

Preliminary Draft Report on

A pilot study on Tejshree Initiative for Empowerment of School Adolescents for Prevention of Sexual Harassment (TIPSH) 22, 23, 29 and 30 January 2021



Context:

This project was launched in fond memory of the globally known late Human Rights advocate Tejshree Thapa, with intention to advance her legacy of justice for the most powerless people.

Introduction:

Children are among the most vulnerable and powerless people in the world, in Nepal. The incidence of sexual harassment and violence among children in Nepal is alarmingly high, a major overlooked gender related public health issue. With centuries of patriarchal values in Nepal, girls' inequality begins at birth and extends through out life. Gender inequality and sexual violence against women co-exist by feeding each other. Research show that unequal access of sexes to resources and opportunities, is associated with a culture of violence against women¹. However, it is possible to challenge dominant roles of masculinity & femininity and decrease interpersonal violence (Barker et al. 2007).

Rationale:

A 2001 study showed both boys and girls felt that girls had greater domestic responsibilities than boys². Boys were more likely to have a wage-earning job outside the house, thus more powerful economically. Such unequal power relation between girls and boys starting early attributes to gendered sexual harassment/violence.

A 2014 study by UNICEF has shown 66% of schoolgoing children suffers one or other kind of sexual harassment, 22 % of them were mentally harassed by teachers, while 28 % suffered physical violence and 15 % mental violence from fellow students³.

A 2018 study 79.6% of female students reported having experienced various forms of sexual abuse in public transport. 67.1% of who reported physical sexual abuse, while 61.2 % verbal sexual abuse and non-verbal abuse by 34.6 %. 44.6% of these victims scolded the harasser, 29.1% remained silent, 17.3% got out of vehicle at nearest bus station where as remaining 9% reacted in other various ways⁴.

Similarly, a 2018 study in Province 5 shows that of a total of 472 sexual violence cases registered in the High Court in 5 years. 74 % were child sexual abuse and 31 % were below ten years of age. Most of these crimes occurred either at victim's or perpetrator's home. 89 % of the perpetrators were known persons while 11 % were strangers⁵.

Furthermore, the existing school curriculum of community schools has not included subjects relating to gender nor sexual harassment. As adolescents comprise the largest proportion of the total population, any positive change in their knowledge, attitude and practice relating to preventing gender inequality and sexual harassment would mean a huge change in overcoming these twin problems.

Objective: Objective of this project is to empower school adolescents with knowledge, attitude and self-defense skills, thus, enabling them to prevent the twin problems of gender discrimination and sexual harassment.

Methods and Materials

Prior launching the project across the seven provinces, a pilot study was conducted among grade 8-10 students of Min High School, in Tanahun District, Gandaki Province in partnership with the Fightback, using a pre-post test quasi-experimental method with a controlled group of school adolescents. This was to test the rapid screening tool (RST), consisting of questions to measuring students' knowledge, attitude and practice on gender, sexual harassment/rape and self-defense during pre-post period. Similarly, the interventions learning modules on gender inequality, sexual harassment and self-defense were also tested. Both the intervention and control group had 30 students each. The students had a total of 24 credit hours of experiential learning.

Because of the COVID 19 pandemic, the entire pilot project was conducted through online.

A quiz test was also conducted at the final day, and the results were analyzed.

Results

Socio-demographic characteristics of the participants: table 1

The intervention and control groups, each had 30 students. Age wise, the proportions of students in both the intervention and control groups were more than half (56.7%) of 15 years and above. The proportion of female students was higher than that of male in both the intervention and control group. Ethnicity wise, proportion of Janajati and Dalit was 40% respectively in the intervention group, while it was 75 % Janajati the control group. Higher grades has proportionately larger number of students with maximum of 70% of students from grade 10 in the intervention group, while that was 46.7% from grade 9 in the control group.

Students' perspectives on sexual-gender identity and human rights: table 2

Proportion of students saying father determines children's sex increased from 30% to 80% after intervention, while was 46.7% in control group. Similarly, the students saying ones' gender identity should be determined by self increased from 63.3% to 86.7% after intervention which was only 30% in control group with minimal change.

Students' knowledge on sexual harassment: Table 3

The proportion of student who were able to identify at least one example of good touch and one example of bad touch increased from 43.3% to 93.3% in intervention group, while it increased from 10% to 13% in the control group. Similarly, the proportion of students who were able to say at least one example of sexual harassment increased from 50% to 56.7% after intervention, while it was 16.7% in the control group. 30% of students identified weak legal provision and implementation as the root cause of sexual violence against women, after intervention, while it was 6.7 % in the control group.

Students' perspectives on prevention of Sexual Harassment: Table 4

The proportion of students agreeing sexual harassment is preventable increased from 87% to 100% after intervention, while there was no change in the control group.

The proportion of students identifying at least one preventive measure against sexual harassment increased from 37% to 67% in the control group, while no change seen between pre-post in the control group.

The proportion students knowing of self-defense increased from 37% to 47% in intervention group, while it declined from 37% to 30% in the control group.

Proportion of students able to name at least one technique of self-defense increased from zero to 23.3% in the intervention group, while none could name it in the control group.

However proportion of students having reported of any incident of sexual harassment (SH) decreased from 50% to 40% and from 27 % to 23 % respectively in the intervention and control group.

The proportion of students applying self-defense technique also decreased from 17% to 13 % % in the intervention, while it declined from 7% to 3% in the control group.

Discussion

The overall results seem encouraging despite the small sample size. The pilot study has also indicated several important messages for undertaking prior to launching the study, for example suggesting to conduct the study on school sites, to further sharpen the design of the RST, including its protocol, and applying RST accordingly.

Regarding the two indicators that have shown negative trends, it happens when some students from pre-test dropout at post-test and some students at post-test were not initially at pre-test. The other important factor could be the design of the questions, as students may have misunderstood as relating to incidents occurring during the training period. Thus, the need for a more careful look at the RST design, its protocol of application, including telling students 'this is not your examination'.

Tejshree Scholarship Program: Tejshree scholarship award was piggybacked along with this project. Two students scoring highest points, one each from girls and boys, were awarded one year of scholarship at the end of the training. Scoring was done using criteria of quiz scores, class attendance, student's participation during class, and inclusive criteria.

Conclusion

As suggested by the results, the prospect of scaling this project seems promising.

References

1. Gender Inequality, Violence Against Women, and Fear A Cross-National Test of the Feminist Theory of Violence Against Women CARRIE L. YODANIS, University of British Columbia.

2. Thapa SH, DAVEY J, WASZAK C, BHADRA R. Reproductive Health Needs of Adolescents and Youth in Nepal. Towards adulthood: Exploring the sexual and RH of adolescents in South Asia. Geneva: WHO Production Services. 2000.
3. USIAD, Government of Nepal, Unicef. Zero Tolerance: GBV-Free Schools in Nepal. Factsheet. <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1861/EDU%20Zero%20Tolerance.pdf>
4. Mishra D, Lamichhane J. Experience of sexual harassment in public transport among female health science students: A cross sectional study of Kathmandu, Nepal. J Manmohan Meml Inst Heal Sci. 2018 Sep 22;4(1):20–32.
5. Pradhan S. Sexual Violence as Social Disease: A Medico-Legal Analysis of High Court Cases in Nepal <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DRHivn7ggO8> [accessed on 12/11/2019]

Annex 1: The Data Tables 1-4 are below:

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of the participants

Characteristics	Intervention (n=30)		Control (n=30)	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Age				
<=15 years	13	43.3	13	43.4
>15 years	17	56.7	17	56.7
Sex				
Male	10	33.3	14	46.7
Female	20	66.7	16	53.3
Caste				
Brahmin/Chhetri	6	20	4	13.3
Janajati	12	40	21	70
Dalit	12	40	5	16.7
Educational Grade				
8	3	10	5	16.7
9	6	20	14	46.7
10	21	70	11	36.7

Table 2: Students' perspectives on sex, gender and human rights

Questions	Intervention				Control			
	Pre-test		Post-test		Pre-test		Post-test	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Who determines children's sex								

Father	9	30	24	80	13	43.4	14	46.7
Mother	5	16.7	1	3.3	-	-	-	-
Both the parents	11	36.7	5	16.7	12	40	11	36.7
Don't know	5	16.7	-	-	5	16.7	5	16.7
Who should determine gender identity of an individual								
Self	19	63.3	26	86.7	8	26.7	9	30
Society	3	10	2	6.7	2	6.7	1	3.3
Both	8	26.7	2	6.7	20	66.7	20	66.7
What do you mean by human rights?								
Right to go to school (study)	21	70	26	86.7	28	93.3	28	93.3

Table 3: Student's perspectives on sexual harassment

Characteristics	Intervention				control			
	Pre-test		Post-test		Pre-test		Post-test	
	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%
Able to say at least on example of good touch and bad touch								
yes	13	43.3	28	93.3	3	10	4	13.3
no	17	56.7	2	6.7	27	90	26	86.7
Able to state at least one behavior which is a sexual harassment								
yes	15	50	17	56.7	5	16.7	5	16.7
no	15	50	13	43.3	25	83.3	25	83.3

Why do you think that victims of SH are more females than males								
Female perceive themselves as weaker than males	4	13.3	3	10	1	3.3	1	3.3
Gender inequality	5	16.7	1	3.3	5	16.7	4	13.3
Usually, females do not speak up due to fear of shame	10	33.3	9	30	2	6.7	2	6.7
Weak legal provision and implementation	5	16.7	9	30	3	10	2	6.7
All of above	12	40	11	36.7	18	60	20	66.7

Table 4: Students perspectives on prevention of SH

Characteristics	Intervention				Control			
	Pre-test		Post-test		Pre-test		Post-test	
	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%
Can SH be prevented?								
Yes	26	86.7	30	100	14	46.7	14	46.7
No	4	13.3	-	-	16	53.3	16	53.3
Able to say at least one preventive measure against SH								
Yes	11	36.7	20	66.7	4	13.3	4	13.3
No	19	63.3	10	33.3	26	86.7	26	86.7
Do you know about self-defense technique?								
Yes	11	36.7	14	46.7	11	36.7	9	30
No	19	63.3	16	53.3	19	66.3	21	60
Able to name at least one self-defense technique								

Yes	-	-	7	23.3	-	-	-	-
No	30	100	23	76.7	30	100	30	100
Ever reported any SH incident to anyone								
Yes	15	50	12	40	8	26.7	7	23.3
No	15	50	18	60	22	73.3	23	76.7
Mechanism of reporting								
Reporting to parents	10	33.3	6	20	6	20	7	23.3
Reporting to police	-	-	1	3.3	-	-	-	-
Anonymous reporting in schools	2	6.7	5	16.7	2	6.7	-	-
Telephone reporting to..	2	6.7	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other means	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ever applied self-defense technique to prevent oneself from SH								
Yes	5	16.7	4	13.3	2	6.7	1	3.3
No	5	83.3	26	86.7	28	93.3	29	96.7

Annex 2: Glimpse of the online Pilot Program:



