

# **Report on the Survey on the Prevalence of and Awareness about Sexual Harassment and Violence at Heidelberg University Campus**

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## **Executive summary**

Any survey arises out of a need to establish or reject a premise. This report, from a survey conducted over the summer of 2019, is neither the first of its kind nor is it going to be the last. Plagued by perils of patriarchy and internalization of gender roles, our community at large has been immune to practices and understandings that need reengineering for a just, equitable and humane society. This survey is towards that end. Sexual harassment and violence seldom get the viable audience due to the nature of shame and prejudices.

The survey was conducted at three institutes of the Centre for Asian and Transcultural Studies (CATS) at Heidelberg University: the South Asia Institute, Institute of Anthropology, and Heidelberg Center for Transcultural Studies. The survey link was sent via email to all the registered students for a response period of forty-five days and 146 valid responses were recorded. Strict anonymity was maintained throughout the process, considering the sensitivity of the issues discussed. In the survey design and the report, the term ‘Instructors’ has been used instead of Chair Holders, Professors, Lecturers and Doctoral Candidates in order to maintain anonymity. Even though the respondents were careful not to name any courses, instructors or institutes when mentioning their experiences, we have anonymized them with the code "[instructor; T.C. and A.M.]" to protect all parties involved.

The first part of the report is an ‘Introduction’ which provides details about the background, aim, timeframe, and sampling method. The second part ‘Findings’ is divided into three sections: the first sub-section deals with the ‘definitions’ of terms (according to German law) and what the respondents thought or knew about these terms; the second sub-section consists of their ‘Experiences’ at Heidelberg; and in the third sub-section, the ‘Institutions’, which are in place and what the respondents know and feel about their effectiveness, have been addressed. The last part of the report consists of suggestions and feedback from the respondents, external researchers and the authors of this report.

This report (in English) has direct quotations from the respondents’ answers, which were both in English and German. The German text has been translated by Alicka Machurich for easy comprehension for English speakers. The German text is also cited in the footnotes for reference. We have tried to make the report as clear and concise as possible, but at the same time it offers a comprehensive insight into the issues discussed. The report only gives a

conclusion in terms of enabling the readers to find out the gravity of present practices and how it has been affecting students.

We found from our survey that 94.5% of students claimed to know what constituted sexual harassment. However, when asked to specify, 21% of the respondents did not know or were not sure of unwanted sexual advances as sexual harassment and less than half (45.2%) could correctly point out what constitutes sexual assault. 20.5% responded that they were aware of the Brochure on Sexual Harassment by the university though half of them have read or seen the brochure. While 43.8% reported of sexual harassment, 7.5% reported of sexual assault during their time at Heidelberg University. 49.3% of the respondents stated that they were not satisfied with the University measure to curb sexual harassment and assault. Specific incidents and comments from the respondents have been included in the report to highlight their experiences.

The numbers clearly give an indication that appropriate measures need to be taken to educate and inform students. Furthermore, there is an acute need for both preventive and curative measures to address sexual harassment and assault. As stated above, we hope that this is not the last attempt to tackle sexual harassment and violence in the university space. We hope, through continuous conversations and measures, that we can make our environment a little safer and more comfortable in order to fully harness the scientific temperament.



Tirthankar Chakraborty



Alicka Machurich

## Acknowledgements

The study (Survey on Sexual Harassment and Assault in Heidelberg University), of which data this report is based on, was undertaken by the Student Research Group that comprised of Sara Hladik, Valida Mendonca and Tirthankar Chakraborty. The survey was initiated because we felt the need for action rather than words. After countless hours of brainstorming, the final design was agreed upon. We would like to wholeheartedly thank Sara and Valida for embarking on this journey and pushing the boundaries one step at a time.

We would like to thank Dr. Zeynep Cemalcilar for her valuable feedback on the survey design and introducing the concept of Interventions; Dr. Georg Mildenerger (AWI-UHD) for prodding us to think further not only as researchers but also as respondents; Prof. Sven Barnow (KLIPS-UHD) for his rigorous feedback on survey design and his kinds words of appreciation; Dr. Martin Gieselmann (SAI-UHD) and Prof. Ute Hüsken (SAI-UHD) for going over the survey design and giving invaluable feedback; we would also like to thank the members of the Gleichstellungsbüro of Heidelberg University for taking the time to sit down with us and sharing their feedback.

We would also like to thank Dr. Roos Gerritsen and Samyobrata Mukherjee for proofreading the drafts of the report and doing the necessary editing. We thank the administrators from the three institutes (SAI, HCTS, IfE) as well as the members of the Gleichstellungsbüro and the equal opportunities commissioners of the associated faculties who went through the report and gave us valuable feedback and advice.

And lastly but most importantly, we thank all those students who have taken the survey for putting their faith on this study. Here's hoping to a more just, equitable space in our university. Needless to say, the shortcomings both in the survey design and the report are entirely our own.

From the authors of this report.

Heidelberg, July 2020.

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# 1. Introduction

Societies function around certain constructions which encapsulate the idea of culture and cultural implications. In a global world, marred by various such constructions, it is imperative to define the fine lines which account for interpersonal relationships and interactions between individuals. One of these constructs is the power hierarchy between genders which account for unequal treatment of one by the other. In a world influenced by patriarchy and misogyny, it is of paramount importance to address the different manifestations of this hierarchy, so as to create habitable, 'safe spaces', especially in the context of the University – a citadel of learning and scientific temper.

Looking at the survey reports from various countries (cited below), it becomes imperative to see the extent to which sexual harassment and sexual assault have prevailed within university campuses across the globe. Sensing the need for one such assessment, the survey was designed not only to get a sense of the problem, if at all, but also become a tool to disseminate information. This section deals with the background, aim and logistics of the survey undertaken.

## 1.1. Background Information (Needs Analysis)

A Needs Analysis is the first step that has to be undertaken before embarking on a survey. This analysis helps to locate the requirement for such a survey to take place. In this section, we briefly look at the studies undertaken across the world and then narrow it down to the context of Germany, and Heidelberg University to be specific.

- In the United States of America, surveys estimate that one in every five women in educational institutions are subjected to or are likely to be subjected to sexual assault or harassment.<sup>1</sup>
- In a study undertaken by *Revolt Against Assault* and *The Study Room*, 4500 students from 153 different UK educational institutions were asked to respond about their

<sup>1</sup> For more details, see the report published by *The Center of Public Integrity*: Kristen Lombardi, "Sexual Assault on campus shrouded in secrecy," (2015 (2009)), URL: <https://publicintegrity.org/education/sexual-assault-on-campus-shrouded-in-secrecy/>.

experiences of sexual harassment and assault. The survey reported that 62% of the respondents had experienced sexual violence as per the definitions of the Rape Crisis.<sup>2</sup>

- Recommendations by the 24th General Meeting of the *German Rectors' Conference*<sup>3</sup>, held on April 24, 2018, underlined the acute need for addressing sexual harassment, sexual discrimination and sexual violence.<sup>4</sup>
- In a study done by the German Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency on “Sexual harassment at university – protection gaps and recommendations”, Prof. Dr. Eva Kocher and Stephanie Porsche highlight the dismal state of affairs when it comes to sexual harassment at German universities. They specified a series of recommendations to be implemented in order to address sexual harassment. The first step in their recommendations was to “Conduct a survey of all students and staff members” to understand the extent of the problem and create adequate mechanisms to counter it.<sup>5</sup>
- Personal incidents (observed by the authors), like an instructor asking male students in the class to reach out to the newly-minted Gender and Equal Opportunities committee (of that institute) if they “would like to get in touch with their feminine side,” and accounts of sexual transgressions, usually in the domain of ‘rumors’ and ‘gossips’, make it pertinent to study the extent of the problem and gauge the awareness of all stakeholders.

## 1.2. Aim

In this section, we highlight the motives for conducting the survey. They are the following:

- The need to give a face and figure to the problem, if there is one at all. We have noticed that when a discussion about sexual harassment arose/was initiated, there was opposition and it was played down as an issue that does not concern ‘everyone.’ It is

<sup>2</sup> *The Guardian* reported on this study: Emily Reynolds, “Universities are home to a rape epidemic. Here’s what they can do,” *The Guardian*, March 2, 2018, URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/mar/02/universities-rape-epidemic-sexual-assault-students>.

<sup>3</sup> This body constitutes the Rectors of all German universities.

<sup>4</sup> For more, see: German Rector’s Conference, “Against sexual discrimination and sexual harassment at universities,” (2018), URL: <https://www.hrk.de/resolutions-publications/resolutions/beschluss/detail/against-sexual-discrimination-and-sexual-harassment-at-universities/>.

<sup>5</sup> Eva Kocher and Stefanie Porsche, “Sexuelle Belästigung im Hochschulkontext – Schutzlücken und Empfehlungen,” *Antidiskriminierungsstelle des Bundes*, September 18, 2015, URL: [https://www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/publikationen/Expertisen/Expertise\\_Sexuelle\\_Belaestigung\\_im\\_Hochschulkontext.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile&v=3](https://www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/publikationen/Expertisen/Expertise_Sexuelle_Belaestigung_im_Hochschulkontext.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=3).

treated as an irregularity . This could be due to the fact that most incidents do not get reported or because the victims/accusers are scared of repercussions or social ostracism.

- To capture the **experience** of the students who have or may have faced sexual harassment and assaults in the university context.
- To provide appropriate definitions that can help students to **be aware** of what notions of sexual harassment, assaults, violations, and consent entail and whether they feel they have been subjected to any of those notions/concepts.
- The survey as a mode of intervention was to inform the students of the **avenues for reporting and redressal** in case there is an incident to be reported and followed up.

### 1.3. Time frame

The design of the survey took 4 months - from April to July 2019. The survey was conducted over a period of 45 days (from July 31, 2019 to September 13, 2019). The data analysis and report writing took place from January to July 2020.

### 1.4. The work behind

Conceptualizing and planning such a survey involves a great deal of consideration, consultation and precaution as detailed below.

- The survey-cum-intervention was designed over a period of four months whereby several stakeholders were consulted and feedback was sought to make the design as robust and nuanced as possible. Researchers from the departments of Sociology, Anthropology, Clinical Psychology, Social Psychology were contacted to ensure that the design is able to incorporate multiple facets of social and behavioural sciences. The design was also presented to the Gleichstellungsbüro (Equal Opportunities Committee) of Heidelberg University for scrutiny and feedback.
- Feedback was sought from student bodies across the three institutions and outside for the aim and design of the survey. Presentations were made to the *Fachschaftsrat*<sup>6</sup> of the Institute of Anthropology and the Heidelberg Centre for Transcultural Studies. Administrators of the SAI were contacted and the survey design was presented.

<sup>6</sup> *Fachschaftsrat* are the student councils that are elected at every institute.



- The medium of the survey was an online platform called SosciSurvey which is commonly used in the domain of social and behavioural sciences. The link of the survey was sent to the students via their university-registered email addresses. The survey was available in German and English.
- Given the nature of this study, anonymity and data protection of the respondents were of immense importance. This counts for all parts of the study, from survey design and data analysis to report writing. Furthermore, the institutes themselves were asked to send the survey link to their students, and no personal data (name, email id, contact details) were asked, taken, or stored by the researchers of this study.
- Questions in the design were both quantitative and qualitative.
- The survey conception and design were formulated and done by Sara Vladik, Valida Mendonca and Tirthankar C.
- The survey data analysis and the writing of the report was done by Alicka Machurich and Tirthankar C.
- No funding was provided by university bodies or external agencies during the conceptualisation, design, data analysis and report-writing phase of the survey.

### **1.5. Who responded?**

The envisioned target group was students of Heidelberg University pursuing Bachelor and Master Programmes at South Asia Institute, Heidelberg Centre for Transcultural Studies, and Institute of Anthropology, who were registered during the academic semester of summer 2019. Respondents were asked to limit their experiences to the extent of their time at Heidelberg University, only.

### **1.6. Sampling Method**

Given the known risk of introducing bias via the sampling method, the acquisition of survey participants shall be outlined. A selection process is justified taking into consideration that this survey presents a pilot study. Extending this study calls for funding and further human resources. In order to guarantee transparency, the sampling method is described below.

- The sampling for this first (pilot) phase was initially planned to comprise of around 500-600 students and the projected response rate was 25%, which would give an

adequate understanding of the probability of response and more importantly, the data would be sufficient in determining the state of sexual discrimination, harassment and violence in these three institutes.

- As to the selection of the sample size, non-probability sampling methods of convenience, purposive and snowball were used.
- The convenience method was applied to get a large enough sample size in a short period of time. Hence, the institutes that could be contacted for taking part in the survey were selected.<sup>7</sup>
- The purposive method implied that not one single group was given preference but rather students of every gender, ethnicity, nationality, religion, et al, were forwarded the survey. This was intended to get an unbiased representation.
- The snowball method was implemented by encouraging respondents to ask their friends to participate in the survey, in order for the sample response size to be as big as possible.
- The total number of valid responses were 146. The total number of students to whom the survey was sent to are: SAI – 263; HCTS – 129; IfE – 570.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Since this study was initially perceived and designed as a pilot study, only three institutes were chosen, based on the familiarity of the authors with the administration, student bodies and students of the institutes.

<sup>8</sup> A valid response is one where the respondent has reached to the last page or to the second last page of the survey on the platform.

<sup>9</sup> These numbers are based on data from the University on the number of students registered for the Summer Semester 2019. To be absolutely clear, the authors do not know how many students actually received the emails which contained the survey link or got to know about the survey. Those mailing lists belong to the institutes and therefore we cannot confirm the numbers of students receiving our survey. Furthermore, there could be some overlap on the total number of students as students are often registered to more than one institute.

## **2. Findings**

The second part of the report deals with the findings from the survey, which is the nominal objective of any survey. Using a mixed method of quantitative and qualitative questions, the findings have been grouped under three distinct sections – Definitions, Experiences, and Institutions. Each of these sections have been addressed with the help of the survey data and our limited understanding of jurisprudence and legal norms.

### **2.1. Definitions**

Firstly, we look into the definitions of sexual harassment, stalking and sexual assault. We not only give the definitions with which we worked for creating the survey, but also present the respondents' understanding of the term. During the survey, the participants were first asked about the terms and if they had sufficient knowledge about it. Subsequently, they received the official definitions during the survey. They also had the possibility to download all the information after finishing the survey.

#### **2.1.1. Sexual harassment**

The survey was created on the basis of the definition given by the Equal Opportunities Committee (Gleichstellungsbüro) of Heidelberg University relying on the General Equal Treatment Act<sup>10</sup> and German federal laws<sup>11</sup>.

“A person is being harassed or sexually harassed if he or she is the object of sexually motivated, unwanted actions that humiliate him or her and violate his or her dignity.”<sup>12</sup>

There are also the following acts cited as examples for harassment:

- unwelcome sexual actions and requests for such actions
- Unwanted physical contact of sexual nature
- Comments of a sexual nature
- Unwanted exposure to pornographic materials.

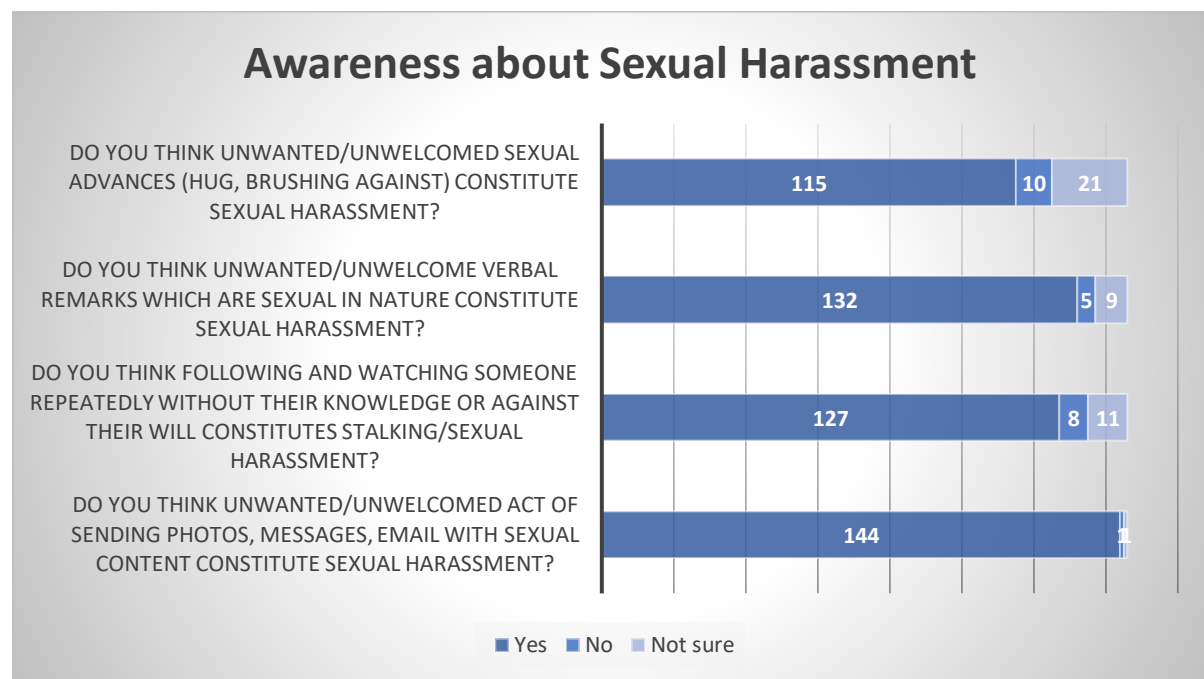
<sup>10</sup> Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz, AGG § 3, Abs. 4.

<sup>11</sup> See also StGB §183, §184, Abs. 6, §184h, §184i, §184j.

<sup>12</sup> Universität Heidelberg, „Sexual Harassment/Bullying/Stalking,“ (2020), URL: <https://www.uni-heidelberg.de/gleichstellungsbeauftragte/consulting/harassment-mobbing-stalking.html>.

During the survey, the participants were first asked whether they knew about sexual harassment and then asked to choose among elements which did or did not constitute it. 94.5% of the respondents stated that they were aware of what sexual harassment constitutes. The overwhelming majority did not only answer that they knew what harassment is but also selected the constituting elements correctly. However, there were respondents who were either not sure or classified acts like “*unwanted/unwelcomed sexual advances (touching, grabbing etc.)*” as *no* sexual harassment.

The chart below shows the respondents’ answers in absolute numbers.



Being asked about further elements that constitute sexual harassment, the respondents named specifications of the examples given above, like “catcalling” and “gender related insult”. Also, University specific examples were given, such as “ignoring female students in class or giving too much attention to them”.

### 2.1.2. Sexual assault

§ 177 StGB notes the following about sexual assault, sexual coercion, rape:

“(1) Whoever, against a person’s discernible will, performs sexual acts on that person or has that person perform sexual acts on them, or causes that person to perform or acquiesce to sexual

acts being performed on or by a third person incurs a penalty of imprisonment for a term of between six months and five years.

(2) Whoever performs sexual acts on another person or has that person perform sexual acts, or causes that person to perform or acquiesce to sexual acts being performed on or by a third person incurs the same penalty if

1. the offender exploits the fact that the person is not able to form or express a contrary will,
2. the offender exploits the fact that the person is significantly impaired in respect of the ability to form or express a will due to said person's physical or mental condition, unless the offender has obtained the consent of that person,
3. the offender exploits an element of surprise,
4. the offender exploits a situation in which the victim is threatened with serious harm in case of offering resistance or
5. the offender has coerced the person to perform or acquiesce to the sexual acts by threatening serious harm."

In the survey, the question "What is rape?" was asked with the possible options (with multiple answers to choose from):

- a) kissing against the other person's will
- b) touching against the other person's will
- c) having Sex with another person against their will
- d) having Sex with a younger or older person
- e) oral stimulation/penetration against the other person's will
- f) penetration/stimulation with objects or fingers against the other person's will
- g) sex with an intoxicated/unconscious partner
- h) sex with another person after pressuring them (through guilt, exploitation of hierarchy)
- i) sex with another person after threatening them
- j) violent Sex
- k) violent Sex against the other person's will

Only **45.2%** of the respondents answered correctly by crossing answers c), e), f), g), h), i), and k).

### 2.1.3. Consent

The declaration of non-consent has become a part of German criminal law in 2016.<sup>13</sup> Since then, the principle is “no means no”. A broadly discussed different approach, however, has been chosen by Sweden. In Sweden, a law from 2018 is based on affirmative consent, a conscious and voluntary agreement, in other words, “yes means yes”. According to this law, passivity is no longer an agreement. However, Swedish law has also been invoked as a polemical issue.<sup>14</sup>

Being asked about the topic of consent, participants in our survey mostly responded akin to the Swedish standard. They called consent an explicit agreement, respecting each other’s boundaries, as something mutual and approved. Around 20 respondents additionally stressed that silence or a lack of resistance does not constitute consent. They referred to “#nomeansno” and “Yes”.

Let’s look at some of the respondents’ answers.

*“If it is not an explicit yes, then it is a definite no.”*

*“In terms of physical intimacy, both parties have to be absolutely sure that their partner is comfortable with the experience. That means at any moment imaginable (prior to any physical contact, during the contact, during the intercourse etc.) one party may want to stop and that has to be respected by the other.”*

*“Consent means that everybody involved agrees by clearly expressing ‘yes’ for everybody.”<sup>15</sup>*

*“Mutual explicit and voluntary approval of the persons who both need to be able to give their consent (approval of underage persons, of persons under strong influence of*

<sup>13</sup> Bundesministerium der Justiz und für Verbraucherschutz, “Gesetz zur Änderung des Strafgesetzbuches – Verbesserung des Schutzes der sexuellen Selbstbestimmung,” November 9, 2016, URL: [https://www.bmjv.de/SharedDocs/Gesetzgebungsverfahren/DE/SchutzSexuelleSelbstbestimmung.html;jsessionid=EDDC5CE9D09B6DEABA0663DC2AC2FAFC.2\\_cid297?nn=6704238](https://www.bmjv.de/SharedDocs/Gesetzgebungsverfahren/DE/SchutzSexuelleSelbstbestimmung.html;jsessionid=EDDC5CE9D09B6DEABA0663DC2AC2FAFC.2_cid297?nn=6704238).

<sup>14</sup> Tagesschau, „Nur Ja heißt Ja beim Sex,“ Juli 1, 2018, URL: <https://www.tagesschau.de/ausland/schweden-sexgesetz-101.html>.

<sup>15</sup> Translated from, “Konsens bedeutet dass alle beteiligten [sic] mit dem Vorgehen einverstanden sind, indem sie für alle verständlich ‘ja’ geäußert haben.“

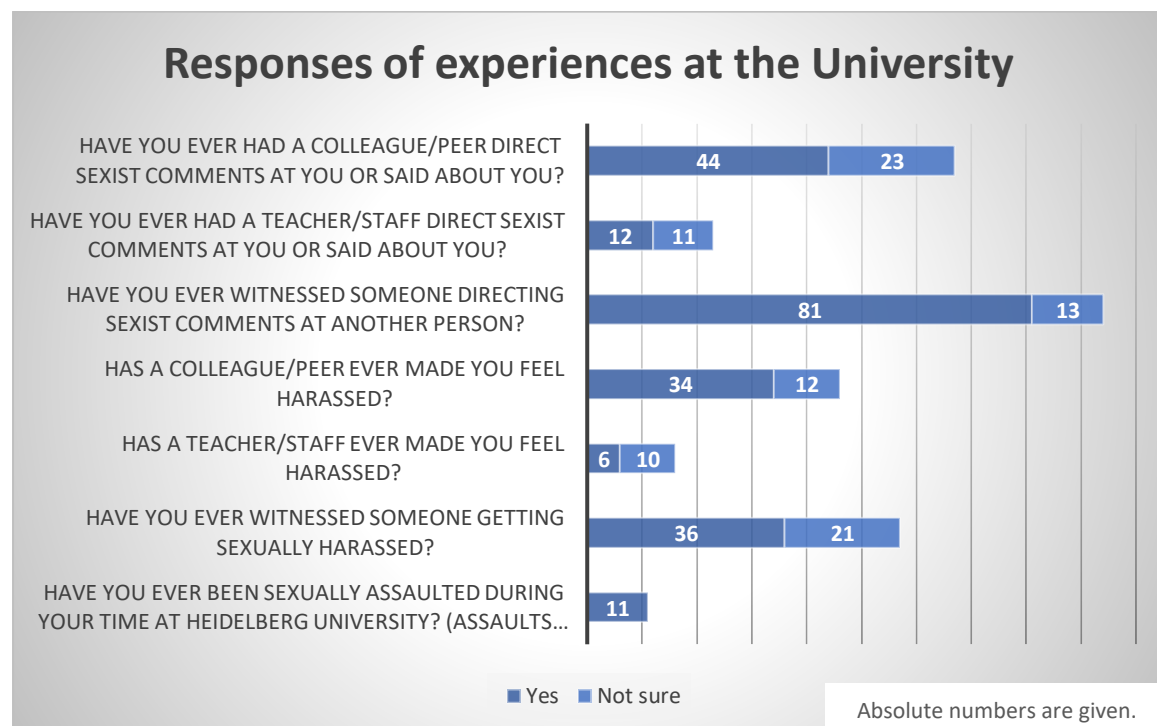
*awareness-altering substances or in an inferior power/dependence situation does not apply as consent!)”<sup>16</sup>*

*“[C]onsent in my interpretation would mean that the person actively participates [sic] and acknowledges [sic] the action. Saying nothing is NOT a consent.”*

## 2.2. Incidents, Experiences

In this section, the experiences of the respondents are presented. It must be noted that in the survey this section was preceded by asking the respondents what they knew about sexual harassment and assault, followed by legal definitions used by the university and law enforcement. The idea was to get a picture of clear violations, rather than ‘perceived’ or assumed violations. Hence, these responses can be read as educated and informed.

Sexual harassment does not seem unfamiliar to the respondents as the following graph shows.



<sup>16</sup> Translated from, “Gegenseitige explizite und freiwillige Zustimmung der Personen, die beide zur Konsensgebung in der Lage sein müssen (Zustimmung von Minderjährigen, von Personen unter starkem Einfluss bewusstseinsverändernder Substanzen oder in einer unterlegenen Macht-/ Abhängigkeitsposition gilt nicht als Zustimmung!)“

Since there are multiple ways to interpret the same data, we leave it up to the reader to deduct the extent and prevalence of sexual harassment from the graph above. In our humble opinion, once is a coincidence, twice equals a mistake and three times can be read as a trend.<sup>17</sup>

The common or accepted way of understanding the extent of sexual harassment and gender discrimination is to attribute a number to the problem. However, it is in the nuanced narratives that one can see how these incidents are experienced. The following sections depict experiences of different categories of harassment and assault. The experiences are presented in form of quotes of the respondents, to give a first-hand account.

### **2.2.1. Experiences of sexist comments**

In this section we have tried to first categorize the comments to the respondents and then look at how they have been used in interpersonal communication.

Comments from peers:

- Occuring at lectures, institutes, institutes' parties, commute, student dorms.
- Salacious comments, objectifying comments (about body and form fitting clothes, body as value of person, only men's perspective is important), comments of stereotypes and clichés, rumors about sex life etc., reproducing stereotypes, discrimination due to gender identity (*"I was segregated by a peer because of my biological gender identity."*).
- Unwanted messaging about attractiveness and insults due to rejection.
- Nagging at sex life of other persons on campus.
- Slut shaming<sup>18</sup> (*"My friend [f.] was approached by a fellow student at a party. Despite rejection, he still tried dancing at her. Sometime he became aggressive and called her*

<sup>17</sup> For an academic breakdown, see the summary at the end of this section.

<sup>18</sup> "Slut-shaming' is the act of criticizing women or girls for their real or presumed sexuality or sexual activity, as well as for looking or behaving in ways that are believed to transgress sexual norms" in L. Karaian, "Policing 'sexting': Responsibilization, respectability and sexual subjectivity in child protection/crime prevention responses to teenagers' digital sexual expression," *Theoretical Criminology*, 18 (2014): 296.



*a slut. I scared him away."*<sup>19</sup>), degrading women (also as answer to rejection of advances)

- Rape glorifying jokes and song circulating on campus<sup>20</sup>
- University related 'jokes'
  - o Women do not belong at university.
  - o Female professors sleeping their way up.
  - o *"After a workshop, a fellow student gave the female presenter an informal feedback which was purely about her body and her sexual attractiveness."*<sup>21</sup>
  - o *"During [a lecture; T.C. and A.M.] one female student once talked about how she becomes a 'bitch' during her period. Another female student then responded how she would prefer if we wouldn't used this word. Then, another male student turned around and told her to "get that stick out of your ass."*
- *"A fellow student postulates a binary gender concept with 'character traits', packed in culturally interpreted terms, which were clearly biologicistic, though. I was not directly concerned but other participants of the discussion. But I intervned as moderator. Maybe this is not directly sexual harassment. However, for me it is a move towards it."*<sup>22</sup>

#### Comments from instructors:

- Gender-based favoritism
- *"[An instructor; T.C. and A.M.] says he doesn't understand why women go for slenderness because everybody knows that man want to grab something at a woman's body."*<sup>23</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Tranlated from, *"Meine Freundin wurde von ihren [sic] Kommilitonen beim feiern [sic] angesprochen. Als sie ihn abgelehnt hat, hat er sie weiterhin versucht anzutanzten und irgendwann aggressiv [sic] reagiert und sie als Schlampe beleidigt. Ich habe ihn dann verscheucht."*

<sup>20</sup> Translated from, *"Es kursieren selbstgerapte vergewaltigungsverherrlichende Songs am Campus. Die meisten finden Sie witzig."*

<sup>21</sup> Translated from *"Ein Kommilitone bezog sich bei einem informellen Feedback nach ein Workshop sich ausschließlic auf den Körper und die sexuelle Attraktivität der Vortragenden."*

<sup>22</sup> Translated from, *"Kommilitone stellte binäres Geschlechtskonzept mit 'Charaktermerkmalen' auf, verpackt in kulturell gedeuteten Begriffen, waren aber eindeutig biologistisch. Es hat mich nicht direkt betroffen, sondern andere Diskutant\*innen aber ich habe als Moderation eingegriffen. Vielleicht ist das nicht direkt sexuelle Belästigung aber es war für mich ein Schritt in die Richtung."*

<sup>23</sup> Translated from, *"Ein[e] [Lehrperson; T.C. and A.M.] sagte dass er nicht versteht wieso Frauen auf Schlankheit stehen, da alle wissen dass Männer was zum anpacken wollen am Körper einer Frau."*

- *“An [instructor; T.C. and A.M.] believes that women do not belong in the academic field because their brain is not as capable as a male's one. The same person also believes that a confident woman does not belong at an academic chair.”<sup>24</sup>*
- *“The [instructor; T.C. and A.M.] told me at an institute’s festivity that loose hair and my clothes would look good on me and I should wear it like this in his lecture.”<sup>25</sup>*
- *“one [instructor; T.C. and A.M.] considers that women must not wear shorts in summer because he does not want them to.”<sup>26</sup>*
- *“In some discussions, it's hard to state one's opinion as a woman because lecturers value the opinion of male students as higher as of female students. [...]”<sup>27</sup>* Giving answers of the same content happen to be ignored (if coming from a woman) or valued (if coming from a man).
- *“I was approached and invited by an [instructor; T.C. and A.M.]. He reacted highly indignant when I rejected him. A man, who was doing research at the university, apparently chased me and it had also been said very clearly that he wanted sexual contact. However, in both situations, I did not feel threatened neither was I afraid, but I had the situation under control. Luckily, it never got as unpleasant so that I had to report it.”<sup>28</sup>*
- *“advances by [instructor; T.C. and A.M.] and research person at Uni.”*

### **2.2.2. Experiences of (further) sexual harassment**

To get a nuanced understanding of the kinds of harassment experienced by the respondents, it was imperative to categorize them so as to see how it gets manifested in our everyday lives. While speech-acts have a potential to cause distress, it was seen that sexual harassment which is physical in nature affected the respondents gravely.

<sup>24</sup> Translated from, *“Ein[e] [Lehrperson; T.C. and A.M.] vertritt die Meinung dass Frauen im akademischen Feld nichts zu suchen haben, da das weibliche Gehirn nicht so leistungsfähig sei wie das männliche.”*

<sup>25</sup> Translated from, *“[Die Lehrperson] bemerkte auf einer Institutsfeier, dass mir offene Haare und das Kleidungs[sic] gut stehen würden und ich diese auch so in der Vorlesung tragen sollte.”*

<sup>26</sup> Translated from, *“Ein[e] [Lehrperson; T.C. and A.M.] ist der Meinung dass Frauen im Sommer keine Shorts tragen dürfen da er das nicht will.”*

<sup>27</sup> Translated from, *“In einigen Diskussionen ist es hart als Frau seine Meinung zu vertreten, da [Lehrpersonen; T.C. and A.M.] die Meinung von männlichen Kommilitonen mehr wertschätzen....richtige Antworten meinerseits wurden ignoriert und die wiederholte Aussage von Seiten eines Kommilitonen als richtig anerkannt.”*

<sup>28</sup> Translated from, *“Ich wurde von eine[r] [Lehrperson; T.C. and A.M.] angesprochen und eingeladen. Er reagierte höchst ungehalten, als ich ihm absagte. Ein Herr, der an der Uni recherchierte hat mir sehr offensichtlich nachgestellt und auch ganz klar gesagt, dass er sexuellen Kontakt wünscht. In beiden Fällen fühlte ich mich allerdings nicht bedroht, hatte keine Angst sondern die Situation unter Kontrolle. Es wurde zum Glück nie so unangenehm, dass ich es hätte melden müssen.”*

- Unwanted physical contact (butt grabbing, prolonged hugging, putting hands between legs, female student unwantedly touching male student)
- unwanted touching of a student by a lecturer
- a man masturbated in front of the room of a friend [f.], while watching her (Student dorm INF)

*"I mostly do not take it that seriously because a certain harassment does belong to the sexual self-discovery. How are humans supposed to learn approximation and their boundaries if they do not try to make contact at all? Of course, this does involve sexual harassment. The harassed person must feed that back to the harassing person. In most cases, it is related to insecurity/lack of experience. Of course, intended sexual harassment does exist, but it seems to be considerably less common."*<sup>29</sup>

*"He came very close and when I backed away, he came closer again. He touched my shoulder and my arm, which was uncomfortable for me. Or he came from behind and placed his head directly next to mine. As soon as I see him, I feel so unwell that I take another path or leave the building again, just to avoid a chance for him to approach me."*<sup>30</sup>

*"I am a survivor of sexual harassment last year. A lot of people might have heard the case because it was publicized on newspaper. The case was about the breaking into a student dorm in Eppelheim [sic]. I went to police and court last year for this case. There were some other sexual harassments in Eppelheim that I had encountered while living there such as catcalling, and slut-shaming."*

<sup>29</sup> Translated from, *"Ich nehme es meistens nicht so ernst, weil eine gewisse Belästigung auch zur sexuellen Selbstfindung dazugehört. Wie sollen Menschen Annäherung lernen und ihre Grenzen kennen lernen, wenn sie es überhaupt nicht erst versuchen Kontakt herzustellen. Natürlich ist dann auch entsprechend sexuelle Belästigung dabei. Das muss die belästigte Person aber dann auch so rückmelden an die belästigende Person. Das hängt in den meisten Fällen mit Unsicherheit/fehlender Erfahrung zusammen. Natürlich gibt es auch absichtliche sexuelle Belästigung, die scheint mir aber deutlich seltener zu sein."*

<sup>30</sup> Translated from, *"Er ist sehr nahe gekommen und selbst bei Zurückweichen, kam er wieder näher. Berührte meine Schulter und Arm, was mir sehr unangenehm war oder kam von hinten und hielt seinen Kopf direkt neben meinen. Sobald ich ihn sehe fühle ich mich so unwohl, dass ich andere Wege einschlage oder wieder aus dem Gebäude gehe nur um zu vermeiden, dass er eine Chance hat mich anzusprechen."*

*“A person (read as man) has annoyed my friends [f.] as well as me. We were worried about stalking concerning one girl friend. He had already been conspicuous due to sexist jokes which I had not witnessed but were depicted to me.”<sup>31</sup>*

### **2.2.3. Experiences of sexual assault**

This section tries to outline some of the incidences of sexual assault that the respondents experienced in the campus (including dormitories). As stated before, in the definitions’ section, sexual assault can be differentiated from other behaviors, distinctly. Although 11 respondents stated that they were sexually assaulted, not all of them were willing to talk about it (the survey was designed in such a way that it did not cause any further trauma or distress to the respondents by allowing them to skip a number of qualitative questions). These are some of the responses:

*“Until the report to the police, the person who sexually abused me did not distance himself from me and repeatedly made improper offers to further dates/overnight stays.”<sup>32</sup>*

*“The fellow student exploited my very intoxicated, probably even unconscious condition. I cannot preclude that there might have been other substances in my drink which led to this condition.”<sup>33</sup>*

*“Attempted rape in a non-university context.”<sup>34</sup>*

*“A guy invited me to his place and tried to kiss me and pushed me against his bed. After constantly asking him to get away from me, he did, but only until I shouted at him.”*

*“Exhibitionism/breaking into a student dorm in Eppelheim.”*

<sup>31</sup> Translated from, *“Person (als Mann gelesen) hat Freundinnen wie auch mich genervt. Waren besorgt um Stalking bei einer Freundin. Er war schon auffällig durch sexistische Witze geworden, die ich allerdings nicht mitbekommen habe, sondern mir geschildert wurden.“*

<sup>32</sup> Translated from, *“Die Person, die mich sexuell missbraucht hat, hat sich mir gegenüber bis zur Anzeige bei der Polizei nicht distanziert und mir mehrmals ungebührliche Angebote zu weiteren Treffen/Übernachtungen gemacht.“*

<sup>33</sup> Translated from, *“Der Kommilitone nutzte meinen sehr alkoholisierten bzw. vermutlich sogar bewusstlosen Zustand aus. Ich kann nicht wirklich ausschließen, dass andere Substanzen in meinem Getränk diesen Zustand förderten.“*

<sup>34</sup> Translated from, *“Versuchte Vergewaltigung im außeruniversitären Kontext.“*

*"He made me very drunk. We were at his place and first, I tried to fight him off, then I was no longer capable of it. Thus he slept with me and did not realize that I was crying at some point...it was the second week that I lived in Heidelberg."*<sup>35</sup>

#### 2.2.4. Summary

While the narratives give us the individual experiences of the respondents, the quantitative data helps us to analyze the extent of it. **39%** of the respondents have experienced incidents of sexist comments more than once. **43.8%** of the respondents have experienced sexual harassment, **26%** of the respondents recounted that it happened more than once. Eleven respondents declared that they have experienced sexual assault during their time at Heidelberg University, which is **7.5%** of the respondents. Only two of them received sufficient help and support after the incident.

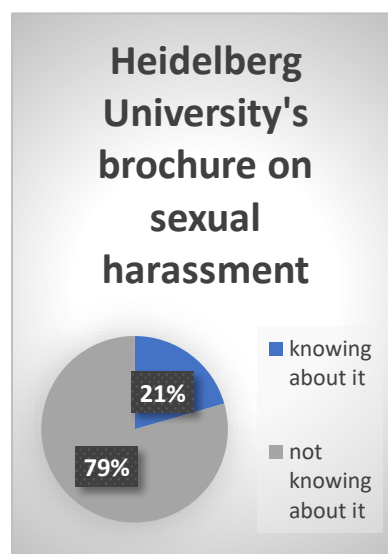
#### 2.3. Institutions

The search for support is a challenge in this matter. So far, the information already available does not seem to be received by the university students; only a small part of the respondents even knew about the brochure on sexual harassment from Heidelberg University.<sup>36</sup> And half of this group answered that they had actually read the brochure.

Strikingly, only **17.1%** of the participants said they knew where to lodge a complaint about sexual harassment at Heidelberg University.

The respondents were asked if they knew the university's institutions which are concerned. They named: Studierendenwerk (psychosocial counselling), Fachschaft and StuRa, equal opportunities officers, and lecturers.

However, only one of the persons concerned turned to one of these institutions and trusted a lecturer with his\*her case.



<sup>35</sup> Translated from, "Er hat mich sehr betrunken gemacht, wir waren bei ihm und kurz habe ich noch abgewehrt, dann war ich jedoch nicht mehr in der Lage. Er hat also mit mir geschlafen und nicht gemerkt, wie ich irgendwann geweint habe...Das war in der zweiten Woche, die ich in Heidelberg lebte."

<sup>36</sup> Universität Heidelberg: Gleichstellungsbüro, "Combatting sexual harassment, stalking and bullying: support and prevention," (2019),  
URL: [https://www.uni-heidelberg.de/md/gsb/broschure\\_sexuellebelast\\_2019\\_online.pdf](https://www.uni-heidelberg.de/md/gsb/broschure_sexuellebelast_2019_online.pdf).

*“I have contacted an [instructor] of trust and have spoken about the approach.”<sup>37</sup>*

The majority of the persons concerned have not complained to any authority for various reasons. They often knew the perpetrator and felt compelled to deal with the incident themselves or were afraid of the reaction when an authority was called in.

*“The person is someone I know and apologized later.”*

Furthermore, the fear of not being taken seriously was mentioned by the respondents. The findings also show a great lack of knowledge about the institutions for redressal.

*“Did not know about these institutions, haven’t taken myself serious enough, and did not want to harm the other person.”<sup>38</sup>*

*“Because I don’t know. I wasn’t informed by any of these contacts. [...] Maybe it was my mistake of not knowing but then again when I contacted the studentenwerk, there was no mention of these authorities.”*

*“Few channels to report the type of student to student harassment I have faced. The comments I have had are benign enough on their own to not warrant reporting, although they add up to a toxic environment.”*

*“I didn’t feel like it was urgent enough/ someone else already did.”*

In addition to it, some people only realized later on what happened to them, were ashamed or felt guilty.

*“I did not know where and I myself felt guilty. Soon, it was ‘too late’.”<sup>39</sup>*

<sup>37</sup> Translated from, *“Ich habe mich mit einer [Lehrperson; T.C. and A.M.] meines Vertrauens gemeldet und das Vorgehen besprochen.”*

<sup>38</sup> Translated from, *“Wusste nichts von diesen Einrichtungen, habe mich nicht wichtig genug genommen, wollte der anderen Person nicht schaden.”*

<sup>39</sup> Translated from, *“Wusste nicht genau wo und habe mich damals selber viel schuldiger gefühlt und dann war es schnell zu ‘spät’.”*

*“[O]nly afterwards realized how serious the situation in fact was, urge to repress situation.”<sup>40</sup>*

In other cases, the affected persons did not feel that the incident was important enough. In addition, some incidents took place outside the university setting – even though between members of the university – and the university was not seen as the authority concerned.

*“Even though he was a student of Heidelberg University, the rape took place in a private setting. That is the reason why I did not take the involvement of the university into consideration.”<sup>41</sup>*

*“I didn’t know where to report, and also it was outside of the university setting.”*

The respondents overall answered that they did not received sufficient help and also made suggestions for an improvement in the university’s structure which will be indicated in the next chapter.

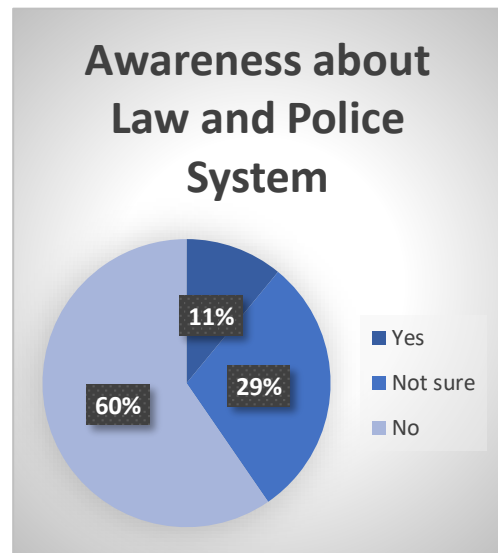
Asked about further institutions, the respondents named several: police, “Hilfetelefon”, “pro familia”, “Weißer Ring”, “Frauennotruf”, Hospital/Physician/Outpatient Clinic for the Protectio against Violence, “Frauenhaus”, “Frauen-Nachttaxi”, “Amt für Chancengleichheit”, Church, Therapy, Friends, “Queerreferat” (StuRa), IT’s FuN Referat (Inter\*, Trans\*, Frauen und Non-Binary Referat, StuRa), crisis line (“Nummer gegen Kummer”), “Wildwasser”.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Translated from, *“erst im Nachhinein verstanden wie schlimm die Situation eigentlich war, Situation verdrängen wollen“*

<sup>41</sup> Translated from, *“Er war zwar ein Student an der Uni Heidelberg, dennoch passierte die Vergewaltigung im privaten Rahmen. Darum habe ich nicht in Erwägung gezogen, die Universität einzubeziehen.“*

<sup>42</sup> See also [https://www.uni-heidelberg.de/md/gsb/weitere\\_anlaufstellen.pdf](https://www.uni-heidelberg.de/md/gsb/weitere_anlaufstellen.pdf).

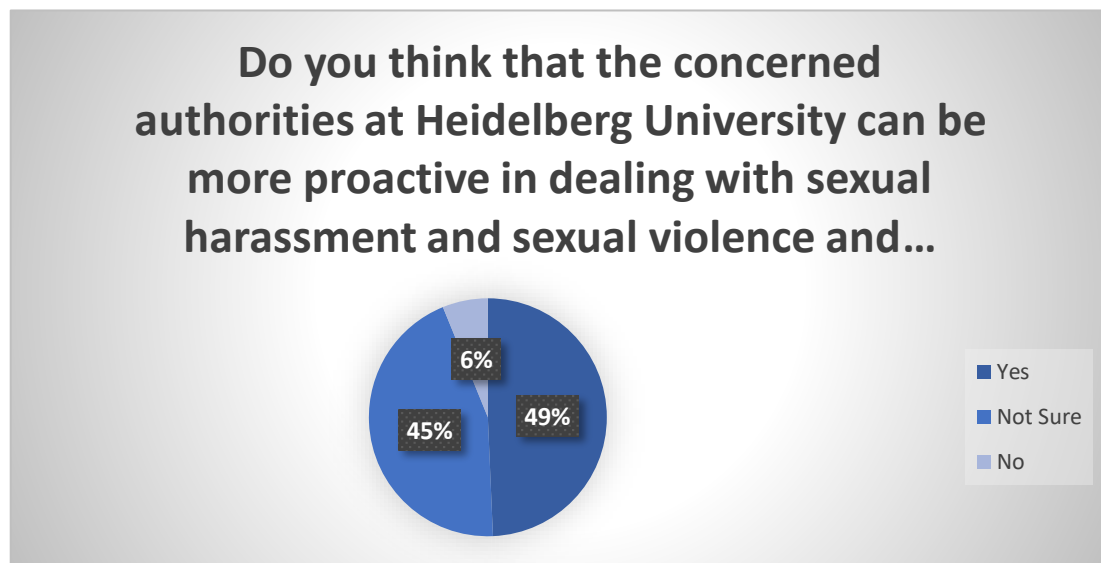
The respondents were also asked if they knew how the law and police system works in Germany with regards to Sexual Harassment and Assault. The numbers indicate that there is also an acute lack of information amongst the respondents when it comes to the legal remedies.





### 3. Suggestions and Feedback

This section deals with the suggestions and feedback from the respondents, German researchers and the authors of the survey. Analysis of the survey data shows that sexual harassment and assault is a serious problem. The idea of the survey, and the process thereafter, was not only to identify the existing problem, but also to provide constructive feedback that could help all stakeholders involved to address the problem of sexual harassment and sexual assault, as the majority felt that the present mechanism are not sufficient.



#### 3.1. From the Respondents

Respondents were asked about their suggestions for and feedback on existing mechanisms and whether they wanted changes or additions. After going through 146 valid responses, a typology of the responses was formulated that helped us refine the suggestions and feedback for improvement or change. Most respondents had more than one suggestion, and therefore the data had to be collated and analysed to find the convergences. These are the suggestions of the respondents.<sup>43</sup>

- **Information on institutes' homepage/Studienbuch/at the beginning of the semester.**
- Regular evaluation.

<sup>43</sup> The highlighted suggestions recorded the most number of hits from different respondents.

- **Flyers/brochures/easy information pamphlets.**
- **More measures for awareness of existing mechanisms/contact person.**
- Accessibility via telephone.
- **Events/workshops.**
- More staff.
- **Online training/courses/compulsory training.**
- Faster and stricter consequences.
- Make the student associations aware.
- Care of students more important than reputation of institute/university.
- More anonymous measures/surveys.
- Raising awareness about sexual violence of men.
- **Proactive counselling – medical, psychological, juridical, police.**
- Awareness training for instructors.
- Good work is being done.
- **Work on perception/against stigmatization/education.**
- Having an office hour for walk-ins.

Furthermore, some of the respondents narrated their life-experiences in the feedback section, which give their understanding of what they feel should be done. While most of the responses were small phrases, some of the longer responses have been stated below.

*“I did a semester abroad at the University of Sydney. Before starting studying there it was COMPULSORY for all students to complete an online assessment/Aufklärung about sexual harrasment [sic] and consent. During that assessment it was explained what consent means, scenarios were given and students had to choose whether consent was given or not. The University of Heidelberg could also introduce a programme like that. There was also a security campus phone number you could call immediately when witnessing or experiencing sexual harassment.”*

*“i don't know. I don't think that more events on this thema [sic] are the best solutions. Normaly [sic] people who go there are aware on what sexual harrasment means: they know to whom they have to report it and don't harass. People who would need such events don't go there. maybe poster with clear slogans, brochures and emails from the*

*Unversity [sic] with concise informations (+ links for more) could be a good thing. I think that posters with good slogans are really useful: you read it even unintentionally.”*

*“Talk to all incoming students about consent, rape, and sexual harassment (it was a mandatory lecture as part of the orientation at my old university) Make sure that all students receive and are aware of the appropriate channels for reporting these incidents (I did not know about them and I've been here for almost 2 years).”*

A couple of respondents stressed the need not to delve into rumour-mongering, and keeping matters “private”, until a “conclusion” is reached.

### **3.2. From the researchers working in Germany**

Based on the background literature and existing reports from studies conducted in Germany, some suggestions are cited below. These steps have been underlined in the report filed by the German Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency .<sup>44</sup> These are:

- To determine the need for action: Conduct a survey of all students and staff members (of any sex).
- Pass guidelines that ensure the ban on sexual discrimination and violence against all students (women, men, LGBTI).
- Organise flyer and poster campaigns to inform and raise awareness among students and staff members.
- Introduce an equal opportunities commissioner and/or the complaints office.
- Empowerment: Inform students about (legal) bases and the background of the ban on sexual discrimination.
- Infrastructural prevention measures: create a safe environment on campus.
- Organise further training on 'non-discrimination at university' and make participation mandatory for all staff members involved in the complaints procedure.

<sup>44</sup> (Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency, “Research by the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency at a glance: Sexual harassment at university – protection gaps and recommendations,” (2015), URL: [https://www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/publikationen/Factsheets/factsheet\\_engl\\_Sexuelle\\_Belaestigung\\_im\\_Hochschulkontext.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile&v=6](https://www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/publikationen/Factsheets/factsheet_engl_Sexuelle_Belaestigung_im_Hochschulkontext.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=6)).

### **3.3. From the researchers of this survey**

After spending considerable amount of time working on these issues, a few steps seemed essential in creating a safe, working environment for everyone concerned. However, keeping the aforementioned suggestions in mind, some more constructive and awareness-building measures<sup>45</sup> would be:

- Formulation of a code of conduct to bring all the students into a common minimum understanding of interpersonal relationships.
- Mandatory fresher course/introductory session on gender violence to nullify misinformation or on preconceived notions and myths.
- Periodic workshops/discussions forums/classroom interactions on sexual harassment and assault, and talk about awareness and queries concerning the students on this issue.
- Periodic provision of information to students about the redress mechanism to enable the registration of complaints. Creation of an office/committee/point-person(s) from every institute which can be contacted, also anonymously, to report any transgressions.
- Provision of an equal opportunities office/contact person/commissioner at the institute, center or faculty level for easy access by students and staff.

<sup>45</sup> These are the modes of intervention as proposed by the authors of this report.

## 4. Conclusion

“The first step in solving a problem is recognizing there is one.”

While this quote comes from the fictional character of Will McAvoy (*The Newsroom*), its importance cannot be highlighted enough. Throughout the designing of the survey, it was often found that sexual harassment or assault does not exist or was a rare occurrence.<sup>46</sup> It has also been hinted that intermingling of students from different ‘cultures’ can bring along ‘miscommunications’. Hence, as we fictionalise everyday happenings as either ‘rare occurrences’ and ‘cultural mishaps’, a quote from a fictional character may bring us back to reality.

Let us first start the conclusion with this conclusion – sexual harassment and assault are not rare occurrences but a widespread problem. Without intending to dramatize reality, it is essential to move beyond the veil of doubt or ignorance and come up with plans to address it. In this report, we have tried to highlight the knowledge of respondents, their experiences and ways of addressing the gaps in knowledge and what can be done to deter incidents from happening in the future. While efforts can be made to educate every mind (which is usually the leitmotif in a university space), it is essential to clearly draw a few lines and remove blurry understandings which can be used as a justification later.

The quantitative data gives a clear indication of the extent of the problem and the narratives help us to look at the experiences, shrouded behind these numbers. It can be claimed that a sample size of 146 might not give accurate representation of the university with 27,203 students<sup>47</sup> and we do not intend to paint such broad strokes and neither does it only reflect the state of affairs in just three institutes. Given the resources at hand, it was only possible to conduct a pilot study which can give us a sneak into the issue at hand, something that has not been done before. We can only hope that such surveys will be conducted throughout the university, so that we not only understand how people have been affected but also, to educate each and every individual to strive for better.

<sup>46</sup> Based on the informal conversations with students and faculty.

<sup>47</sup> According to the data obtained from the university, there were 27,203 registered students in the Summer Semester of 2019.

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