Online training to reduce sexual harassment at the University of Eswatini

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University of Eswatini (UNESWA)

7600 undergraduate students

3 campuses, 4500 enrolled at main Kwaluseni campus

58% of students are women, but women are 15% more likely to drop out by their 4th year than their male counterparts
In a 2017 sexual violence survey we found that:

44% of female students at UNESWA had experienced an attempted or completed sexual assault in the previous 12 months.

57% of women who had been assaulted in the previous 12 months had not disclosed to anyone.

52% of women who had not disclosed did not do so because they did not consider their experience assault.

25% did not disclose because they were too ashamed.

The University had no official sexual violence policy or training.
Drs. Shabalala and Masuku led development an official sexual harassment and violence policy, with mandatory training for all staff and students.

Institutional training mandate to:

01 Instill knowledge of sexual harassment policies
02 Change attitudes and behaviors
03 Empower students and staff to protect themselves and others
04 Reduce stigma and shame; Encourage help-seeking
05 Build internal capacity to respond
06 Prevent sexual harassment
07 Create spaces for dialogue and peer education
Project aims

Co-design a brief, online intervention to address institutional policy mandate, evaluated using a mixed-methods wait-list RCT design.

01
Co-design a 16 day, WhatsApp based intervention to address institutional policy mandates, to be launched during the 16 days of activism against Gender Based Violence.

02
Pilot and refine intervention modules with student advisory board.

03
Evaluate intervention's ability to:
Decrease endorsement of victim-blaming rape myths
Decrease acceptability of sexual harassment
Increase self-efficacy to support survivors
Increase knowledge of UNESWA policy
Intervention co-design process

• Facilitated WhatsApp discussions (n=5-10)

  • 16 day multimedia narrative (infographics, brief videos) that follows a group of friends at UNESWA, with prompts for facilitated group discussion.
  • US-based graphic designer and study staff will be based in Eswatini for 3 months to support co-design and project administration

• Modules will be theater tested with members of the Student Network against Sexual Harassment (SNASH)
• SNASH moderators will be trained as intervention facilitators
• Pilot test with ~5-10 students, using rapid exit surveys and FGD feedback for final modifications
Sample modules

- An established couple have a disagreement about where to go for dinner and talk it through with their friends after the fact (Communication skills)
- A new couple is about to have their first kiss (Consent and communication)
- Didactic sexual harassment infographic - the spectrum of sexual violence
- A student is supported by her friends through the process of reporting a sexual harassment incident (modeling help-seeking and survivor support)
- Another friend discloses an incident of "ambiguous" sexual assault (blaming myths, modeling survivor support)
- A character intervenes in an imminent sexual assault (bystander intervention)

Content is developed using social cognitive theory, using modeling and social learning and emphasizing self-efficacy
Intervention Evaluation

• Block randomization to intervention during 16 days of activism or waitlist control
• Online immediate pre and post survey, 3-month follow-up
• Discourse analysis of WhatsApp conversations
• Focus group discussions with participants (n=3 FGDs, ~24 participants)
• Participants will be incentivized with gift certificates/vouchers for lunch on campus

Primary outcome:
• Attitudes towards sexual harassment (Moral Disengagement in Sexual Harassment Scale). Powered to detect 0.7 point shift (scale range 1-7).

Qualitative outcomes:
• Thematic analysis of student discourse on sexual violence and help-seeking
• Intervention feasibility and acceptability
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