full recognition of the autonomy of female students’ lives. Awareness raising and on the road shows throwing flyers could also go some way in mitigating street harassment.

Empowering the female undergraduate students is also critical to arrest this scourge. This could be done through peer dialogue facilitated by women and female student organizations. Undergraduate female students in general need to be their sisters’ keepers. These female students need to recognize that harassment of girls in the street is about male domination. There is need to realize that street harassment is a tool to keep the female students in their subordination. The need for girls and women to unite and fight for their right to
equality cannot be over emphasized. This ought to be done for them to discover and achieve their dreams.

At the national level, conscientization of society on the laws that regulate behaviour in public places ought to be done. Awareness of Section 52(a) of the Constitution of Zimbabwe which provides for the right to freedom from both public and private sources as well as Criminal Law Act could go a long way in empowering both victims of harassment and potential harassers. Chapter 9:23 (77b) of the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act (2004:39) says that:

> Any person who knowingly or realizing that there is a real risk or possibility that he or she will be heard, utters or makes use of different or obscene language in or near a public place, or in or near a private place within hearing of another person shall be guilty of public indecency and liable to a fine not exceeding level nine or imprisonment for a period not exceeding six months or both.

Awareness and knowledge of these pieces of legislation as well as apprehending the harassers by police will go a long way to reduce incidences of street harassment.

This research like any other has got its own limitations. The study is intended to share female undergraduate students’ street harassment experiences. The sample of 18 students was small. Female students are not the only targets for street harassers. Women as well as girls of similar age are victims as well. Possibility of researcher bias in a qualitative research of this nature cannot be ignored although efforts have been made to maintain reflexivity throughout the study process. Future research within the realm of street harassment could harness experiences of female students in all universities in the country as well as women and girls out of the university system. Furthermore a study could be carried out to find out how men and boys view the issue of street harassment from their own perspective. Such a study could help in understanding if and how they identify instances of street harassment.

REFERENCES


Newspaper articles
