

**THE EXTENT OF SEXUAL COERCION AMONG FEMALE
STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO: MEDUNSA
CAMPUS**

by

BRONWYN MENOE

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SUPERVISOR: DR. MATHILDA MOKGATLE-NTHABU

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ABSTRACT

Background: Little is known about sexual coercive behaviour at colleges and campuses across South Africa. Research in this area has primarily been conducted in the United States of America. Sexual violence against women is a serious public health issue that may result in unwanted pregnancies, complications as a result of termination of pregnancies, increased risk of sexually transmitted infections, physical abuse by partners, substance use and an array of emotional and psychological problems. The negative consequences of sexual coercive behaviour may have an added negative impact on academic performance; which increase the burden of disease in South Africa. The aim of this study was to gain insight into sexual coercion among students in a South African university in order to augment the current knowledge on this phenomenon and to be an impetus for further research

Method: This cross-sectional study investigated sexual coercion and possible predictors of sexual coercion at the University of Limpopo: Medunsa Campus. Using a systematic random sampling, the Sexual Experiences Survey was administered to female undergraduate students registered for the 2010 academic year.

Results: A total of 335 students participated in this study. A sexual coercion incidence of 27.16 % within the past year, and a sexual coercion prevalence of 28.74% since age 14 was found. Rape was the most common unwanted sexual act reported by respondents. Half of the respondents that were raped since age 14 were raped again within the past 12 months. Date rape was the least unwanted sexual act experienced by respondents. Age, nationality, years at Medunsa and sexual orientation did not influence susceptibility to sexual coercion. However, residing on campus increases the likelihood of attempted verbal coercion twofold.

Conclusion: Particular attention needs to be given to rape as it has the most deleterious medical, psychological and social repercussions. The majority of perpetrators of rape are not intimate partners, therefore developing and implementing strategies to reduce sexual coercion becomes challenging. In addition, those students who reside on campus are especially vulnerable to attempted verbal coercion, which can easily escalate into unwanted sexual intercourse.

Recommendations: Consistent implementation of laws governing sexual violence against women and children, intolerance of policing authorities to the culture of violence that is endemic to South Africa, improved psychological resources on campus, emphasis on the laws governing the conduct of students and alternative constructions of discourses relating to sexual rights are needed to curb this public health issue in South Africa.

Keywords: sexual coercion, female students, gender inequality, violence, sexual and mental health, law implementation, resources.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AAU- Association of African Universities
AIDS- Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
CSA- childhood sexual abuse
HIV- Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HIV/AIDS- Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome/ Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HOD- Head of Department
IPV- intimate partner violence
MEDUNSA- Medical University of South Africa
MREC- Medunsa Research Ethics and Publications Committee
NICRO- National Institute for Crime Prevention and Rehabilitation
SAPS- South African Police Services
SES- socio-economic status
SSA- Sub-Saharan Africa
STI- sexually transmitted infection
SVRI- Sexual Violence Research Initiative
TOP- termination of pregnancy
USA-United States of America

STATEMENT OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP

I declare that this dissertation, “**The extent of sexual coercion among female students at the University of Limpopo: Medunsa Campus**” is my own work. All the sources used and quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of a complete reference list.

Signature: 

Bronwyn Menoe

Student Number: 200906019

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