

A Comparison between the Consequences of Peer Sexual Harassment for Boys and Girls

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ABSTRACT This article reports on findings of a concurrent mixed method study on gender differentiating consequences of peer sexual harassment for learners in the Free State Province of South Africa. A self-reporting questionnaire, based on Fitzgerald's Sexual Experience Questionnaire and Timmerman's questionnaire on unwanted sexual behaviour in secondary schools, was completed by 474 Grade 8-12 learners (286 girls, 180 boys, and gender not indicated for 8). The average age of the respondents (in completed years) was 17.0 years. Frequency tables, ratios, Spearman's rho, Kendall's tau, χ^2 - and t-tests, as well as coding frames were used to analyse the data. The qualitative and quantitative data reveal that contrary to popular belief and most sexual harassment research findings, the consequences of sexual harassment for boys and girls are more similar than different. Boys, however, experience sexual harassment as more flattering and "normal" than girls. This study shows that boys who have been subjected to sexual harassment feel more like fools, embarrassed and powerless than their female counterparts. It may, therefore, be concluded that whilst female victims react more emotionally, male victims react in terms of their idea of masculinity.