

The Promotion of Student's Efficacy to Prevent Sexual Violence: How Higher Education Institution Should Respond?

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Abstract: Sexual violence against women is acknowledged as one of pressing problems across the globe. The presence of capable bystanders to prevent sexual violence is a necessity. This article is based on a research questioning whether individual, family and institutional factors associated with student's efficacy to perform bystander behavior to prevent sexual violence. Student's efficacy was measured using Bystander Intention to Help Scale developed by Banyard et.al. (2005). The research was carried out in late 2016 at 3 universities in West Java that was classified as public-secular, public-religious affiliated, and private-secular types. Around 950 non-randomly selected students from various academic disciplines with average age of 19 years participated in the study. Study found that level of religiosity and university type as significant factors. The higher the level of religiosity, the more students reported confidence to act as bystander. In addition, students from public university reported higher level of efficacy to prevent sexual violence than their counterparts from private university. Findings will be discussed by comparing developing and developed regions contexts, especially with regards to strategies to prevent sexual violence in campus and university roles to promote pro-social norms behavior against violence against women.

1 INTRODUCTION

Sexual violence against women is acknowledged as one of pressing public health issues across the globe. A report by World Health Organization estimated that globally 35.6 % women have ever experienced physical or sexual assault by intimate partner, non-intimate partner or both. In Indonesia, the National Survey on Women of 2016 revealed that 1 out of 3 women aged between 15-64 years old years have ever been physically and or sexually abused by an intimate partner or non-intimate partner (Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection and National Statistic Agency, 2017). Annual reports published by the Indonesian National Commission on Violence against Women revealed that sexual violence has become one among two most common type of violence against women in Indonesia (National Commission on Violence Against Women, 2016; 2017).

According to World Health Organization (2013) sexual violence is "[...] any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, or other act directed against a person's sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting" (p.2). Sexual violence exists on a continuum

from sexual harassment to rape and or homicide and sexual exploitation. Numerous studies revealed such violence caused serious impacts on victims including risks of experiencing harmful physical, psychological and behavioral disorder or distress that can disable individual and family functioning and well-being (Miller, Handley, Markman, & Miller, 2010; Chen, Murad, Paris, Colbenson, Sattler, et al., 2010; World Health Organization, 2010).

DeKeseredy, Tait, and Alvi (2001) highlighted that sexual violence occur due to three factors: perpetrators who have intention or motivation, potential victims and the absence of capable bystander to prevent the occurrence of violence. The prevention of violence against women should address at least one of those three aspects. This article investigated the factors associated with the efficacy of bystanders to prevent sexual violence among Indonesian undergraduate students. Our review of literature found such a study in Indonesian context is not yet available. It is expected that the study will narrow down the gap of knowledge in Indonesian context and provide the recommendations for higher education institutions in dealing with the issue.

Higher education institution is among the key party responsible to address sexual violence against

women. Campus and surrounding campus are the places where sexual harassment or sexual assault against female students potentially occur. In United States for instance, sexual assault in campuses is considered as a pressing issue, thus pushing the institutions to deal with it seriously (Banyard, Moynihan, & Crossman, 2009; Center for Disease Control & Prevention, 2014). Although data on sexual violence against students within and surrounding colleges/universities in Indonesia is not available, campus environment is not violent free and the lack of attention to address the issue may make campuses as risky places for any form of sexual violence. In addition, higher education institution has a mandate to strengthen student's soft skills including the promotion of pro-social behaviors. The elimination of sexual violence will require the existence of people who are concerned about the issue and have willingness to perform actual acts to prevent such violence. Education institution, therefore, is also responsible to educate their students for being responsive for the welfare of others including by performing act as bystander. Banyard, Moynihan, Walsh, Cohn & Burn (2009) described bystanders as individuals who witness actual or potential situations leading to sexual violence and have choices to perform positive behaviors to prevent before, during and after sexual violence occur.

2 METHODS

Data were collected from students in 3 large universities in Sumedang, Bandung City and Cimahi City in West Java province. Of the three universities, one is private and the other two are public institutions. Two universities are secular and one is affiliated with Islamic education. Approval from universities, schools and faculties were obtained prior to data collection. Students were approached in their classes, explained about the purpose of the study and consented. The total of 1025 questionnaires were distributed and 1003 were returned (98% response rate) but only 953 students completed the questionnaires.

Three standardized measures were used in the study. Bystander Efficacy was measured using Bystander Efficacy Scale developed by Banyard, Plante & Moynihan (2005). The Scale asks the level of confidence of individuals in potentially doing 14 behaviours to prevent sexual violence against women. Participants rate their confidence on a scale of 1 to 100 percent. Higher score means higher level of confidence or efficacy to act as bystander in

intervening a sexual violence incident. The level of reliability of Bystander Efficacy Scale in this study was .89.

Two other instruments were utilized to measure predictor variables which are Attitudes toward Women Scale – short version (ATWS) by Spence, Helmreich & Strapp (1973) and Religiosity Scale (Haj-Yahia, 1998). ATWS consists of 25 items that are measured using a four-point Likert scale (0 to 3), providing scores along a continuum range from endorsement of traditional sex roles to an egalitarian view of the roles of women and men. The ATWS is scored so that a high score reflects more feminist, egalitarian attitudes and a low score reflects more conservative, traditional gender attitudes. ATWS is the most widely used instrument to assess women roles and rights in family and society with very good internal consistency (Bryne, Felker, Vacha-Haase, & Rickard, 2011). Reliability test of the Scale in this study was .77, indicating a good internal consistency.

Religiosity Scale was applied to measure participants' level of religiosity. Three items of the Scale assess participants' subjective perspective regarding the extent of their religiosity in general, religious devotion, and religious affiliation through three items (Haj-Yahia, 1998). In original scoring system, a low score meant a high level of religiosity and a high score means a low level of religiosity. However, in this study, the scoring was reversed so that a high score means a high level of religiosity. The Cronbach alpha of the Scale for this study was .82.

Other independent variables were assessed using self-developed measures. The respondents were asked to provide information about their sex (Female as reference group), age, cohort, study program, parents' highest education level (1=below primary school, 9=doctoral degree), parents' employment status, religion, and ethnicity.

3 RESULTS

Nine hundred fifty three undergraduate students aged 19 years old on average (age range 17 to 30 years) completed the survey. Almost $\frac{3}{4}$ of them were and the remaining 25% were male students. Participants were studying in various disciplines: medicine, law, social and political sciences, dentistry, education, and religious law. The majority of the students (86%) identified themselves as Muslims and the other 14% were non-Muslim (Christians, Hinduism and Buddhism). The levels of parents' education were varied, starting from below primary school to postgraduate levels. Fathers' average level of

education was 12 years (senior high school), which was higher than the mothers' (11 years).

The mean efficacy score of participants was 902; indicating that on average the participants have upper middle level of confidence to act as bystander. Descriptive analysis found students reported that they mostly confident in performing bystander behaviour of to prevent potential sexual violence against women in the following activities: seeking services or help to assist friend who experienced intimate partner violence ($M=77.2$; $SD=23.5$), Contacting the police when hearing someone near my house screaming for help ($M=75.3$, $SD=24.9$), talking with friend who are suspected facing intimate partner ($M=72.1$; $SD=22.5$), doing something to help a female friend who feels uncomfortable among several guys ($M=71$, $SD=24.2$), and criticizing a male friend who admitted that he had sex with a drunken female ($M=71$, $SD=23.5$).

On the other hand, the least confident behaviour to do as reported by students were: offering help to accompany a female stranger who look need an assistance to return to her place at night after party or campus activities ($M=35.1$, $SD=27.8$), delivering straight comments to correct the lecture who provide inappropriate or wrong information about the cause of sexual violence against women ($M=57$, $SD=24$), and seeking help when find out my neighbour is experiencing dating violence ($M=59.8$, $SD=28$).

Multi regression analysis found two significant predictors of bystander efficacy: the level of religiosity and type of university. Level of religiosity positively associated with bystander efficacy in which the higher the level of religiosity, the higher efficacy to intervene as bystander ($p<.001$). Higher level of efficacy to act as bystander to prevent sexual violence was also reported by students from public universities compared to their counterpart from private university ($p<.05$). Other predictors including sex, level of parents' education, attitudes toward gender roles, university affiliation (secular versus religious-based university) were not found as significant predictors of efficacy to perform bystander acts. All variables included in the analysis explained 14% of variability in the student's efficacy.

4 DISCUSSION

The descriptive finding show that in average the university students in this study have a middle level of confidence to perform bystander acts when knowing or witnessing potential sexual violence-related event. This shows that the university students

are not apathy toward their surroundings but having preference to respond to possible sexual violence situation either to prevent it from happening or helping the potential victim. They reported greatest confidence to act when the victim or perpetrator of violence is someone they know as a friend. However, they were less confident to perform the act of bystander when dealing with a stranger or someone with the authority (i.e. the lecturer).

Such patterns have been confirmed in previous research. Studies found the intention to intervene is higher when bystander feel that the victim share same social characteristics with the victim (Levine & Crowther, 2008; Levine, Cassidy, Brazier, & Richer, 2002). Regardless of the gender, tendency to intervene is higher when the potential victim is a friend than unknown person (Burn, 2009). Bystanders also considers the potential cost that may occur from their intervention, thus they will choose taking action that cause them less costs (Fritzsche, Finkelstein, & Penner, 2000). This may explain why students were discouraged to correct their lecturer although they were aware that the lecture deliver wrong messages about sexual violence against women to avoid potential conflict that put them in a risky position. In addition, they feel more confident to help friend for the reason of "sameness" but less confident to help the stranger both because they feel do not belong to the same group with someone they do not know or they afraid having more problems when dealing with strangers.

The study found level of religiosity positively predict efficacy to intervene. Previous studies have confirmed level of religiosity associated with prosocial behaviour. Religious involvement serve as protective factor for negative behaviour such as crime, substance abuse and alcohol consumption (Geppert, Bogenschutz, & Miller, 2007), pornography (Baltazar et al, 2010), or voluntary activities (Bekker & Schuyt, 2008). Unfortunately, very limited study investigated the association between level of religiosity and bystander efficacy to prevent sexual violence against women as performed in this study. One study conducted 21 among undergraduate and graduate students in the United States by Foubert and Rizzo (2013) found no significant association between religiosity (intrinsic and extrinsic dimension) with efficacy to prevent potential sexual violence. This study confirmed the contrary. In the future, more studies are needed to examine the rigorousness of association between religiosity and bystander efficacy

This study found that the type of university as a significant variable in predicting the level of efficacy.

No conclusive explanation can be derived from this finding because so far the study on this dimension is not exist. However, one possible explanation offered by the study related to the characteristics of the study programs. In this study, students at private university mostly came from specific majors like dentistry and medicine and it is likely that they received less exposure to discussions or courses about sexual violence against women. On the contrary, students from public universities came from mixed disciplines and are more aware about the issue, thus making them feeling more prepared to respond. However, further study needs to consider investigating the nature of curriculum and extra-curricular activities at the university to understand their influences on the students' sensitivity about sexual violence and interventions.

How the higher education institution can utilize the findings of this study? The university can strengthen student's efficacy to perform bystander behaviour not only for someone they know but also strangers who need help. Bystander education and trainings can be included in classes and or out class activities to sensitize students with the importance and readiness in helping to prevent sexual violence or help the possible victims. At the same time, they also need to be informed about potential risks of intervening and strategies to minimize the potential harms of helping.

In other countries, especially United States, various Bystander Intervention trainings have been implemented in many campuses and have been found to be effective in increasing students willingness and readiness to intervene sexual assault-related situation effective (Banyard, Moynihan, & Crossman, 2009; Vladitiu, Martin & Macy, 2011). The campuses are also active in promoting the awareness about sexual assault and have developed specific guidelines to prevent and deal with the case that bound the campus community. However, based on researcher observation, none of the university included in this study ever conducted any training or placed protocols related to the prevention of sexual violence and bystander intervention for their students, lecturers, and staff.

Despite its contribution to existing knowledge, this study poses some limitations. First, it investigates the confidence to act not actual acts. Assessing willingness to act may contain risk of social desirability so that the respondents tend to provide normative answers. Unfortunately, this study does not assess social desirability tendency of the participant. Second, the study utilizes a simple measure for religiosity. In fact, religiosity covers complex

dimensions that need to be assessed more thoroughly. Third, all variables in the study only explained less than 20 percent variability in dependent variable. Future studies need to consider other predictor variables to increase the explanatory power.

5 CONCLUSIONS

Bystander appropriate responses prior, during and after the occurrence of potential sexual violence can play important role to minimize the incident and damages resulted from sexual assault. This study can be considered a pioneer in investigating factors associated with bystander efficacy in Indonesian context and it has added some knowledge regarding the role of level of religiosity and type of university in influencing the level of confidence to take actions as bystanders in responding to potential sexual assault. Further studies should be encouraged to find more evidence of the association.

The elimination of sexual violence is a responsibility of all parties, including the higher education institution because campus is not free from any form of violence and also because the institution is responsible to produce graduates with high morality and integrity. The degree of confidence to act as bystanders found among students need to be promoted by well-structured interventions by the universities. Equipping students with appropriate knowledge, attitude and skills to respond to sexual violence is important for them to protect themselves from the assault as well as to make them become more active in protecting the welfare of others, their communities and society.

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