Abstract

Introduction: Sexual harassment means unwanted sexually determined behaviour such as physical contacts and advances, making sexually derogative comments, and sexual pressures whether by verbal or non-verbal actions. Students may not recognize the harassing behaviours and the harasser can take this as an advantage. Therefore, it becomes very important to understand how the students perceive different types of sexual harassment. Objective: To assess the perception of sexual harassment by the undergraduate students. Methods: A cross-sectional survey was conducted among 408 undergraduate students of selected professional colleges of Udupi district. Data was collected using Perception Scale on sexual harassment. Stratified proportionate systematic random sampling technique was used. Result: The data suggest that majority of the students, 396 (97.1%) have agreed that asking to indulge in sexual acts in return to a favour done, is considered as sexual harassment whereas only 203 (49.8%) agreed that repeated requests for dating in spite of rejection by a person is considered as sexual harassment. Most of the students i.e., 371 (90.9%) agreed that establishing sexual harassment awareness programs can be helpful in preventing sexual harassment in colleges whereas only 174 (42.6%) agreed that establishing proper dress code can prevent sexual harassment in colleges. Conclusion: The perception on sexual harassment differs with the students’ age, gender and course of the study.

Keywords: Perception, sexual harassment, undergraduate students