

The Big Picture: Sexual Assault

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The Problem

Sexual harassment is a crucial problem and it has become an even bigger issue now that it has spread to children and teens. Sexual harassment is a form of discrimination that is often realized through bullying. Young girls being cat-called while walking through the school halls happens everyday, as well as students inappropriately touching without consent. These issues are still yet to be solved.

Although teens often report this behavior to teachers or deans, the problem still goes on. When schools are presented issues of all sex discrimination complaints, including complaints of sexual harassment, they should be the ones to stop it, report to parents, or report to authorities. Yet many schools continue to make it difficult for students to come forward, and a majority of schools fail to properly report incidents of sexual harassment and violence when they occur. This misconduct creates an unsafe and unwelcoming educational environment that interrupts learning and impacts students' mental and physical well being.

Facts & Effects

More than 11% of all students experience rape or sexual assault, and “only 20% of female students who experience sexual assault report authorities because of the fear of disbelief.” Although sexual harassment and sexual assault can happen to anyone, female students are constantly affected, disrupting their safety, comfort and equal access to education.

Not many understand how crucial it is to help the victims of sexual misconduct because after the traumatizing event, their lives can change rapidly for them. Harassment and assault can have long lasting physical and psychologically damaging impacts.



Solutions

A common issue is there are few resources that benefit these women and victims. Some solutions that should be offered are educating others on consent and personal space. This could help both teens and adults that maybe did not have people share this information with them when they were younger. Another solution would be to start having sexual abuse advocates. Without sexual abuse advocates, victims are less likely to receive critical services in the immediate aftermath of their attacks. I also believe that schools and sexual abuse advocates should be involved with parents, families, or guardians, as they can monitor, and care for, the victim at home.

Many students experience this tragedy, not because of something they did, or because they put themselves in the situation, but because the act of sexual harassment is often a cycle. Some children come from a family that has history of sexual abuse and they can end up repeating the same cycles of previous generations. Many people commit these acts because they, themselves, are a victim, so they end up projecting the same violence onto another person. Although one person has been affected, acting out of their trauma, that does not make this behavior okay. The cycle of sexual abuse needs to end, which could be through people in power creating change, and through providing awareness.

My Connection

I originally chose this topic because after researching and learning more, I realized this is an injustice that deserves to be spoken about without receiving backlash. I believe the ERA (Equal Rights Amendment) will help with this. The ERA is a U.S constitutional amendment designed to give equal legal rights for all American citizens, regardless of sex. This relates to my topic by giving women, and victims of sexual assault, a platform and a voice to speak about their rights to their own body. Overall sexual abuse can happen in many forms, from inappropriate "jokes" that offend someone, making them uncomfortable, to harassment, and assault, each are important issues to talk about.

More Resources & Works Cited

National Sexual Assault Hotline
Call 1-800-656-4673 ; Help is available

"The Equal Rights Amendment Explained" - Brennan Center for Justice
<https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/equal-rights-amendment-explained>

"The Effects of Sexual Assault", WCSAP
<https://www.wcsap.org/help/about-sexual-assault/effects-sexual-assault>

"Crossing the Line: Sexual Harassment at School", AAUW
<https://www.aauw.org/resources/research/crossing-the-line-sexual-harassment-at-school/>

This project was made in collaboration with Global Girl Media-Chicago, The Fund for Women's Equality, and the ERA Coalition.



About the Author



My name is Jayla, I am a fifteen-year-old high school student who has lived in Chicago my whole life. I enjoy music, dancing and doing hair :) Growing up in Chicago, I have learned and experienced a lot of things but one of the most common things I have learned is that the world is a crazy, dangerous place. There has always been constant violence so many overlook the thought of protecting women and young girls. While growing up and becoming a young girl I've learned the terrors and blessings that can come with teenage life. I've always heard about sexual assault and seen it on TV but I never realized it effects so many people everyday. It is a constant injustice. The GlobalGirl Media-Chicago community has given me the opportunity to speak out about this.