

## Sexual Harassment in University Contexts: *Projective Diagnostic Study of the Gender Situation at the Universidad de Santiago de Chile*

### Acoso sexual en el contexto universitario: estudio *Diagnóstico proyectivo de la situación de género en la Universidad de Santiago de Chile*

Andrea Lizama-Lefno<sup>1</sup> & Andrea Hurtado Quiñones<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Facultad de Ciencias Médicas, Universidad de Santiago

<sup>2</sup> Dirección de Género, Diversidad y Equidad, Universidad de Santiago

#### Abstract

In university environments, gender violence is a problem that mostly affects women and manifests itself in multiple ways. Sexual harassment is one of them; yet, it continues to be widely naturalized and is therefore barely visible. This article presents the results of the *Projective Diagnosis Study of the Gender Situation at the University of Santiago*, which addresses this phenomenon. It reveals a current and inescapable problem expressed in a high prevalence, a clear naturalization of verbal and gestural harassment, and a high percentage of unreported events. The latter aspect is associated with labor relations marked by fear and distrust, as well as a lack of protection and institutional neglect related to the problem of sexual violence. This publication also aims to lay the foundations for addressing sexual violence in university contexts, particularly through diagnostic studies, which are part of an array of measures to promote equality and deal with one of the main sexual violence problems which higher education institutions are currently facing.

**Keywords:** gender, gender violence, higher education, sexual harassment, sexual violence

---

#### Post to:

Andrea Lizama-Lefno  
Facultad de Ciencias Médicas, Universidad de Santiago.  
Av. Libertador Bernardo O'Higgins 3363, Estación Central, Santiago, Chile.  
andrea.lizama@usach.cl

We would like to thank all the academic units at Universidad de Santiago that contributed to the study and all the people who offered us their assistance. We also extend our thanks to Sofía Schuster and Francisca Dávalos, members of the Gender Network of Universidad de Santiago, for reviewing the article, and to Nicolás Lizama for his contributions to the English translation.

---

© 2019 PEL, <http://www.pensamientoeducativo.org> - <http://www.pel.cl>

ISSN: 0719-0409      DDI: 203.262, Santiago, Chile  
doi: 10.7764/PEL.56.1.2019.8

## Resumen

---

Dentro de los ambientes universitarios, la violencia de género es un problema que afecta sobre todo a las mujeres y se manifiesta de diferentes formas; el hostigamiento o acoso sexual es uno de ellos, el que continúa siendo una realidad ampliamente naturalizada y, en consecuencia, escasamente visibilizada. Este artículo presenta los resultados del *Diagnóstico proyectivo de la situación de género en la Universidad de Santiago de Chile* en relación con dicho fenómeno. Devela una problemática vigente e ineludible expresada en una alta prevalencia, una manifiesta naturalización del acoso verbal y gestual, y un alto porcentaje de no denuncia, asociado a motivos sostenidos en relaciones laborales de miedo y desconfianza, así como también de desprotección y desatención institucional en relación con el problema. Esta investigación pretende, además, sentar bases para el abordaje de la violencia sexual en contextos universitarios, particularmente mediante la realización de estudios diagnósticos como parte de procesos de promoción de la igualdad, y de afrontamiento de uno de los grandes problemas de las instituciones de educación superior.

**Palabras clave:** acoso sexual, educación superior, género, violencia de género, violencia sexual

## Introduction

The *Projective Diagnostic Study of the Gender Situation at the Universidad de Santiago de Chile* was conducted in 2016 and executed by that institution's Gender, Equity, and Diversity Unit, as part of the project "Institutionalization and Generalization of the Gender Perspective" (2015-2019). The initiative sought to contribute to the democratizing processes implemented in the university through the generation of scientific and humanistic knowledge, the promotion of gender equality within its student, academic, and administrative structures, and the encouragement of a cultural change in the community intended to foster equality between men and women.

This diagnosis sought to detect possible inequalities, inequities, and/or elements of discrimination based on people's sex and on the attributes and characteristics socially and culturally ascribed to men and women, while also identifying behaviors and situations linked with gender violence. In projective terms, the study sought to inform the development of the *Institutional Gender Equity Policy*<sup>1</sup>, thus helping improve our understanding of gender-related dimensions in the measures adopted in university life.

In consequence, conducting this diagnostic study helped authorities, students, academics, and administrators develop and evaluate institutional programs and activities aimed at extending the gender perspective throughout the university, providing answers and prioritizing relevant issues from an objective point of view in order to employ the institution's resources and capacities rationally.

The study was conducted considering five dimensions that made it possible to examine the status of gender relations in the university and provide an up-to-date overview:

- characterization of the university population according to their sector (students, academics, administrators), segmented by sociodemographic and institutional aspects;
- contextualization and projections of gender topics in the academic and administrative field, considering the interest and commitment of the three sectors of the institution;
- recognition of situations where care and exclusion roles are assigned;
- recognition of instances of university participation in gender-related issues;
- recognition of behaviors and situations associated with gender violence.

This article presents the results of the latter dimension, particularly in connection to the current situation concerning sexual abuse, reports, and perceptions in the university community, in order to

---

<sup>1</sup> This policy aims to extend the gender approach throughout the institution in the 2016-2020 period, encouraging the development of plans and projects in the university's political agenda in order to make visible the status of gender relations, strengthen the gender approach in research and teaching, and propose equality-oriented measures in academic and administrative units, among other specific goals intended to improve respect and healthy coexistence in the university community.

bring to the fore and analyze the issue of sexual abuse at the Universidad de Santiago, with its associated manifestations and problems, while also making it possible to estimate their magnitude and develop projective measures. First, the study aimed to encourage the exploration of gender issues in the university sphere, establishing a baseline for a diagnosis; second, it sought to make visible the reality of sexual harassment in universities as one of the key problems affecting higher education institutions. Lastly, the study was developed as a way to accept institutional responsibility for the protection of the university community, within the context of its social mission of constructing a fairer and more inclusive society.

### Current status

According to theoretician Teresita De Barbieri, “gender is a form of social inequality affecting distances and hierarchies [...] even though it has a dynamic of its own, it is linked to other forms of inequality, distances, and social hierarchies” (De Barbieri, 1993, p. 161). Considering this definition, the point of this diagnosis was to reveal the various expressions of inequality between men and women due to the existing gender arrangement, and conduct a gender-aware analysis of this situation. In this vein, for Marta Lamas:

Gender is the cultural manifestation of sexual differences, and symbolizes what is ‘typical’ of men (the masculine) and what is ‘typical’ of women (the feminine); however, apart from being a cultural mandate, it also involves psychic processes, and all that complexity is organized as a set of beliefs and practices that hierarchize and discriminate against human beings (Lamas, 2003, p. 3).

In this context, including the concept of gender in the field of education and training is not only necessary, but also inevitable in Chile’s sociocultural context, since we aspire to strengthen human rights and democracy upon the basis of the recognition and appreciation of others: “social relationships are only those that are grounded on the acceptance of others as legitimate others in coexistence, and that acceptance is what constitutes respect-based behavior” (Maturana, 2001, p. 14).

A fundamental theoretical element that supported this diagnosis was the reflection conducted by the Gender Network of Universidad de Santiago, a tri-sector, voluntary university group that agreed to define gender as a social, historical, political, and cultural construct that establishes an order based on a power system that conditions people to live in line with their sex<sup>2</sup>. This conceptualization emphasizes power relationships, thus grounding institutional inclusion challenges involving sexual diversity and new masculinities by holding that these power relationships exceed the binary logic.

Equality has gained relevance in universities since these organizations are essential socialization agents that constitute social and cultural points of reference and therefore have a strong commitment to society. Equality in university life, as well as a focus on people, are indicators of institutional quality and modernization.

In this context, in the present century, universities all over the world are addressing gender inequalities and violence through action plans which include specific diagnostic studies. Results and conclusions converge on multiple aspects, revealing academic and administrative inequalities which include disparities in: the men-women rate of administrative and service staff; the job conditions and salaries for women and men; the hiring and hierarchization of male and female academics; the masculinization of the higher echelons and the feminization of the lower ones; the lack of a sexual harassment prevention protocol and measures for preventing gender violence; and the absence of a gender perspective in course syllabuses, among other elements.

In this regard, gender-focused studies have also been conducted in Spanish universities using quantitative and qualitative techniques (Aguilar, Alonso, Melgar, & Molina, 2009; Olarte, 2014; Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, 2011; Universidad de Córdoba, 2012; Universidad de Jaén, 2009; Universidad de La Laguna, 2013; Universidad de Málaga, 2010; Universidad de Oviedo, 2009; Universidad de Zaragoza, 2015; Valls, 2006). In Latin America, the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, UNAM, through the University Program for Gender Studies and the National Women’s Institute presented the *System*

<sup>2</sup> Consensus definition drawn up in sessions of the Gender Network of Universidad de Santiago, recorded in unpublished internal documents.

of *Indicators for Gender Equity in Mexico's Higher Education Institutions*, a document that formed the basis for implementing the University-wide Gender Program and was applied in other Mexican higher education institutions (Buquet, Cooper, & Rodríguez, 2010).

In Chile, in 2013, the Universidad de Chile conducted a study on sexual violence in the university community in order to gauge and characterize sexual harassment in its campuses. In the study, 26% of the interviewees reported being aware of sexual harassment incidents at the university, with 14.7% having experienced one directly. Most of the victims were women, mainly students, with most perpetrators being male academics or students. Also, 6.6% of the participants had been victims of sexual harassment in the last year. Most victims did not report the incidents due to not being aware of the procedures, fearing reprisals or a negative influence on their career, or mistrusting the university's institutional framework and its investigative mechanisms.

In 2014, the Universidad de Chile published the results of the first diagnostic study of equal gender opportunities, *Del biombo a la cátedra: igualdad de oportunidades de género en la Universidad de Chile* [From the Room Divider to the Classroom: Equal Gender Opportunities in the Universidad de Chile], while the Universidad Austral published its *First Diagnosis of Gender and Diversity* in 2015. Among other findings, the results of these studies reveal gaps between male and female enrollment, feminization and masculinization in some programs, inequality in terms of the hierarchical positions, awards, and distinctions granted to male and female professors, and a variety of other institutional inequalities. Likewise, regarding sexual violence, a common factor in Chilean diagnostic studies was the frequency of sexual harassment, especially against women, and the lack of mechanisms for reporting and penalizing incidents and protecting victims.

Sexual abuse in university campuses is one of the manifestations of gender violence that diagnostic studies tend to measure and characterize, which prompts the need to explore its manifestations, reasons for underreporting, and risk factors, among other aspects.

*General recommendation no. 19 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women*, issued by the U. N. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (1992)<sup>3</sup>, defines sexual harassment as behavior of a sexual nature such as physical contact and innuendo, sexual remarks, exhibition of pornography, and sexual demands, either verbal or factual. This type of behavior can be humiliating and lead to health and security problems, and is discriminatory when women have sufficient reasons to believe that their refusal could cause problems at work, including negative consequences with respect to hiring or promotion, or when a hostile work environment is generated. It is therefore a type of behavior that violates people's dignity and prevents them from enjoying and exercising multiple rights. In the educational field, it is a behavior that violates people's right to a quality education, preventing them from enjoying real training and comprehensive development opportunities in an environment of equality; in the work sphere, sexual hinders equality in women's and men's employment conditions.

Particularly in the educational context, the definition advanced by Aguilar et al. (2009) was also relevant for the analysis of this diagnostic study:

Sexual harassment is a form of violence against women that is commonly present in academic curricula and in discussions and debates in university classrooms, constituting a subordination and oppression mechanism that affects women in everyday university life (p. 89).

The problem is rooted in the normalization of domination relationships that legitimize gender violence in a way that causes it not to be acknowledged as such, instead becoming part of institutional, political, and social functioning. The authors warn that many women affected by sexual violence incidents do not regard them as aggressions, even if they have been forced to have sexual intercourse. This is due to a stereotyped view of rape, whose consequences include, for instance, the victim's acceptance of some degree of responsibility due to having provoked the situation through behaviors such as agreeing to go on a date (Aguilar et al., 2009).

---

<sup>3</sup> This is a body of independent experts that oversees the application of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, issued by the U. N. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Charkow & Nelson (2011), for their part, analyzed a population of 178 women university students and detected that the relationships in which sexual violence or sexual coercion occurred were characterized by dependency and the acceptance of abuse, which was confused with love or traditional romantic ideals. This is a result of the subjectivities constructed/disciplinized in the context of a structure of social relationships that naturalizes the regulation and control of women's bodies. Thus, while men are most of all taught to model their body for strength and work, stamina, mobility, energy, and domination, the social learning of women's bodies instrumentalizes them for reproduction and seduction, in order to connect these two elements to the beautiful, sensitive, sensual, and controllable. The body is a central object of study and one of the main concerns of feminism, inasmuch as gender, as a source of the configuration of social practices, is directly associated with it (Esteban, 2013).

All in all, the reality of sexual harassment is supported by a structure of unequal social relationships determined by the sex/gender category, according to which sexual differences justify sociocultural inequalities; that is, the subordination of women to men and of the feminine to the masculine.

The effects of sexual harassment include low self-esteem, shame, emotional imbalance, guilt, hopelessness, passivity, fear of rejection, and, consequently, a negative effect on academic or work performance and on professional development. Likewise, women who have experienced sexual harassment episodes tend to perceive a poor environment in their universities and try to avoid interacting with their abusers, sometimes even quitting their chosen educational spaces by switching classes, abandoning projects, or enrolling in other programs (Universidad de Chile, 2014).

### Method

The *Projective Diagnostic Study of the Gender Situation at the Universidad de Santiago de Chile* is a quantitative, descriptive-relational, cross-sectional, and prospective study that provides a critical interpretative analysis from a gender perspective.

Methodologically, the study consisted in the analysis of seven of the 59 variables included in the project:

Independent variables:

- Sex (man/woman).
- Sector (administrative staff/academic-professional staff/students).

Dependent variables:

- Experiences of sexual harassment (prevalence).
- Manifestations of sexual harassment.
- Perception of the university environment.
- Report of the incidents.
- Reasons for not reporting incidents.

The following sections provide a conceptual description of the dependent variables.

**Experiences of sexual harassment (prevalence).** A participant was understood to have experienced sexual harassment when she/he mentioned having been the victim of a sexual harassment incident in a university context. Prevalence refers to the percentage of cases relative to the total number of participants.

**Manifestations of sexual harassment.** Situations in which an undesired sexualized interaction took place which reflects the intent or action of controlling or appropriating a body. The following situations have been typified:

- Verbal harassment: undesired flirtatious remarks or comments.
- Gestural harassment: suggestive looks or gestures that bother the receiver.
- Sexual pressure: pressure to accept invitations to undesired encounters or dates.
- Threat: Threats that negatively impact the victim's academic situation if she/he rejects sexual invitations or proposals.
- Physical harassment: Undesired brushes or physical contact.

- **Obligation:** Feeling pressured due to obligations, threats, or possible punishments leading the victim to perform undesired sexual acts.

**Perception of the university environment.** Yes/No answers to the question: “According to your experience at the university, do you feel you are in a good environment?”.

**Report of the incidents.** Taking measures in response to a case of violence (Yes/No answer).

**Reasons for not reporting incidents.** Of all the cases in which participants experienced violence and failed to take measures, they were asked about their reasons. The following response categories were available.

- a) You gave no importance to it.
- b) You did not know what to do.
- c) You did not want to be regarded as a problematic person.
- d) You do not trust the way university authorities handle these cases.
- e) You thought there could be academic reprisals against you.
- f) You were afraid of the possible reaction of the perpetrator(s).
- g) You were afraid of damaging your reputation.
- h) There were no witnesses, and you thought reporting the incident would have been pointless.

## Instrument

The instrument used consisted in an adaptation of the instruments proposed in the methodological guidelines of the *System of Gender Equality Indicators in Higher Education Institutions* (Buquet et al., 2010). The adaptation was conducted together with a committee of the Gender Network of the Universidad de Santiago, composed of representatives from the Gender and Sexualities Council of the Students’ Federation; the students’ unions of all academic programs; academic staff from the faculties of Humanities, Medical Sciences, Engineering, Chemistry and Biology, and Administration and Economy; and administrative and professional staff belonging to the Offices of the Vice-President of Academic Affairs, the Vice-President of Student Support, and the Vice-President of Outreach. This questionnaire, differentiated by sector, yields information about the gender equity situation of students, administrative/professional staff, and academics.

This committee worked upon the basis of a proposal developed by the head of the Gender, Diversity, and Equity Office, then called Gender Focal Point. This joint, voluntary task was performed in eight work meetings over a five-month period in the first semester of 2016. The instruments were adapted to the reality of Chile and its universities, expanding the dimensions of analysis proposed for Mexican universities. Lastly, the final instruments comprised items associated with the five dimensions mentioned at the beginning of the article.

## Sample

According to the *Sustainability Report* of the Universidad de Santiago de Chile (2016), the university community comprises 27,487 people who, for the effects of sample, constitute the population size (N). Of them, 93% are students (25,563 people) and the remaining 7% are administrative/professional staff and academics (1,924 people).

The survey was taken by 1,419 people or valid cases for the study. The sample was representative with a 95% confidence interval and a 3% sampling error. Per-sector participation was as follows: 71.3% of students (1,012 students) and 28.6% of administrative staff (205 administrators and 202 academics). Considering the true proportions according to the aforementioned report, the sample over-represents the latter sectors<sup>4</sup> and under-represents students<sup>5</sup>.

---

<sup>4</sup> 28.6% of the sample size is over-representative of 7% of the population size.

<sup>5</sup> 71.3% of the sample size is under-representative of 93% of the population size.

Regarding representation bias, it should be noted that the survey was voluntary; therefore, it participation is likely to be representative of segments interested in gender issues. In addition, the instrument was disseminated using the institutional e-mail addresses of the university community, which fostered the participation of administrative and academic staff: due to the nature of their functions and the organizational culture, they are constantly checking their university mailboxes. Students, on the other hand, tend to privilege the use of personal e-mail over their institutional e-mail.

### **Fieldwork**

Fieldwork was conducted in August 2016 through two data collection strategies. First, a digital survey hosted on the Google platform was conducted. It was sent over the institutional e-mail through the university's Communications Department to the mailing lists of the three university sectors: academics, administrative/professional staff, and students.

The other data collection strategy was based on face-to-face fieldwork in the university campus. In this process, several institutional units volunteered their assistance: the Admissions Department, which hired fifteen students to invite the community to take part in the survey on campus; the Program for Student Support and Effective Entry to Higher Education (PACE); the Universidad de Santiago Library System, which provided electronic equipment to administer the survey and the delivery system for survey administrators; and the Electronic Management and Computing Service (SEGIC), which provided maps to locate Internet access points and gave technical assistance.

### **Data analysis**

The answers received were fully anonymous. The data collected were processed at the institution's Department of Research and analyzed by the researchers using SPSS 18.0. The study was approved and recommended by the Institutional Ethics Committee of the Universidad de Santiago.

First, a descriptive analysis of the variables was performed. Then, non-parametric hypothesis tests were conducted to examine the association of the sex and sector variables with the dependent variables sexual harassment, incident report, and perception of university environment.

## **Results**

55% of the participants were women and 45% were men (n=1,419). 13.2% were academics (202 cases), 13.6% were administrators (205 cases), and 71% were students (1,012 cases). The participants' average age was 29 years.

39.9% of the participants report having experienced a sexual harassment incident, which represents 533 valid cases<sup>6</sup>. Verbal harassment was the most frequent situation (unwanted flirtatious remarks or comments), followed by gestural harassment (suggestive looks or gestures that annoy the receiver); physical harassment (unwanted brushes or physical contact), and threats that negatively affect the victim's academic situation or force her/him to perform unwanted sexual acts.

---

<sup>6</sup> The analysis of sexual violence indicators yielded 82 missing cases, which represent 5.8% of the total number of participants.

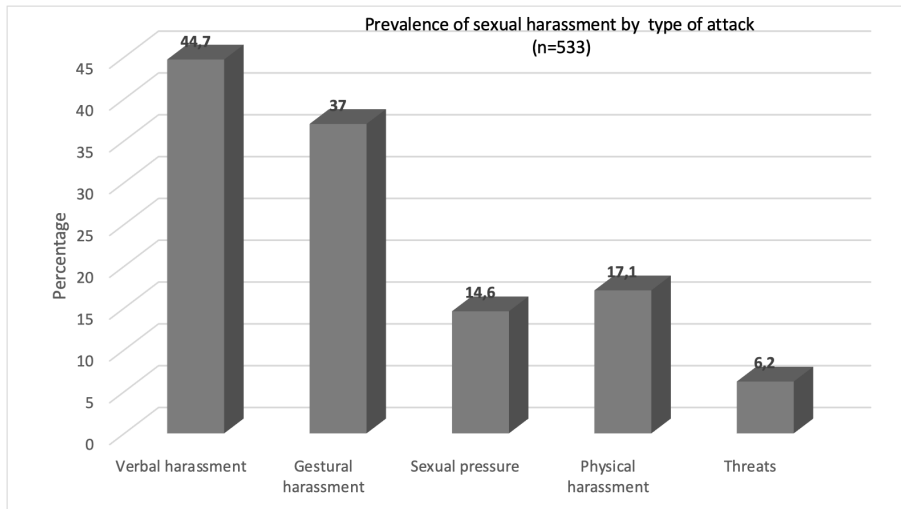


Figura 1  
Source: Prepared by the authors.

Figure 2 shows that more than two thirds of the total number of people who had experienced a sexual harassment incident (533) were women. The difference between the prevalence for women and men was statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = 67.983$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ). The analysis of the sex-segregated data showed that, of the total number of women who participated in the survey (769), 49.8% mentioned having experienced a sexual harassment incident at the university. As for the men (619), the percentage was 27.6%.

Percentage of people who have experienced a sexual harassment incident by sex (n=533)

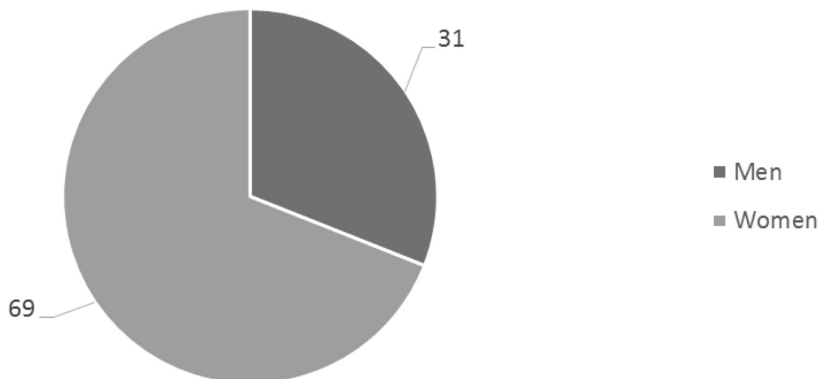


Figura 2  
Source: Prepared by the authors.

In all the manifestations of sexual harassment, the prevalence is higher for women, except for threats that have a negative influence on the victim’s academic situation or lead them to perform unwanted sex acts, which was 0.6% higher for men than for women. Regarding verbal and/or gestural harassment, the prevalence was more than 40% higher for women than for men.



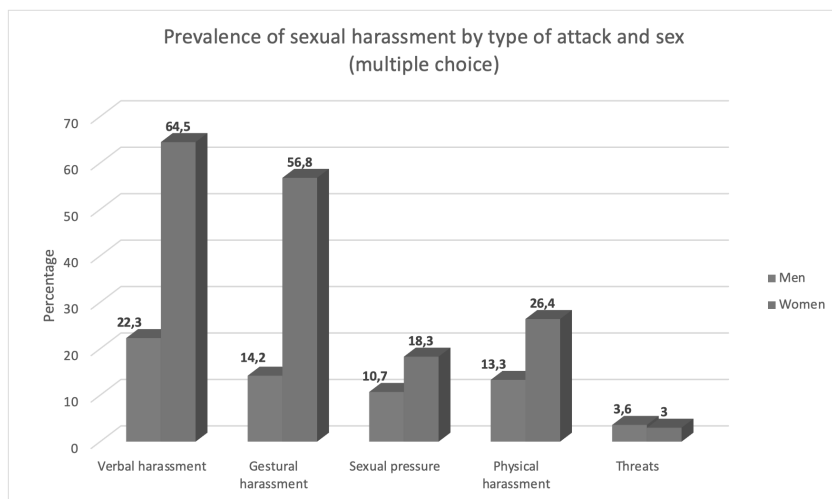


Figura 3  
Source: Prepared by the authors.

With respect to the victim's sector, of all the people who mentioned having experienced a sexual harassment incident at the university, 74.5% were students, 15.8% were administrative staff, and 9.8% were academics. In general, the difference is statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = 15.712$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ). The analysis of the multiple manifestations of sexual harassment shows that the prevalence is statistically significant for gestural harassment, physical harassment, and sexual pressure, with students being the most harshly affected sector, followed by administrative staff and academics.

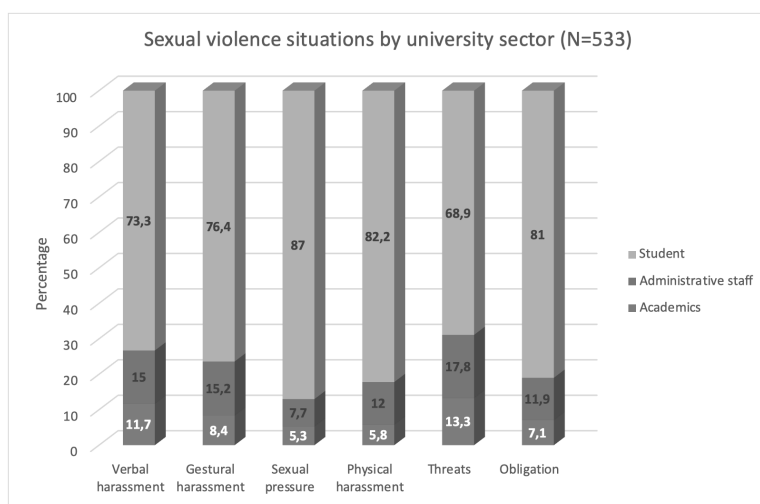


Figura 4  
Source: Prepared by the authors.

This means that the sector to which a person belongs at a given time —academic, administrative/professional, or student body— influences the probability of experiencing sexual harassment at the Universidad de Santiago. In general, and in all cases, women are more vulnerable to these situations.

Although more than a third of the people surveyed have experienced sexual harassment within the university community, 83% of them report perceiving a “good environment”, with the value being slightly higher among men. Also, of the total number of people who have experienced a sexual harassment incident, 74.3% perceive a good environment; in contrast, of all the people who do not perceive a good environment, 60.9% have been victims of harassment.

For its part, the relation between experiencing sexual harassment and the perceived university environment is statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = 48.793$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ). That is, despite the high percentage of victims who perceive a good environment, the proportion of victims who see a bad environment is markedly different.

Regarding reported incidents, of the total number of participants who mention having experienced a sexual harassment incident at the university (533), 205 reported it (38.5%) and 328 did not (61.5%). The most frequent reason not to report an incident was giving no importance to it (43%). However, it should be noted that the 74% that groups together other reasons for not reporting incidents indicates that most participants would give importance to a violent event; in these cases, the reason for not reporting it was not knowing what to do or feeling mistrust, hopelessness, or fear.<sup>7</sup>

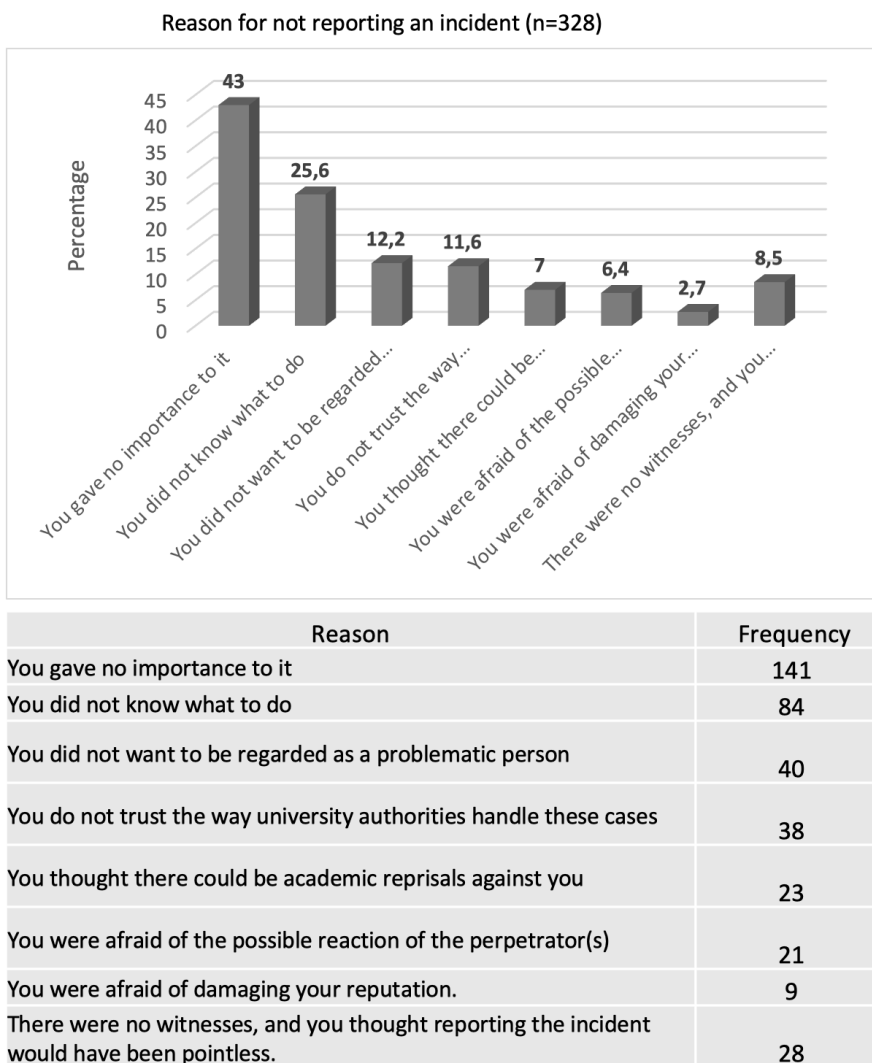


Figura 5  
Source: Prepared by the authors.

In general, there are no statistically significant differences between men and women’s reasons not to report an incident, although most of those who reported an incident were women (76.1%). As for the reasons not to report an incident in each sector, the most common motive was not giving importance

<sup>7</sup> Multiple choice questions.

to the event (37.5% in academics, 26.7% in administrative/professional staff, and 11.2% in students). Nevertheless, the second most frequent reason varied across sectors.

For instance, among academics, 61.5% of the participants who mention having experienced a sexual harassment incident (52) did not report it (32). The second most frequent reason for this was not wanting to be regarded as a problematic person (25%). For administrative/professional staff, 71.4% of the respondents who have experienced a sexual harassment incident (84) did not report it (60), with the second most frequent reason being mistrust of university authorities (18.3%). Finally, among students, 59.4% of those who have experienced a sexual harassment incident (397) did not report it (236), with the second most frequent reason being not knowing what to do (7.3%).

## Discussion

The prevalence of sexual harassment by sex reveals that the main risk factor is being a woman. Practically half the women who participated in the study have suffered a sexual harassment incident at the Universidad de Santiago, in contrast with less than one third of the men.

It should be pointed out that, in general, the results of this study could be affected by interest bias, since victims may be sensitized to the issue and be more willing to take part. However, regardless of the representativity of the result and despite the differences between the sexes, the absolute figure of 533 cases is a relevant wakeup call, since it demonstrates that sexual harassment within the university walls is an unavoidable problem.

Likewise, it is also problematic to see that sexual harassment appears to have been naturalized, as suggested by the contrast between its prevalence (39.9%) and the perceived good environment in the university community (83%); that is, the high percentages of verbal and gestural harassment do not seem to represent a problem to the respondents, since they do not affect the university environment, to the extent that such incidents are not worthy of being reported: 61.5% of victims did not report them, and most of them failed to do so because they felt they were unimportant.

These findings are consistent with studies conducted abroad, which suggest that the problem originates in deep-seated cultural relationships based on gender domination. In consequence, they are also in line with the hegemonic definition of sexual violence, which is directly associated with the stereotyped action of rape or physical harassment; in contrast, verbal and gestural harassment are not widely acknowledged to be forms of sexual violence.

Nevertheless, the results of the diagnostic study suggest the presence of a malaise in a large percentage of victims: 60.9% of those who perceive a bad environment have been victims of sexual harassment; 38.5% reported the incident; and 74% of the victims who failed to report an incident say it was due to ignorance, mistrust, hopelessness, or fear (though they were willing to take the survey and report the incident through their participation). These figures reflect the distress that results from a negative experience, being indicative of its degree of visibilization as an attack.

This segment of the university probably has probably been more sensitized to the reality of sexual harassment; also, their experience and its resulting distress may have encouraged them to take part in the study. This may represent a percentage of people constituting a critical mass with respect to matters of gender violence at the university.

A second and no less important wakeup call concerns the reasons not to report sexual harassment in each university sector; that is, in most cases —among academics, administrative staff, and students— victims are willing to devalue the sexual harassment incident experienced to privilege a motive that appears to be more important and that is probably linked to keeping their jobs: for administrative staff, this may be due to not wishing to be regarded as a problematic person or mistrusting university authorities; students, for their part, mention lacking information (not knowing what to do).

In brief, two phenomena appear which require attention: first, the reasons declared by the staff suggest the presence of work relationships grounded on fear and mistrust, and maybe a lack of institutional

protection or attention toward people; second, students are affected by insufficient information, a lack of accessibility, and the nonexistence of institutional harassment reporting mechanisms. In conclusion, considering that in all cases women were the most seriously affected respondents, it is evident that this community is poorly protected from gender violence; also the institutionalization of domination-based social relationships is palpable.

All in all, the problem of sexual abuse in university contexts revealed in this study —along with its attendant issues— brings to the fore a reality that is representative of the power relationships structure that sustains the production and reproduction of social beliefs, which legitimize gender violence in our society, and which are the root of said problem.

The results of the *Projective Diagnostic Study of the Gender Situation at the Universidad de Santiago* regarding sexual harassment in the university community are in line with those yielded by the diagnostic study conducted by the Universidad de Chile in 2014, thus confirming the generalized notion configured by such research: that these institutions reproduce inequalities and gender violence incidents which are deeply rooted in Western culture and, in this case, in Chilean society.

The *Projective Diagnostic Study of the Gender Situation at the Universidad de Santiago* is the result of a coordinated effort that reflects the commitment and political will of this Chilean higher education institution to transform our country's culture and achieve equality between women and men. It should also be noted that, after this diagnostic study was completed, in 2017 the institutions made available to the university community an *Institutional Protocol for the prevention, punishment, and reparation of sexual harassment, gender harassment, and other types of discrimination* (Universidad de Santiago de Chile, 2017), a document designed and managed by the institution's Gender, Equity, and Diversity Area, which benefited from the assistance of the Gender Network and which is currently in force.

Both the diagnostic study and the design and activation of the institutional harassment reporting protocol are initiatives aimed at constituting a point of reference for addressing gender issues in the university context, particularly in connection with the protection of communities from sexual violence.

In addition, in 2017 —within the context of the Week of Nonviolence Against Women— the Gender, Equity, and Diversity Area conducted the *Cartography of Gender Violence* in the Universidad de Santiago de Chile, which compiles substantial data for adopting measures regarding infrastructure and the use of institutional space to prevent gender violence incidents on campus.

Still, despite the institutional efforts made, it should be noted that it is necessary to implement measures aimed at preventing, researching, punishing, and repairing gender violence. Thus, although the implementation of the aforementioned protocol since early 2017 has greatly helped address perceived mistrust, this task continues to be an institutional challenge. In this vein, the protocol is indeed a tool and an institutional response, but it is not the one solution to gender violence experienced in the university.

In conclusion, university campuses are spaces where sexual violence, particularly violence against women, is a current problem. For this reason, it is necessary to continue implementing measures that consider this issue and deal with the problem behind gender violence, specifically against women: a culture of power-based social relationships that sustains machismo-inspired domination and violence, sexist education, and opportunity and privilege gaps grounded on gender.

The achievement of gender equality in higher education institutions is a goal to be pursued in two ways: first, via the epistemological examination of non-sexist education and the encouragement of critical thinking in order to reveal domination relationships based on gender and any other social categories through studies, academic programs, and visibilization strategies, all of which should contribute to modifying the subjectivity construction processes where gender stereotypes that encourage said relationships emerge; second, through initiatives that, as part of institutional administration, protect people and improve the quality of life of the university community.

The original article was received on September 4th, 2018

The revised article was received on March 9th, 2019

The article was accepted on March 11th, 2019

## References

- Aguilar, C., Alonso, M. J., Melgar, P., & Molina, S. (2009). Violencia de género en el ámbito universitario. Medidas para su superación. *Pedagogía Social. Revista Interuniversitaria*, 16, 85-94. [https://doi.org/10.7179/psri\\_2009.16.06](https://doi.org/10.7179/psri_2009.16.06)
- Buquet, A., Cooper, J. & Rodríguez, H. (2010). *Sistema de indicadores para la equidad de género en instituciones de educación superior*. Ciudad de México: UNAM, Instituto de las Mujeres México.
- Charkow, W. B. & Nelson, E. S. (2011). Relationship dependency, dating violence and scripts of female college students. *Journal of College Counseling*, 3, 17-28. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2161-1882.2000.tb00160.x>
- Comité para la Eliminación de la Discriminación contra la Mujer (1992). *La violencia contra la mujer. Recomendación General N°19, Artículo 11. Oficina del Alto Comisionado de las Naciones Unidas para los Derechos Humanos*. Recuperado de [http://archive.ipu.org/splz-e/cuenca10/cedaw\\_19.pdf](http://archive.ipu.org/splz-e/cuenca10/cedaw_19.pdf)
- De Barbieri, T. (1993). Sobre la categoría género. Una introducción teórico-metodológica. *Debates en Sociología*, 18, 145-169. Recuperado de <http://revistas.pucp.edu.pe/index.php/debatesensociologia/article/view/6680/6784>
- Esteban, M. L. (2013). *Antropología del cuerpo. Género, itinerarios corporales, identidad y cambio* (segunda edición). Barcelona: Edicions Bellaterra.
- Lamas, M. (2003). *Género: claridad y complejidad*. Recuperado de <http://biblio.comisionporlamemoria.org/meran/getDocument.pl?id=74>
- Maturana, H. (2002). *Emociones y lenguaje en educación y política*. Santiago de Chile: Dolmen Ediciones.
- Olarte, E. T. (2014). *Diagnóstico de género Universidad La Rioja*. Logroño: Universidad La Rioja.
- PASW Statistics for Windows (Version 18.0) [Software de computación]. Chicago, IL, USA: IBM/SPSS Inc.
- Universidad Austral de Chile (2015). *Primer diagnóstico de género y diversidad*. Valdivia: Autor.
- Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (2011). *III Diagnóstico igualdad de género en la UAM*. Madrid: Autor.
- Universidad de Chile (2014). *Del biombo a la cátedra: igualdad de oportunidades de género en la Universidad de Chile*. Santiago: Oficina de Igualdad de Oportunidades de Género.
- Universidad de Córdoba (2012). *Diagnóstico de igualdad entre hombres y mujeres*. Córdoba: Autor.
- Universidad de Jaén (2009). *Informe diagnóstico de la situación de hombres y mujeres en la Universidad de Jaén*. Jaén: Autor.
- Universidad de La Laguna (2013). *Diagnóstico de igualdad de la ULL*. La Laguna: Autor.
- Universidad de Málaga (2010). *Diagnóstico en igualdad de género en la Universidad de Málaga*. Málaga: Vicerrectorado de Bienestar Social e Igualdad.
- Universidad de Oviedo (2009). *El estudio diagnóstico*. Recuperado de <http://geniuniovi.uniovi.es/estudiodiagnostico.html>
- Universidad de Santiago de Chile (2016). *Reporte de Sostenibilidad 2016*. Santiago de Chile: Autor.
- Universidad de Santiago de Chile (2017). *Protocolo de política institucional de prevención, sanción y reparación frente al acoso sexual, de género y otras conductas discriminatorias de la Universidad de Santiago de Chile*. Recuperado de [http://rsu.usach.cl/sites/rsu/files/documentos/resolucion\\_protocolo\\_acoso.pdf](http://rsu.usach.cl/sites/rsu/files/documentos/resolucion_protocolo_acoso.pdf)
- Universidad de Zaragoza (2015). *Diagnóstico sobre la igualdad de género en la Universidad de Zaragoza*. Zaragoza: Autor.
- Valls, R. (2006) *Violències de gènere a l'àmbit universitari. Realitats, formes i superació*. Barcelona: Agència de Gestió d'Ajuts Universitaris i de Recerca. Generalitat de Catalunya.

