

PSYCHOLOGICAL-BIOLOGICAL IMPACTS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND APPROACH TO COPE WITH THE TRAUMA IN FEMALE ADOLESCENT VICTIMS IN SURAKARTA

Nila Widya Keswara

Diploma Program in Midwifery, School of Health Polytechnics
Dr. Soepraoen Hospital, Malang

ABSTRACT

Background: The effects of experiencing sexual harassment can be profound, and can range from uncomfortable to devastating. They may last a short or long time, and can even generate a "ripple effect" of negative symptoms in the affected workplace or living environment. This study aimed to describe psychological and biological impacts of sexual harassment and approach to cope with the trauma in female adolescent victims in Surakarta.

Subjects and Method: This was a qualitative study conducted in Surakarta, Central Java. The informants were social workers working at Yayasan KAKAK, a non-government organization dealing with sexual harassment issues. The data were collected by in-depth interview. The informants provided information about psychological and biological impacts of sexual harassment as well as approach to cope with the trauma in female adolescent victims in Surakarta.

Results: The psychological impacts of sexual harassment included anger, fear, self-consciousness or embarrassment, difficulty sleeping, loss of appetite. According to the information provided by the informants, the victim's life turned into a misery, and school became a place to be avoided. The sexual attacks led to feelings of demoralization and humiliation, causing loss of self confidence and self esteem. The victims were reported as having trouble studying or paying attention, less able to perform well, participating less, no longer going to study group, thinking about dropping a class, or even leaving the school. Victims experienced symptoms such as headaches, stomach aches, nightmares and anxiety attacks. Yayasan KAKAK assisted victims by supporting and guiding about steps to be taken to protect victims and to cope with the aftermath.

Conclusion: Sexual harassment has serious emotional and biological effects on adolescent victims. According to this research finding, one of the greatest mitigating factors to trauma is the acknowledgment that it is happening. Victims of sexual harassment should be assisted to find support and guidance about what steps can be taken to protect themselves and how to cope with the aftermath.

Keywords: sexual harassment, female adolescent, coping with

Correspondence: Nila Widya Keswara. Diploma Program in Midwifery, School of Health Polytechnics Dr. Soepraoen Hospital, Malang. Email: nilakeswara_purwanto@yahoo.com. Mobile: +628123555056