SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN URBAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN THE GAMBIA
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Sexual harassment (SH) in The Gambia is defined as unwanted, non-consensual sexual behaviour, where sexual attention is imposed on an unwilling party. Because of the culture of silence in The Gambia, it is believed that sexual harassment though prevalent in secondary schools; is underestimated like in most other African societies.

Objective
To determine the prevalence of sexual harassment amongst secondary school students in urban Gambia, the socio-demographic characteristics of victims and perpetrators, and the effect of SH on the victims and the actions taken.

Methodology
A pre-tested structured questionnaire was administered to 100 students in each of 3 of the 14 senior secondary schools in urban Gambia. A multistage sampling technique was used to select the study participants. The questionnaire collected information related to the participant’s experience of sexual harassment as victims or perpetrators.

Results
Of the 300 questionnaires distributed, 293 were returned. 88.4% of study participants had been victims of sexual harassment, which ranged from verbal forms of abuse to physical forms such as pulling clothes off or being forced to engage in a sexual act. While 86.8% of girls reported being victims of sexual harassment, 90.4% of boys also reported being harassed mainly perpetrated by fellow students. 29.1% of victims reported being perpetrators of SH.

Conclusion
SH is quite common in secondary schools in The Gambia with some victims becoming perpetrators themselves. This data suggests a need for more open discussion of SH in schools to combat the menace.