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Preliminary Exploration of Bystander Intention to Stand Up for a Female-Peer Targeted in Sexual Harassment in Greek Academia

By Stilianí “Ani” Chroni¹, Stefania Grigoriou², Antonis Hatzigeorgiadis³, & Yannis Theodorakis⁴

Abstract

University students' intentions to stand up for a female-peer victimized in a sexual harassment incident by peer and/or professor as perpetrator were explored using the planned behavior theory. The participants were 296 Greek male and female undergraduate students. Using a standard planned behavior theory questionnaire, hypothetical scenarios of sexual harassment conveyed through (a) unwanted verbal comments of sexual content, (b) unwanted physical contact, and (c) gender based taunting, were presented to participants. In all scenarios, bystander intention to stand up was predicted. Specifically, we found that it is more likely for a student-bystander to intervene when perceiving a strong social pressure as significant others would also stand up for a victim; his/her self-control beliefs are strong over the behavior to stand up; and when his/her attitude is negative and unfavorable toward the witnessed conduct. In both peer- and professors-as-perpetrator scenarios, female students, more than males, held significantly more negative attitudes towards sexual harassment and stronger intentions to intervene. Considering female students' well-being, findings are related to the characteristics of the Greek society and the lack of protective laws and policies against sexual harassment in Greek academia.

Keywords: sexual harassment, bystander, planned behavior theory, higher education, Greece.

Introduction

Sexual harassment (SH) is a prevailing form of sexual victimization among women (Pina, Gannon, & Saunders, 2009; United Nations, 2003). Studies on the prevalence and negative impact of SH have been carried out since the 1970s and efforts to prevent and control the phenomenon through laws, conduct policies, and procedures have been made worldwide. Today,

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although significant progress has been made, harassers continue to harass. SH occurs in higher education institutions worldwide (e.g., American Association of University Women, 2001; Barak, 1997; Borufka, 2010; Cortina, Swan, Fitzgerald, & Waldo, 1998; Dziech & Weiner, 1984; Huerta, Cortina, Pang, Torges, & Magley, 2006; Reilly, Lott, & Gallogly, 1986) and its experience may cause psychological distress (anxiety and depression) in female university students, which was found to relate with lower academic satisfaction, greater physical illness, and greater disordered eating, whereas greater disengagement from the academic environment was reported to be the cumulative effect, associating to performance decline (Huerta et al., 2006).

While SH is a form of behavioral misconduct recognized by law in EU member states, in Greece the newly introduced laws condemn solely SH at the workplace environment (Laws 3488/2006 and 3896/2010), leaving education on the outside. Moreover SH continues to be a societal taboo (Artinopoulou & Papatheodorou, 2004) and has never been part of the public agenda for education. Hence, even if it happens we know little about; nothing is done for preventing or controlling the phenomenon and research on the topic is sparse. Few researchers in Greece have collected research data within educational institutions (Fasting, Chroni, & Knorre, in press; Mitsopoulou, Hatzimanoli, Triantafillou, & Giotakos, 2005; Pendaraki, Eseroglou, Kalatzi, & Stavropoulou, 2009). As neither prevention nor control exists in Greek academia we deemed appropriate to explore an alternative approach for confronting the taboo phenomenon of SH, that of bystanders' intentions to take some action against unfolding SH.

The manuscript presents a preliminary exploration of student-bystanders' intentions to stand up for a female peer who is targeted for sexual harassment, using Azjen's theory of planned behavior. The present study is one of few that have approached aspects of the SH phenomenon through the behavioral model of planned behavior (Goldberg, 2007; Li, Frieze, & Tang, 2010; O'Leary-Kelly, Paetzold, & Griffin, 2000), which has been shown to have predictive utility in determining if a person will take action in diverse array of domains. This approach may open for us a new window toward the '*easier said than done*' act of confronting SH in the case a bystander is present.

In the international setting, the existing laws, policies, and procedures against SH heavily rely on victims' reporting the incident; while underreporting is a key factor (Di Martino, Hoel, & Cooper, 2003) as well as reporting experiences of unwanted sexualized behaviors, but not labeling them as SH (Welsh, Carr, MacQuarrie, & Huntley, 2006). Considering that attempts to control SH based on victims reporting the incident meet difficulties, Bowes-Sperry and O'Leary-Kelly (2005) proposed '*observer intervention*' as an alternative mechanism for controlling SH (the term bystander is used in the present study instead of observer).

Bystander Intervention

For some time, scholars called for attention onto *bystanders of SH as mediators for controlling and/or preventing SH through direct action* (e.g., reporting, intervening) (see Cleveland, 1994; Bowes-Sperry & Powell, 1999; Bowes-Sperry & O'Leary-Kelly, 2005). Bowes-Sperry and O'Leary-Kelly (2005), extending their work (O'Leary-Kelly & Bowes-Sperry, 2001), proposed a model based on the 'bystander intervention' work of Latané and Darley (1970). According to the proposed model, 'bystander intervention' is the final step in a complex decision-making process. A bystander will intervene if he/she notices an unfolding SH incident, and (i) interprets the situation as one requiring action, (ii) decides that it is his/her

personal responsibility to act, and (iii) decides on a specific form of assistance to offer. Nonetheless, at each one of these three decision stages, various conditions may promote or inhibit intervention (e.g., ambiguity of conduct, moral intensity of the behavior, social influence effects, observer-target relationship, etc) and influence the behavioral outcomes. Bystanders are expected to finally choose between two general behavioral outcomes, to intervene or not to intervene, based on their determinations (by answering yes/no) at each of the decision-making stages. Only when a bystander develops affirmative answers to the questions posed at each decision-making stage, intervention is likely to occur (for an extended review of the model, see Bowes- Sperry & O'Leary-Kelly, 2005).

Bowes- Sperry and O'Leary-Kelly (2005) thoroughly discussed some of the numerous conditions that play a role in promoting or inhibiting bystander intervention and identified 13 propositions that may positively influence a bystander toward an active intervention. As proposed, a bystander is more likely to intervene when: perceiving the witnessed incident as low in ambiguity and high in moral intensity; other bystanders who influence the individual also display a strong concern over the incident; there is no personal relationship between the harasser and the target; the organizational role expectations include SH prevention; within the group of bystanders there is no person for whom such behavior is considered in-role; the bystander and the target are members of the same salient identity group; the bystander has experienced role modeling around SH intervention; the bystander has strong negative emotional reactions to the SH incident; the bystander believes that SH will recur and that it has caused or will cause significant harm; the intervention is welcomed by the target and/or the organization; as well as when the bystander perceives low-cost and high-benefits being associated with his/her involvement.

Thus far, systematic research on this topic has not been conducted (O'Leary-Kelly, Bowes-Sperry, Bates, & Lean, 2009), thus the predictive power of the presented model and the 13 propositions for intervening require further exploration and empirical research evidence. Bowes-Sperry and Powell (1999) in an early study on factors influencing bystander reactions in SH incidents found that those who had an ethical concern over the witnessed behavior were more likely to form intentions to intervene in the unfolding behavior. According to the literature intention to perform a behavior is a valid predictor of actual behavior; hence we proceeded here to a preliminary exploration of bystanders' behavioral intention to intervene. One of the models that have been widely used and delineated as fruitful in explaining and predicting behavior based on the individual's intention is the planned behavior model (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991; Ajzen, 2005; Ajzen & Madden, 1986).

The Theory of Planned Behavior

According to the TPB, human behavior is a function of the individual's intention to perform the behavior-at-hand. *Intention* captures one's motivation, indicates how hard he/she is willing to try in order to perform the given behavior and is determined by three conceptually independent factors: attitude toward the behavior, perceived behavioral control, and subjective norm. *Attitude* refers to one's favorable or unfavorable evaluation of the behavior. *Perceived behavioral control* portrays the individual's beliefs on the ease or difficulty of performing the given behavior and reflects past experiences as well as obstacles preventing the person from exhibiting the behavior. *Subjective norm* expresses the social pressure placed on the individual to perform or not to perform the behavior. According to Ajzen, Brown, and Carvajal (2004) "the

more favorable the attitude and subjective norm, and the greater the perceived behavioral control, the stronger should be the person's intention to perform the behavior in question." (p. 1110).

The framework of TPB has been applied successfully in a diverse range of behavioral domains. It has been employed toward the prediction of behaviors relating to healthy and unhealthy habits, e.g., violence, exercise, nutrition, use of drugs, alcohol, smoking (e.g., Ajzen, Albarracín, & Hornik, 2007; Droomers, Scrijvers, & Mackenbach, 2004; Hassandra et al., 2011; Kosmidou, Theodorakis, & Chroni, 2008). It has also been used in attitude modification toward risky behaviors, such as doping in competitive sports, unprotected sex, and use of condoms for prevention from sexually transmitted disease (e.g., Albarracin, Johnson, Fishbein, & Muellerleile, 2001; Hogben, Lawrence, Hennessy, & Eldridge, 2003; Hutchinson & Wood, 2007). Moreover, TPB was successful in predicting the dishonest actions of lying, cheating in exams, and shoplifting (Beck & Ajzen, 1991). Recently, Li et al. (2010) explored middle to high school Chinese students' intentions to protect themselves against peer sexual harassment and abuse and found the TPB model to be predictive for girls, while only subjective norms and behavioral control significantly predicted boys' intentions to protect themselves.

In the present study, the planned behavior model was employed to help us explore bystander intention to intervene in SH incidents as a potential confrontational mechanism that may overcome some of the existing barriers for controlling sexual harassment. Since in the literature the educational arena is portrayed as an environment where SH often occurs and female students are the most frequent targets; we reckoned them as a suitable population for our study. More specifically, we explored students' intention, perceived behavioral control and subjective norm toward the behavior *to stand up for a sexually harassed female-peer targeted by a male peer and/or a male professor*, along with their attitudes on three specific sexually harassing behaviors. We anticipated that if a bystander's attitude is unfavorable toward the unfolding SH incident, while his/her perceived behavioral control and subjective norm are strong towards standing up for the victim, this would predict intention to stand up for the female-peer. We also explored gender and anticipated it would have an effect on the TPB variables. Lastly, exploring the effect of year of enrollment on the TPB variables, no specific hypothesis was formed.

Method

Participants

The participants were 296 undergraduate students [109 men and 187 women] enrolled in academic departments in areas of education. Their mean age was 20.49(+3.96) years. Of the 296 students, 156 (57 men and 99 women) were attending their first year of studies and 140 (52 men and 88 women) were at the fourth and final year of their studies. The mean age of the first year students was 18.71(+2.48) and of the fourth year students 22.47(+4.34) years.

Measurement

The topic of SH and bystanders' behavioral intentions is a sensitive one, thus subjective to systematic biases and dishonest reporting. Nonetheless, the common practice of self-reported answers was used here, even though it has been heavily criticized as potentially biased for furnishing socially desirable responses and denying socially undesirable attitudes or behaviors (Beck & Ajzen, 1991), since research has also shown that self-reports of dishonest behavior are relatively accurate (Beck & Ajzen, 1991; Himmelfarb & Lickteig, 1982).

To overcome the sensitivity of the subject and to increase the likelihood to receive honest responses, we used hypothetical scenarios in the TPB questionnaire as done in previously published studies (see Ajzen et al., 2004; Beck & Ajzen, 1991). In addition, to overcome underreporting and the gap between objectively and subjectively defined SH (see Barak, 1997); the term SH was nowhere used in the questionnaire. Instead, the hypothetical written scenarios, presented below, descriptively exposed three forms of sexual harassment: (a) unwanted verbal comments of sexual content, (b) unwanted physical contact, and (c) gender based taunting.

- Some *male students* when talking to *female peers* repeatedly make comments of strong sexual content while this is clearly unwelcome by them. Some find these comments funny, others find them perfectly normal, others derogatory, and some find them socially unacceptable.
- Some *male students* in their encounters with *female peers* hug them briefly, kiss them or pinch their bodies lightly while this is clearly unwelcome by them. Some find these comments funny, others find them perfectly normal, others derogatory, and some find them socially unacceptable.
- Some *male students* when talking to *female peers* taunt them either for being women and/or for their performance in various fields (e.g., studies, sports, arts, technology, etc). Some find these comments funny, others find them perfectly normal, others derogatory, and some find them socially unacceptable.

In these scenarios, *male students* and *female peers* were replaced with *male professors* and *female students* to accommodate our exploration of SH incidents initiated both by peers and by professors. All six scenarios were administered to all participants. Considering the sensitivity of the topic and to increase response rate the peer-harassment scenarios were answered prior to the professor-harassment ones. However, within the three scenarios concerning each perpetrator these were counterbalanced to partially control for an order effect.

The forms of SH explored here have been reported in recent studies as the most common ones (see Fasting, Chroni, Hervick, & Knorre, 2011; Fasting et al., in press; Pina et al., 2009). Moreover, these forms are explicitly considered in the Greek anti-harassment law (effective in the workplace), where SH is defined as “any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature occurring, with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person, in particular when creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.” (Law 3896/2010 replaced Law 3488/2006).

The TPB questionnaire (Ajzen, 2011) employed was administered in the Greek language and had been previously used in studies with Greek populations (e.g., Hassandra et al., 2011; Kosmidou et al., 2008). Items of the questionnaire are translated to English only to serve the purposes of this publication. Attitude toward sexual harassment, was assessed by the mean score of responses to the statement ‘For me, when a male student talks in such way to a female student, it is...’ using five bipolar adjectives (i.e., good - bad, foolish - clever, ethical - unethical, ugly - nice, unpleasant - pleasant). The responses were marked on 7-point scales, where higher scores indicated more negative attitudes toward sexual harassment, signifying an unfavorable evaluation of the incident and less acceptance of it. Cronbach’s α ranged between .85 and .86. Intention was assessed by the mean score of two items, e.g., ‘I intent to defend the female student’, measured on 7-point scales ranging from 1 (*unlikely, definitely no*) to 7 (*likely, definitely yes*). Higher scores indicated a stronger intention to stand up for a sexually harassed peer during an unfolding incident. Cronbach’s α varied from .67 to .83. Perceived behavioral control was assessed by the mean score of two items, e.g., ‘For me to defend the female student

in the abovementioned circumstances is ...' Answers were marked on 7-point scales ranging from 1 (*difficult, I disagree*) to 7 (*easy, I agree*). Higher scores indicated higher self-control beliefs toward defending a female peer victim, hence an activity controlled by the observer. Cronbach's α varied from .52 to .81. Subjective norm was assessed by the mean score of two items, e.g., 'Most people who are important for me ...', and responses were also marked on 7-point scales ranging from 1 (*would stand up for the perpetrator*) to 7 (*would stand up for the SH target*). Higher scores indicated a strong influence by significant others who would stand up for a female student being sexually harassed and the social pressure to exhibit this behavior. Cronbach's α varied from .74 to .93.

Furthermore, two (2) behavioral questions were posed based on each scenario: 'What would be your choice?' explored the behavioral choice to intervene with responses given on an 11-point scale (1 = *to stand up for the male student/professor*, 6 = *no action*, 11 = *to stand up for the female peer/student*); and 'How often do you see this [form of SH] happening?' explored their behavioral experience, with responses given on an 11-point scale ranging from *not at all* (1) to *extremely often* (11), with the midpoint of 6 = *sometimes*. Lastly, upon each scenario female students were asked to answer with *yes* or *no* to the question 'Has this happened to you?' For all participants, the last part of the questionnaire included the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (SDS) (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960). The correlations between SDS and the TPB variables for SH behaviors from peers and/or professors were low, ranging between .13 and -.08.

Procedures

The study was approved by the authors' University Ethics Committee. Confidentiality and anonymity were of extreme importance thus the demographic information asked were minimal (gender and year of enrollment in school). Students were approached before or after classes and invited to participate on a volunteer basis. University authority figures (professors or staff) were not present in the room at the time of data collection. Before completing the questionnaires, standardized verbal instructions were provided by one of the authors present at all times during data collection to accommodate any questions and/or insecurities. The completed questionnaires when returned were placed in an envelope that was sealed before departing the room. To further protect our participants, the results are presented in such way that makes it impossible to recognize any individual, department or academic institution.

Results

Linear regressions were computed to test potential predictions by the TPB for each SH incident and two-way MANOVAs were used to explore potential differences in the TPB variables based on the respondents' gender and year of enrollment. Descriptive statistics were used to explore the participants' answers to the behavioral experience questions.

Predicting Bystander Intention to Intervene

Six regression analyses, one for each scenario involving the SH behaviors initiated by peers and by professors, were performed to test the degree to which bystanders' intention to

intervene could be predicted by attitudes, perceived behavioral control, and subjective norms. The standardized coefficients for all analyses are presented in Table 1.⁵

Table 1.

Predicting bystander intention by attitudes, perceived behavioral control, and subjective norms: Standardized coefficients (beta) for all regression analyses.

	A	PBC	SN
<i>From peers</i>			
SH through verbal comments	.330**	.338**	.211**
SH through physical contact	.206**	.301**	.383**
Gender harassment	.247**	.258**	.362**
<i>From professors</i>			
SH through verbal comments	.193**	.365**	.370**
SH through physical contact	.172**	.360**	.380**
Gender harassment	.195**	.453**	.288**

Note: SH = Sexual Harassment. A= Attitude. PBC = Perceived Behavioral Control. SN = Subjective Norms. ** $p < .001$

SH from peers

Concerning one's *intention to stand up for a female peer when she is sexually harassed by a male peer through repetitive yet clearly unwanted verbal comments of strong sexual content*, the regression analysis revealed that 38.3% of the intention variance could be predicted, $F(3, 295) = 60.476, p < .001$. Concerning one's *intention to stand up for a female peer when she is sexually harassed by a male peer through unwanted touching, hugging or pinching*, the regression analysis revealed that 50.3% of the intention variance could be predicted, $F(3, 294) = 98.178, p < .001$. Finally, for one's *intention to stand up for a female peer when she is taunted by a male peer because of her gender and/or performances*, the analysis revealed that 47% of the variance could be predicted, $F(3, 295) = 86.487, p < .001$. For all scenarios from peers, examination of standardized coefficients showed that all three predictors were significant at the .001 level. The strongest contributor in peer the harassment through verbal comments scenarios was perceived behavioral control, followed by attitude, and subjective norms. In the peer harassment thru physical contact and gender harassment scenarios the pattern of the contribution is similar with subjective norms being the strongest, followed by perceived behavioral control and attitude.

SH from professors

On one's *intention to stand up for a female peer when she is sexually harassed by a male professor through repetitive yet clearly unwanted verbal comments of strong sexual content*, the regression analysis revealed that 48% of the intention variance could be predicted, $F(3, 295) = 89.743, p < .001$. Concerning one's *intention to stand up for a female peer when she is sexually harassed by a male professor through unwanted touching, hugging or pinching*, the regression

⁵ Regressions were also computed separately for men and women. The analyses yielded results similar to those of the total sample. These are available upon request from the first author.

analysis revealed that 48.3% of the intention variance could be predicted, $F(3, 294) = 90.692, p < .001$. Finally, *one's intention to stand up for a female peer when she is taunted by a male teacher because of her gender and/or performances*, the regression revealed that 51.5% of the variance could be predicted, $F(3, 295) = 103.429, p < .001$. For all scenarios from professors, examination of standardized coefficients showed that all three predictors were significant at the .001 level. The strongest contributor in the professor harassment through verbal comments and physical contact scenarios was subjective norms, followed by perceived behavioral control and attitude. In the professor gender harassment scenario the pattern of the contribution changed with perceived behavioral control being the strongest predictor, followed by subjective norms and attitude.

Gender and Year of Enrollment Effect on TPB variables

Six two-way (2 x 2) MANOVAs, one for each scenario, were calculated to test for differences in the variables of the TPB as a function of gender and year of enrolment. Descriptive statistics for the TPB variables according to the participants' gender and year of enrollment are presented in Tables 2 (from peers) and 3 (from professors). Significant univariate effects for the TPB variables according to the participants' gender and year of enrollment are presented in Tables 4 (from peers) and 5 (from professors).

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations of TPB Variables for SH Behaviors Exhibited from Peers

	SH through verbal comments		SH through physical contact		Gender Harassment	
	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>
<i>by Gender</i>	<u>Males</u>	<u>Females</u>	<u>Males</u>	<u>Females</u>	<u>Males</u>	<u>Females</u>
A toward SH	5.10 (±1.15)	5.64 (±1.05)	5.28 (±1.14)	5.71 (±1.06)	5.51 (±1.08)	6.25 (±0.92)
I to stand up for peer	5.21 (±1.17)	5.69 (±0.97)	5.19 (±1.13)	5.49 (±1.06)	5.44 (±1.01)	6.25 (±0.83)
PBC to stand up for peer	5.34 (±1.15)	5.30 (±1.26)	5.28 (±1.20)	5.28 (±1.35)	5.33 (±1.22)	5.87 (±1.09)
SN to stand up for peer	5.22 (±1.18)	5.89 (±0.84)	5.35 (±1.12)	5.63 (±1.02)	5.32 (±1.23)	6.04 (±1.01)
<i>by Year of Enrollment</i>	<u>1st</u>	<u>4th</u>	<u>1st</u>	<u>4th</u>	<u>1st</u>	<u>4th</u>
A toward SH	5.48 (±1.09)	5.40 (±1.14)	5.51 (±1.06)	5.61 (±1.16)	5.96 (±1.04)	5.99 (±1.05)
I to stand up for peer	5.73 (±1.04)	5.27 (±1.05)	5.45 (±1.09)	5.31 (±1.10)	6.07 (±0.94)	5.81 (±1.01)
PBC to stand up for peer	5.41 (±1.66)	5.21 (±1.27)	5.31 (±1.29)	5.24 (±1.30)	5.67 (±1.24)	5.67 (±1.08)
SN to stand up for peer	5.78 (±1.05)	5.49 (±0.99)	5.54 (±1.07)	5.50 (±1.07)	5.90 (±1.10)	5.63 (±1.19)

Note: SH = Sexual Harassment. A= Attitude. I = Intention. PBC = Perceived Behavioral Control. SN = Subjective Norms

Table 3*Means and Standard Deviations of TPB Variables for SH Behaviors Exhibited from Professors*

	SH through verbal comments		SH through physical contact		Gender harassment	
	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>
<i>by Gender</i>	<u>Males</u>	<u>Females</u>	<u>Males</u>	<u>Females</u>	<u>Males</u>	<u>Females</u>
A toward SH	5.90 (±1.17)	6.31 (±1.09)	5.92 (±1.16)	6.50 (±0.89)	6.03 (±1.04)	6.48 (±0.81)
I to stand up for peer	5.67 (±1.06)	5.72 (±1.10)	5.63 (±1.07)	5.67 (±1.11)	5.62 (±0.99)	5.89 (±1.03)
PBC to stand up for peer	5.33 (±1.39)	4.71 (±1.62)	5.30 (±1.33)	4.72 (±1.63)	5.29 (±1.33)	5.19 (±1.51)
SN who stand up for peer	5.61 (±1.13)	5.79 (±1.02)	5.65 (±1.11)	5.75 (±1.03)	5.57 (±1.07)	5.87 (±1.03)
<i>by Year of Enrollment</i>	<u>1st</u>	<u>4th</u>	<u>1st</u>	<u>4th</u>	<u>1st</u>	<u>4th</u>
A toward SH	6.25 (±1.03)	6.06 (±1.24)	6.35 (±0.93)	6.22 (±1.14)	6.34 (±0.87)	6.29 (±0.99)
I to stand up for peer	5.93 (±1.01)	5.45 (±1.11)	5.85 (±1.04)	5.44 (±1.11)	5.98 (±0.95)	5.58 (±1.06)
PBC to stand up for peer	5.04 (±1.53)	4.83 (±1.61)	5.07 (±1.53)	4.78 (±1.56)	5.31 (±1.49)	5.14 (±1.39)
SN who stand up for peer	5.89 (±1.02)	5.54 (±1.09)	5.87 (±0.99)	5.53 (±1.11)	5.98 (±0.97)	5.51 (±1.09)

Note: SH = Sexual Harassment. A= Attitude. I = Intention. PBC = Perceived Behavioral Control. SN = Subjective Norms

SH from peers

Exploring potential differences on the scenario of SH conveyed through unwanted verbal comments by peers, the 2 X 2 MANOVA revealed significant multivariate effects for gender, $F(4, 289) = 11.871, p < .001, \eta^2 = .141$, and year of enrollment, $F(4, 289) = 4.237, p < .01, \eta^2 = .055$. Examination of univariate effects and mean scores revealed that (a) female students scored higher than male students on attitude against the SH incident ($p < .001$), as well as on intention ($p < .001$) and subjective norms ($p < .001$) toward standing up for the female peer; (b) younger first year students scored higher on intention ($p < .001$) and subjective norms ($p < .05$) toward standing up for the female target than the older fourth year ones.

On the scenario of SH by peers conveyed through unwanted physical contact, the analysis revealed significant multivariate effects for gender, $F(4, 288) = 4.206, p < .01, \eta^2 = .055$, but not for year of enrollment ($p = .637$). However, a significant gender by year interaction emerged, $F(4, 288) = 2.255, p < .05, \eta^2 = .034$. Examination of univariate effects and mean scores revealed that women scored higher on attitude ($p < .01$), intention ($p < .05$), and subjective norms ($p < .05$) than men did. Examination of the interaction effects showed a significant effect for attitude ($p < .01$). Pairwise comparisons showed that in first year students there were no differences between men ($M = 5.48$) and women ($M = 5.53$), whereas women in the fourth year ($M = 5.92$) scored higher than fourth year men ($M = 5.06$) did ($p < .05$).

Concerning potential differences on the scenario of gender harassment from peers, the analysis revealed significant multivariate effects for gender, $F(4, 289) = 17.595, p < .001, \eta^2 = .196$, and year of enrollment, $F(4, 289) = 2.852, p < .05, \eta^2 = .038$. Examination of univariate effects and mean scores revealed that (a) female students scored higher on all TPB variables ($p < .001$) than their male counterparts did; (b) younger first year students scored higher on intention ($p < .05$) and subjective norms ($p < .05$) than older fourth year students.

SH from professors

Exploring potential differences on the scenario of SH conveyed through unwanted verbal comments of sexual content by professors, the analysis revealed significant multivariate effects for gender, $F(4, 289) = 8.332, p < .001, \eta^2 = .103$, and year of enrollment, $F(4, 289) = 4.117, p < .01, \eta^2 = .054$. In addition, a significant gender by year interaction emerged, $F(4, 289) = 3.053, p < .05, \eta^2 = .041$. Examination of univariate effects and mean scores revealed that (a) female students scored higher on attitude ($p < .01$), yet male students scored higher on perceived behavioral control ($p < .05$) than females did; (b) younger students attending the first year of their studies scored higher both on intention ($p < .001$) and subjective norms ($p < .01$) than older students in their fourth year of studies. Examination of the interaction effects showed a marginal effect for subjective norms ($p = .06$). Pairwise comparisons showed that in first year students there were no differences between men ($M = 5.92$) and women ($M = 5.87$), whereas women in fourth year ($M = 5.70$) scored higher than fourth year men ($M = 5.10$) did ($p < .05$).

On the scenario of SH from professors conveyed through unwanted physical contact, the analysis revealed significant multivariate effects for gender, $F(4, 288) = 9.719, p < .001, \eta^2 = .119$, and year of enrollment, $F(4, 289) = 3.023, p < .05, \eta^2 = .040$. Examination of univariate effects and mean scores revealed that (a) female students scored higher on attitude ($p < .001$), while male students scored higher on perceived behavioral control ($p < .01$); (b) first year students' scored higher on intention ($p < .01$) and on subjective norms ($p < .01$) than the fourth year ones did.

Moreover, on exploring potential differences in gender harassment from professors, again the analysis revealed significant multivariate effects for gender, $F(4, 289) = 6.661, p < .001, \eta^2 = .084$, and year of enrollment, $F(4, 289) = 5.432, p < .001, \eta^2 = .070$. In addition, another marginal gender by year interaction emerged, $F(4, 289) = 2.347, p = .055, \eta^2 = .031$. Examination of univariate effects and mean scores revealed that (a) female students scored higher on attitude ($p < .001$), on intention ($p < .05$), and subjective norms ($p < .05$) than male students did; (b) younger first year students scored higher on intention ($p < .01$) and subjective norms ($p < .001$) than the older fourth year students did. Examination of the interaction effects showed the same as in previous scenarios significant effect for attitudes ($p < .01$). Pairwise comparisons showed that in first year students there were no differences between men ($M = 6.23$) and women ($M = 6.40$), whereas fourth year women ($M = 6.58$) scored higher than the fourth year men ($M = 5.80$) did ($p < .01$).

Table 4*SH from Peers: TPB Variables as a Function of Gender and Year of Enrollment*

	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2
<i>Gender</i>				
SH through verbal comments*				
A toward SH	1	17.595	.000	.057
I to stand up for peer	1	15.571	.000	.051
SN to stand up for peer	1	32.420	.000	.100
SH through physical contact**				
A toward SH	1	12.153	.001	.040
I to stand up for peer	1	5.959	.020	.015
SN to stand up for peer	1	5.267	.022	.018
Gender Harassment*				
A toward SH	1	40.229	.000	.121
I to stand up for peer	1	56.672	.000	.163
PBC to stand up for peer	1	14.892	.000	.049
SN to stand up for peer	1	29.461	.000	.092
<i>Year of Enrollment</i>				
SH through verbal comments*				
I to stand up for peer	1	14.631	.000	.048
SN to stand up for peer	1	6.127	.011	.022
Gender Harassment*				
I to stand up for peer	1	5.782	.017	.019
SN to stand up for peer	1	4.309	.039	.015
<i>Gender x Year of Enrollment</i>				
SH through physical contact**				
A toward SH	1	9.886	.033	.002

Note: SH = Sexual Harassment. A= Attitude. I = Intention. PBC = Perceived Behavioral Control. SN = Subjective Norms. * $df_{\text{error}} = 292$. ** $df_{\text{error}} = 291$.

Table 5*SH from Professors: TPB Variables as a Function of Gender and Year of Enrollment*

	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2
<i>Gender</i>				
SH through verbal comments*				
A toward SH	1	4.682	.002	.016
PBC to stand up for peer	1	11.195	.001	.037
SH through physical contact**				
A toward SH	1	24.732	.000	.078
PBC to stand up for peer	1	9.972	.002	.033
Gender Harassment*				
A toward SH	1	19.080	.000	.061
I to stand up for peer	1	4.810	.029	.016
SN to stand up for peer	1	5.620	.018	.019
<i>Year of Enrollment</i>				
SH through verbal comments*				
I to stand up for peer	1	12.742	.000	.042
SN to stand up for peer	1	10.723	.001	.035
SH through physical contact**				
I to stand up for peer	1	10.328	.001	.034
SN to stand up for peer	1	8.393	.004	.028
Gender Harassment*				
I to stand up for peer	1	10.926	.001	.036
SN to stand up for peer	1	13.911	.000	.045
<i>Gender x Year of Enrollment</i>				
SH through verbal comments *				
SN to stand up for peer	1	3.569	.060	.012
Gender Harassment*				
A toward SH	1	8.002	.005	.027

Note: SH = Sexual Harassment. A= Attitude. I = Intention. PBC = Perceived Behavioral Control. SN = Subjective Norms. * $df_{\text{error}} = 292$. ** $df_{\text{error}} = 291$

Behavioral Experiences and Choice

The mean scores to the behavioral experience question ‘*How often do you see this [form of SH] happening?*’ regarding harassment behaviors initiated by peers were 7.72 (± 2.51) for verbal comments of sexual content, 8.72(± 2.26) for physical contact, and 8.20(± 2.50) for gender harassment. With regard to behaviors exhibited by professors, the mean scores were 6.18(± 2.82) for verbal comments of sexual content, 5.80(± 2.90) for acts of physical contact, and 6.74(± 2.75) for gender harassment. Female participants’ responses to the question ‘*Has this happened to you?*’ signify that based on each scenario a female student only disclosed if she had an actual experience of it; they do not indicate the severity, frequency or total volume of the reported

experiences. Regarding the 187 women's personal experiences of SH by peers, verbal comments of sexual content had been experienced by 51.9% of them, acts of physical contact by 50.8%, and gender harassment by 47.6% of them. For SH behaviors exhibited by professors, 13.9% had personally experienced verbal comments of sexual content, 8% acts of physical contact, and 23.5% reported experiences of gender harassment.

The mean scores to the behavioral choice question '*What would be your choice?*' were 8.92(±2.04) for verbal comments of sexual content, 8.70(±1.91) for physical contact, and 9.28(±1.92) for gender harassment initiated by peers. With regard to behaviors exhibited by professors, the mean scores were 8.99 (±2.00) for verbal comments of sexual content, 9.04(±1.81) for acts of physical contact, and 9.23(±1.68) for gender harassment.

Discussion

The present study employed the theory of planned behavior to explore male and female university students' intention to stand up for a female peer if they were bystanders in unfolding SH incidents initiated by male peers and professors. Given that this is the first study exploring SH and an alternative mechanism of confrontation, we begin the discussion with the participants' behavioral choices and experiences, and then we elaborate on the prediction of bystander intention to intervene and the effects of gender and year of enrollment in school.

The students' behavioral experiences revealed that SH conducts had been observed; fairly often initiated by peers and less often initiated by professors. In addition, female students reported having had personal experiences of sexually harassing behaviors at a medium percentage from students and low from professors. Lastly, the participants reported that if they witnessed an unfolding SH incident, they would choose to stand up for the female peer victim. While conducting any analyses on these behavioral questions was not in the scope of our study, they are revealing the occurrence of SH in academia and ought to be taken in consideration in future studies.

As anticipated, our findings predicted students' intention to stand up for a female peer in case they witnessed the unfolding SH incident. More specifically, we found that it is more likely for a student-bystander to intervene when (a) perceiving a strong social pressure (i.e., subjective norm) as significant others would also stand up for a victim; (b) his/her self-control beliefs (i.e., perceived behavior control) are strong over the behavior to stand up; and (c) his/her attitude is negative and unfavorable toward the witnessed conduct. This finding offers support to Bowes-Sperry and O'Leary-Kelly's (2005) proposed conditions suggesting that individuals are more likely to intervene as witnesses when they evaluate the witnessed conduct in a negative and unethical way and when influenced by others with whom they share similar negative attitudes toward the conduct. Furthermore, we are adding to the Bowes-Sperry and O'Leary-Kelly's (2005) propositions that 'bystander intervention in SH is more likely to occur when the bystander perceives having high self-control over this behavior'.

Looking at the overall picture of predictors on bystander intention to intervene in unfolding SH, it is perceived behavioral control and subjective norms followed by attitude that shape one's intention in the peer and professor as perpetrator scenarios. Similarly, in the Li et al. (2010) study on Chinese students' intention to take protective actions against peer SH, the influence of subjective norms and perceived behavioral control was found to be significant. Our findings also suggest that intervening efforts should seek to increase the students' perceived behavioral control and subjective norms. It is possible though that the attitude construct was not

properly assessed here as it targeted attitude against SH and not for standing up in unfolding SH. Considering Ajzen's (2005; 2011) suggestions on altering an intention and/or actual behavior, one should target the intervention toward one of the three major predictors under the conditions that (i) there is room for change within the predictor and (ii) the predictor accounts for significant variance in intention and behavior. In our study, perceived behavioral control seems to be the variable to target for change in the future, if one also considers that subjective norms is not directly accessible for change being formed based on significant other's views. Last, since SH is universally viewed as a wrongful act, future research on bystander intervention could explore the predictive strength of additional TPB variables, such as knowledge, moral norms, and anticipated feelings of moral regret (Beck & Ajzen, 1991; Kaiser, 2006; Kaiser, Hübner, & Bogner, 2005).

Looking at gender as a factor influencing bystander intention to intervene, as anticipated it differentiated individuals' attitudes toward SH and their intentions to stand up for a female peer. In incidents initiated by peers, female students were consistently more negative toward SH and felt more social pressure to intervene, which provided them with a stronger intention to stand up for a female peer. The finding that women are more negative and less tolerant of SH in comparison to men has been also reported in previous studies. Scholars extensively explored gender differences in attitudes via levels of tolerance (e.g., Beauvais, 1986; Ford & Donis, 1996; McCabe & Hardman, 2005) and via what constitutes SH (Gutek, Morasch, & Cohen, 1983; Rotundo, Nguyen, & Sackett, 2001). They found men being more tolerant, less likely to interpret ambiguous forms of sexual interactions as sexual harassment, while they also define a relative narrow range of behaviors as sexually harassing ones compared to women.

The strong social pressure reported by women toward standing up for a female peer may be explained by the fact that they are members of the same identity group, which is a condition articulated by Bowes-Sperry and O'Leary-Kelly (2005) as promoting bystander intervention. It is imperative to point out that although the male students mean scores were lower than those of females, they were not low in general and no gender differences were apparent in students' intentions to intervene in professor initiated incidents. The male students' lower social pressure may reflect the traditional male-hegemonic gender hierarchy and stereotypes of the complex Greek society (Athaniadiadis, 2007).

The traditional male-hegemonic gender roles featured in the Greek society also aids us in explaining male students' stronger perceived behavioral control for standing up when witnessing SH by professors, compared to the female students. One needs to consider the difficulty for a female student to stand up for her peer when a male authority figure (i.e., professor) is hugging, kissing or taunting the peer. According to Bowes-Sperry and O'Leary-Kelly (2005) it is more likely for a bystander to intervene when a low cost is associated with the intervening behavior. A professor-perpetrator holds substantial authority and power over the student and the related cost may be perceived as high.

The participants' year of enrollment in school also revealed variations in subjective norms and intention to take action. The younger first year students intended more strongly to stand up for a peer victim whereas they reported stronger subjective norms. Each year spent in school may account for (a) opening the ground for more and closer interactions with potential perpetrators (Cortina et al., 1998) and (b) loosening the students' negative attitudes toward SH due to the frequency of observed incidents, the tolerance by university authorities and absence of anti-harassment policies/procedures. However, this was a cross sectional study and not a longitudinal one, so only speculations can be made based on these findings. Looking at gender and year of enrollment jointly, we note that while younger men and women students shared

similar negative attitudes toward certain SH behaviors, among the fourth year students women were more negative and intolerant than men were. If these unfavorable attitudes toward SH changed overtime due to women developing stronger emotional reactions toward SH or by bonding as members of the same identity group or due to perceiving the incident more clearly as a significantly painful one for the victim, is not known and was not within the scope of the study. Nevertheless, these conditions are worth exploring.

Future research ought to consider the limitations of the present study. The main limitation here is that intentions to intervene were measured and not actual behaviors. As mentioned before, underreporting has often been discussed as a limitation in SH research and may have also occurred in this study. As the impact of SH even in its lighter form may still be severe (Fasting, Brackenridge, & Sundgot-Borgen, 2003), many victims appear to experience guilt and shame and since the act of SH is an illegal one in Greece, students may feel shame to report their behavioral beliefs, leading to underreporting and/or dishonest reporting. Alike, social desirability remains as a concern even though we found little correlation between responses. It should also be taken into account that the participants were asked to respond to hypothetical scenarios and the possibility that the behaviors explored were hypothetically marked exists. As participants were asked to respond to six scenarios (3 for peers and 3 for professors) a contamination effect of reaction might have occurred. The few items used to measure some of the TPB variables, although these have been used in existing studies, may have limited the data collected. The findings of this study are also limited by the fact that we explored only scenarios of incidents targeting female victims from male perpetrators. Lastly, the cross sectional rather than longitudinal exploration of first and fourth year students' behavioral, normative, and control beliefs may also limit our findings through a potential cohort effect, as younger and older students' experiences may vary significantly.

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