

## **THE ABSTRACT**

This study sought to investigate whether or not the problem of sexual harassment existed in schools in Jamaica. It examined the situation as it existed among students and teachers through the use of eight research questions.

The sample was randomly selected from six primary and six secondary schools in rural and urban Jamaica and comprised 360 students, 120 teachers and 12 principals. Two questionnaires and one interview schedule constructed for use with descriptive statistics constituted the methods for collection and analysis of the data.

The major findings were:-

1. Sexual harassment is present in primary and secondary schools in Jamaica. Of the sample taken, 42% of students and 28% of teachers including male and female from both groups are involved in the activity.
2. Sexual harassment is more prevalent in urban than in rural schools and secondary school students experience 50% more sexual harassment than primary school students.
3. Students and teachers were harassed more by peers than by other individuals within the organisation. Student/ student harassment registered over 80% while teacher/teacher harassment was 61%.
4. Forty-one percent of the victims of sexual harassment reported their experiences to no one.
5. Students and teachers preferred to confide in their friends when they experience sexual harassment. Twenty five point eight percent of students

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reported to their friends, while 27.6% of teachers spoke to colleagues.

6. Students experience anger, embarrassment, fear and other discomforts that interfere with their development psychologically, socially, emotionally and physically. Teachers experience difficulty communicating with harassers and concentrating on the job.
7. The facilities for dealing with sexual harassment at school are woefully inadequate.
8. Principals and teachers cited school policies and programmes, Ministry of Education policies and programmes as well as the introduction of Government legislation as necessary tools for effectively attacking the problem of sexual harassment.

These findings, it is noted, can have serious consequences for the harassed as well as the country at large. Problems of a physical, social, psychological and emotional nature may result as students experience fear, worry, develop sicknesses and miss classes because of absenteeism. Lowered academic performance, missed opportunities, unrealised goals and economic difficulties may also follow. Teachers who are harassed may find it difficult to do their jobs well. Disharmony between the harasser and the harassed may create communication problems, affect morale, organisational climate and the delivery of quality education. Eventually the country Jamaica would have experienced its loss on its greatest asset – its people.