

**Exploring Institutional Policies and Female
Students' Coping Strategies on Sexual
Harassment:**

*A Case Study of Adi Haki Campus, Mekelle
University, Ethiopia*

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Adi Haki Campus, Mekelle University, Ethiopia**

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Abstract

The issue of sexual harassment is wide-spreading in higher education and becoming a central topic of public discussion and research. This thesis focuses on examining institutional policies and exploring female students' coping strategies on sexual harassment. In doing so, socio-cultural and organizational theories of sexual harassment have been used as an analytical framework. A qualitative research approach was employed to explore the issue under investigation. More specifically, this research is a case study, and semi-structured interviews and policy analysis were used to collect the necessary data. This study disclosed that Mekelle University has been implemented clearly worded gender policy and anti-sexual harassment code of conduct to address the problem. In addition, the university organized structures or offices to implement the policies. Despite the existence of institutional policies and structures, the interviews with participants of this study disclosed that sexual harassment is pervasive. Female students are the main victims of sexual harassment while most of the perpetrators are male instructors. The study also shows that the female students' choice of coping strategies has mainly been determined by the gender and power relationship between the perpetrators and victims. Most specifically, the strong patriarchal ideology and the unbalanced or unregulated hierarchical power of the perpetrators mainly determine the female students' choice of coping strategies. The female students opted to deal with the sexual harassment through two different coping strategies. Very few female students managed to bring their sexual harassment cases either to the gender office and/or the police. The majority of female students opted to deal with sexual harassment through indirect strategies. Staying silent, normalization of the incident, withdrawing from the academic institution, sitting for re-exams, confront the perpetrators, transferring to other departments and accepting the sexual proposition of the perpetrators are some of the female students' choices of indirect coping strategies. Moreover, interviews with female students show that fear of revenge and perceived of making false allegations, lack of confidence in the institutional structures, the absence of concrete evidence, and lack of awareness are some of the reasons behind the female students' difficulty of reporting their sexual harassment cases. Normalization of the problem also exacerbates the female students' reluctance to report.

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Lists of Abbreviations

AAU	Addis Ababa University
ACFID	Australian Council for International Development
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Violence against Women
EDIS	Environmental Data and Information Service
EEOC	Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
FDRE	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
IJRRSSH	International Journal of Recent Research in Social Sciences and Humanities
IJSR	International Journal of Science and Research
ILO	International Labor Organization
ITUC	International Trade Union Confederation
MOE	Ministry of Education
OCR	Office for Civil Rights
QDA	Qualitative Data Analysis
UN-NGLS	United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Sexual harassment has long been an unfortunate part of an educational experience, which affects students' physical or emotional well-being and ability to succeed academically (Hill and Silva, 2005). In modern organizations, including higher educational institutions, the issue of sexual harassment is winning the public attention and increasingly becoming the center of academic discussion and debate (Taiwo, et al., 2014; Kayuni, 2009). What has brought the topic of sexual harassment to the forefront is the fact that more students are currently joining higher educational institutions whereby policies are not well-prepared to handle it (Kayuni, 2009).

In the educational settings, sexual harassment involves unwelcome sexual advances or propositions that intend to interfere with academic performance or creating an intimidating and hostile academic environment against the victims (Wetzel and Brown, 2000). Sexual harassment in higher education can take different forms depending on the nature and severity of the problem (Leitch, 1999; U. S. Department of Education, 2008). The university's employees, non-employee third parties as well as both male and female students can be victims or perpetrators of sexual harassment (US Department of Education, 2008). Sexual harassment can occur everywhere on campus, including in the classrooms, libraries, academic and administrative staff's office (Hill and Silva, 2005).

Studies show that sexual harassment is a universal and persistent form of violence that experienced by the female students in higher education (Hill and Silva, 2005; Kayuni, 2009; Imonikhe, et al., 2011; Fasting, et al., 2014). Research by Hill and Silva (2005) show that nearly two-third of U.S. college students experience some forms of sexual harassment. A survey by the Association of American Universities identifies that 11.7% of the students across 27 universities reported experiencing some form of non-consensual sexual contacts by physical force and threats of physical force (Cantor and Fisher, 2015). A similar research that has conducted in Sweden also reveals that 77% of the female students experienced some forms of sexual harassment in their academic life (Fasting, et al., 2014).

Moreover, there are different factors that have been contributed to the prevalence of sexual harassment in higher education. A study conducted at the Lagos State University of Nigeria identifies lack of academic integrity as well as the wrong perception that female student's way of dressing as factors that increase sexual harassment in higher education (Adedokun, 2005). Consistent with the above finding is the conclusion reached by Okoroafor, et al. (2014) that limited roles or oppression of women, maintaining power, blaming the victims, the traditional construct of manhood, societal pressure to secrecy or silence as well as the lack of specific policies to address the problem has been among some of the contributing factors for the prevalence of sexual harassment in Nigeria higher education.

Furthermore, sexual harassment can cause severe consequences for the individual victims as well as for the organizations or society at large. It can affect female students' psychological and physical well-being, as well as their academic achievement (Hunt, et al., 2007). Sexual harassment causes irritation, frustration, anxiety, stress, and trauma on the individual victims (Taiwo, et al., 2014). Moreover, a study by Edwin (2006) indicates that sexual harassment can make students avoid school, experience low academic performance, diminish their interest in education or co-curriculum activities, and lowers their dedication to academic life.

To address sexual harassment, many countries have been formulating different laws, policies, and code of conduct (Reena and Saheab, 2012). Apart from formulating and implementing policies, universities have been organizing structures to implement these policies (Joubert, 2009; Vohlídalová, 2015). In the case of Mekele University, despite the institution's effort to address the problem through formulating policies and organizing structures, the victims of sexual harassment have hardly been reported their experiences to the concerned bodies. Therefore, this thesis focuses on exploring institutional policies and female students' coping strategies on sexual harassment.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In the Ethiopian context, sexual harassment against female students has remained as a critical challenge for the higher education system (Molla, 2013). According to Eshetu (2015) in Ambo University, there was high-level of sexual harassment against female students. The perpetrators were male teachers, and from the total 414 female students, 35.5% of them have been experiencing some forms of sexual harassment (Ibid). Research by Gemechu and Meleku (2012) also indicates the pervasiveness of sexual harassment against female students in the Hawassa University. Melese and Fenta (2010) also identifies that sexual harassment has been the core factor that negatively affects the female students' academic well-being in Jimma University. Accordingly, physical, verbal and non-verbal forms of sexual harassment were common in the mentioned university (Mamaru, et al., 2015).

Despite the wide spreading nature of sexual harassment in Ethiopia higher educational settings, it has hardly been reported (Eshetu, 2015; Gemechu and Meleku, 2012; Ayenew and Gebremeskal, 2014). Furthermore, in spite of the existence of some studies on the magnitude, causes, forms, and impacts of sexual harassment in some Ethiopian higher educational institutions, much is not known about the institutional policies and the female students coping strategies of sexual harassment. This research is, therefore, significant not only in terms of filling an existing knowledge or literature gap about institutional policies and female students coping strategies, but also documenting the issue so as to inform all stakeholders and the university community.

In addition, the problem with most studies of sexual harassment is that they have been focusing on the quantitative aspects of the problem. Suffice to mention that even in cases where qualitative studies conducted, it tends to be done in quite different socio-cultural contexts, in contrast to the context of Ethiopia. Therefore, this study is important to explore the institutional policies and female students coping strategies using qualitative semi-structured interviews. Since most studies on the institutional policies and female students' coping strategies have been conducted by the western scholars, without fully taking the socio-cultural context, this study fills the gap by being the pioneer in investigating the issue within the socio-cultural context of Ethiopia. Perhaps the finding of this study might serve as a foundation, background, and context for future research. Generally, taking into account the gaps, this research intends to explore institutional policies and female students coping strategies on sexual harassment.

1.3 Research Purpose and Questions

The core purpose of this research is to explore institutional policies and female students' coping strategies on sexual harassment. In order to achieve this broad purpose, the following specific research questions are prepared:

- How does the university deal with sexual harassment against the female students?

This specific research question has been addressed through the analysis of the university policies and strategies about sexual harassment. Specifically, the university gender policy and strategy, as well as the anti-sexual harassment code of conduct, were examined. The FDRE constitution was also being examined as background to the primary topic. Besides, institutional offices/structures to address the problem were investigated.

- How do the female students cope with sexual harassment?

This research question mainly concentrates on the experience of the female students about their coping strategies of sexual harassment. Therefore, semi-structured interviews with female students of the campus were mainly used to address this question.

1.4 Organization of the Thesis

This research contains a total of five chapters. This first chapter is an introduction part which presents the background and rationales of the study, the statement of the problem, research purpose, and specific research questions. The second chapter reviews related literature and introduces an analytical framework. It begins with a review of related literature on the pervasiveness, magnitude, forms, causes and impacts of sexual harassment, with special emphasis on higher education context. It then discusses sexual harassment policies in higher education, and the female students coping strategies. Finally, the chapter discusses the analytical framework.

Chapter three presents the methodology and methods of the research. It specifically discusses the research approach, research design, semi-structured interviews, and policy analysis, the issue of validity and reliability as well as ethical considerations. Chapter four discusses the findings from the data analysis which also entails interpretations and discussions. The finding has organized in two different parts. First, I discuss policies and mechanisms of the institution to address sexual harassment. Second, I explore the female students coping strategies of

sexual harassment. Chapter five presents the general conclusions of the study, taking into account the specific research questions of the research.

Chapter Two

Literature Review and Theoretical Perspectives

This chapter began by defining sexual harassment and its main forms, contributing factors, impacts as well as presents the existence of the problem from higher education contexts. It then discusses the analytical framework, i.e. the socio-cultural and the organizational theories on sexual harassment.

2.1 Defining Sexual Harassment

The problem of sexual harassment has become one of the most common challenges for female students in educational settings, which have been affecting the victim's physical and emotional well-being as well as their ability to achieve academically. The term sexual harassment was first coined in the early 1970s, became commonly used in the 1980s, even though it is an age old problem (Hill & Silva, 2005). Since the 1980s, the issue has become a recognized phenomenon throughout the world, in all cultural and occupational contexts (Ibid).

The term sexual harassment can be defined as a form of sex discrimination that involves some sexual propositions or requests for sexual favoritism, as well as other verbal and physical contacts of a sexual abuse (Connolly, et al., 2014). Some others also perceive sexual harassment as a form of gender-based discrimination that is an indicator of unequal power relations between men and women (Chung, et al., 2009). Some scholars argue that sexual harassment is not related to the biological differences between men and women – rather, it relates to the social status of men and women and the wrong perceptions towards a gender relationship in the society that can lead to sexual harassment (Ibid). Furthermore, George Washington University (1992) state that sexual harassment includes sexual violence which consists of sexual acts that are perpetrated against a person's will or without a person's consent.

However, implicit in all of the definitions is the fact that sexual harassment is a form of sexual/gender discrimination that can happen anywhere and under any circumstances. Besides, a conduct can only regard as sexual harassment if it is unwelcome or without the free

consent of the victims. All the definitions agree on one basic issue that sexual harassment is unethical and illegal behavior which causes severe consequences for the individual victims. However, there is still a controversy on the definitions of sexual harassment. As Zindi (2002) argues there is strong confusion in the literature regarding the nature of sexual harassment and the procedures that have been used to deal with the issue. There is no universally agreed definition of sexual harassment. In other words, there is a lack of a definition of sexual harassment that can be broad enough to comprehend the various aspects and forms of the problem (Leitch, 1999). This is because the term sexual harassment is not used uniformly across the globe because countries have defined it differently and the prevalence of sexual harassment in education varies across different cultures and societies (Joseph, 2015). This indicates that the definitions of sexual harassment are highly influenced by the cultural context of the occurrence. This lack of a universally accepted definition of what constitutes the act of sexual harassment makes it very difficult to objectively measure and quantify the problem (Apaak and Sarpong, 2015). Besides, the issue of what constitutes the act of sexual harassment has become the problematic area for the researchers (Pina, et al., 2009). However, for the purpose of this research, I have adapted and used a definition which has developed by Sandler and Shoop (1997: 4) as an operational definition of this study:

Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when any one of the following is true: (1) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of a person's employment or academic advancement; (2) submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions or academic decisions affecting the person; (3) such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with a person's work or academic performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working, learning or social environment.

This definition entails many aspects of sexual harassment in educational settings. First, it posits the view that sexual harassment is unwelcome sexual propositions and requests for sexual favors. Second, sexual harassment can include both verbal and physical conducts. Thirdly, it also shows a power relationship between the perpetrators and the victims. Lastly, the definition posits that sexual harassment can affect victims' academic life by creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working, learning, or social environment. Therefore, the

definition is relatively comprehensive, and to a large extent similar to the definition that has developed in the Mekelle University anti-sexual harassment code of conduct. This is the reason that I have adopted the above definition for this research.

2.2 Categories of Sexual Harassment

Perceptions on the forms and types of what constitutes sexual harassment vary among and within cultures and societies. The categories of sexual harassment varied from culture to culture and from country to country. Hence, sexual harassment can take different forms based on the severity and nature of the harassment (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). The European Commission and the International Labor Organization (ILO), as well as the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) of the United States Department of Education (ED), identify two principal categories of sexual harassment. These are Quid Pro Quo and Hostile Working Environment Harassment.

Quid Pro Quo harassment is also referred to as ‘something for something’ refers to the abuse of authority by a person who demands sexual favors, forcing the victims to choose between agreeing to these or losing a certain opportunity or privilege (AWARE, 2008). Such kinds of sexual harassment occur when a person abuses his/her authority and demands sexual favors or requests in return for a benefit for the individuals of opposite or same sex (Connolly, et al., 2014). In educational settings, quid pro quo may occur when a school employee conditions student participation towards an educational activity or program or bases an educational decision on the student’s submission to unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favoritism, and may include verbal, nonverbal, or physical conducts (U.S. Department of Education, 1997).

A Hostile Environment Harassment refers to a conduct that creates a threatening or hostile environment for the victims that interfere with his or her work/academic performance (AWARE, 2008). In such kinds of sexual harassment, individuals are exposed to sexual conduct which creates an offensive and hostile atmosphere (Connolly, et al., 2014). More specifically, it includes unwelcome sexual advances or requests for sexual favoritism by employee, student and third part, and the harassing behavior is severe, persistent and pervasive that limits a student’s ability to participate in or benefit from educational activities (U.S. Department of Education, 1997).

A hallmark of any categories of the sexual harassment claim, whether it is quid pro quo or hostile work environment harassment, is that the advances or requests are unwelcome and unreasonable. The word “unwelcome” indicates that the person did not invite the advances, or it is conducted without the free consent or will of the victims (Connolly, et al., 2014). These two forms of sexual harassment can occur in any kinds of school programs or activities and can take place everywhere in school facilities, on a school bus, or in other outside campus locations, such as field trips or a training program at another location (U.S. Department of Education, 2008).

Furthermore, while it is difficult to list all behaviors that may constitute sexual harassment, different authors and organization identify different behaviors that may constitute sexual harassment. The act may include physical, verbal, visual and psychological behaviors of sexual nature, which are offensive to the victims (AWARE, 2008; Connolly, et al., 2014; McCann, 2005). Direct proposition of sexual nature, unwelcome sexual advances, sexual jokes, displaying sexually suggestive objects, unwanted or unwelcome physical contact (such as impeding or blocking movements touching, hugging, brushing against a person’s body), gender persistent and unwanted requests for dates; unwelcome and inappropriate letters, telephone calls, email, texts, graphics, and other communications or gifts are some of the behaviors that may constitute sexual harassment (Connolly, et al., 2014; AWARE, 2008; U.S. Department of Education, 2008).

Generally, different scholars and institutions come up with different forms or categories of sexual harassment. However, the most common and widely used categories of sexual harassment are quid pro quo harassment and hostile environment harassment. The former occurs when school employee conditions student participation or academic success by extending unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal, nonverbal, or physical conduct of a sexual nature while the latter requires that the harassing behavior is sufficiently severe, persistent, or pervasive so as to limit a student’s ability to participate in or benefit from an educational program or activity (U.S. Department of Education, 1997).

2.3 Impacts of Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment can have very severe consequences for individual victims as well as for organizations or the society at large. At the individual level, sexual harassment can have an overwhelming impact on the well-being of the victims depending on the nature and severity of the problem. It can affect the victims' psychological and physical well-being, as well as their employment or educational engagement or success (Hunt, et al., 2007). Sexual harassment causes serious psychological effects such as the victims can be exposed to live in shame, fear of people talking behind their back and afraid of losing trust in other people (ILO, 2013; McCann, 2006). A study by Taiwo, et al. (2014) shows that sexually harassed individuals suffer a number of psychological problems such as irritation, frustration, anxiety, stress, and trauma, and depend on the nature and severity of the problem, individual victims experienced anything from mild annoyance to extreme psychological damage.

A study by Edwin (2006) aimed at exploring the nature and effect of sexual harassment in Kenya identifies that the problem force students to avoid school (for example, in case of pregnancy or embarrassment or fear), hardly want to talk in class, experience low academic performance, diminish their academic interest and co-curriculum activities and negatively affect their dedication to academic pursuits. A Trade Union Guide (2008) also found that sexual harassment leaves individual victims feeling threatened, humiliated, patronized, and causes an intimidating working and academic environment, as well as individual victims, may commit suicide and in all cases it makes victims' live difficult and even impossible.

The social and human costs of sexual harassment can be very high. Sexual harassment can involve heavy costs to the organization and society. Organizations where sexual harassment continually takes place bear direct and indirect consequences, including a reduction in productivity and profit, damage to the organization's reputation, negatively affects their business relationships, the loss of human resources and an increase in the running costs of such enterprise or unit (ILO, 2013). Furthermore, a study by Hunt, et al. (2007) supports the above finding that sexual harassment damages organization performance, damage the company's public image through adverse publicity, and cost money through potential personal injury claims. It also causes lower down the commitment of victims and negatively affects job or academic performance of individual victims and creates a room for absenteeism (Edwin, 2006; Hunt, et al., 2007).

Generally, different studies on sexual harassment indicate that the problem can have severe consequences for the individual victims and the organization or society at large. Individually, sexual harassment affects victims' physical and psychological well-being as well as negatively affect the victims' academic engagement and success. Studies also show that sexual harassment reduces organization's productivity, and damages its image or reputation. However, the impact of sexual harassment is largely determined by the readiness and effectiveness of institutional mechanisms to address the problem. The more institutions are well prepared to solve the sexual harassment, the less the impact on the individual victims and the organization at large.

2.4 Sexual Harassment in Higher Education

Sexual harassment against female students is a burning issue that is adversely affecting higher educational institutions (Taiwo, et al., 2014; Kayuni, 2009). There are different studies that prove the pervasiveness of sexual harassment in higher education. Research by Hill and Silva (2005) reveals that nearly two-third of U.S. college students experience some forms of sexual harassment in their academic life. In the European higher education contexts, research that was conducted in Sweden reveals that 77% of female students have experienced some forms of sexual harassment in their academic life (Fasting, et al., 2014). In addition, a research by Jones et al. (2013) in New Zealand indicates that despite the existence of strong legislation, sexual harassment is prevalent in the country's higher education system.

Studies in African higher education also show that sexual harassment occurs in universities persistently. For example, a study by Arulogun, et al. (2013) indicates that, 78.8% of the female students encountered different forms of sexual harassment in the school of nursing of a tertiary hospital in the Southwest Nigeria. Another research from Kenya also concludes that sexual harassment is pervasive and persistent in the country's higher education system (Edwin, 2006). A research by Taiwo, et al. (2014) in Nigeria also proves the pervasiveness of the problem in the country's higher education system. However, the existence of sexual harassment in the continent's higher education has been receiving passive responses from the governments in general and higher educational institutions in particular (Okeke, 2011; Taiwo, et al., 2014).

Like other African countries, research in Ethiopia context proves that sexual harassment is pervasive in the higher education. Research conducted by Eshetu (2015) in Ambo University

concludes that there is high-level of sexual harassment on the university campus. Thus, perpetrators of sexual harassment in school were male teachers and specifically, from the total 414 female students, 35.5% of them have experienced some forms of sexual harassment throughout school life (Ibid). Furthermore, a similar research by Gemechu and Meleku (2012) also confirms a high pervasiveness of sexual harassment against female students at Hawassa University.

In addition, different studies identified that the problem of sexual harassment can occur in any school program or activity or can happen within the school compound or off campus (Kayuni, 2009; U.S. Department of Education, 2008). Besides, in the educational settings, sexual harassment involves unwelcome sexual advances that have the intention of unreasonably interfering with academic performance or creating an intimidating, hostile academic environment for the individual students (Wetzel and Brown, 2000).

Moreover, the incident of sexual harassment takes several forms in the case of higher education, such as from the male lecturer to the female students, from the male students to the female students, from the male lecturers to the female lecturers and non-academic staff and so on (Taiwo, et al., 2014). However, a research in Nigeria by Adedokun (2005) concludes that the male lecturers' sexual propositions to the female student were the commonest form of sexual harassment in higher education. This was similarly confirmed by the research of Hill and Silva (2005). Furthermore, research by Taiwo, et al. (2014) in Nigeria also proves that the direct sexual proposition was the most common form of sexual harassment. The behavior occurs when the male instructors demand sexual pleasures from the female students in reward of better grades. Likewise, withholding or threaten to withhold female students earned or deserved grades, submitting or threatening to submit undeserved grades, denying or threatening to deny educational opportunity are some of the manifestations of sexual harassment in higher education settings (Imonikhe, et al., 2011).

The behavior of sexual harassment can range from the verbal or non-verbal to the physical kinds of harassment of students (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). Furthermore, the incident of sexual harassment in the educational settings can come in all sorts of educational institutions, but it is more pervasive in the larger one' (Hill and Silva, 2005; Smit and Du Plessis, 2011). This is because most of the sexual harassment incidents occurred in universities with a large number of female students, which is true at the large universities. Besides, in smaller universities, it is easier to control and manage the incident of sexual

harassment (Smit and Du Plessis, 2011).

Regarding the contributory factors to the prevalence of sexual harassment in the higher education context, different scholars come up with different reasons. A study conducted at Lagos State University in Nigeria identifies the contributing factors to the incident of sexual harassment from different angles. The integrity and intellectualism were not properly cultivated by some lecturers as well as the wrong perception that the female student's way of dressing increases the vulnerability to sexual harassment (Adedokun, 2005). A similar report by the United States Senate (2014) disclosed that the lack of knowledge about the scope of the problem, the failure to encourage reporting of sexual harassment and the lack of coordinated oversight are some of the factors that exacerbate the incident of sexual harassment in U.S. higher education.

Furthermore, research by Ogunbameru (2006) finds out that lack of abstinence, habit, value, personality disorder, lust, the lack of morality and passion, the lack of integrity, the pursuit of pleasure, and a search for happiness, the inferiority complex of the perpetrators, irresponsibility, greed and abuse of organizational power are among the major compelling factors for the prevalence of sexual harassment in Nigeria higher education. Consistent with these findings are the conclusions reached by Taiwo, et al. (2014) that poverty, weak system to redress the problem, low victims' confidence to report due to lack of confidence/trust in the institutional structures and the lack of proper punishment for the perpetrators are some of the factors that cause sexual harassment on campus.

However, despite the pervasiveness of the problem in higher education, silencing is becoming the core reason for the invisibility of the problem (Smit and Du Plessis, 2011; Taiwo, et al., 2014; United States Senate, 2014; Hill and Silva, 2005). Dziech and Hawkins (2011) confirm that the actual incident of sexual harassment against female students in campus remains hidden. The fear of revenge and retaliation which are derived due to the unregulated power relationship between the male teachers and the female students are among the contributing factors for victim's choice to stay silent (Smit and Du Plessis, 2011; Bennett, et al., 2007; Taiwo, et al., 2014; Popoola, 2008). Besides, a survey conducted in the southern Africa universities indicates that the normalization of sexual harassment in higher education has been common and the willingness of the victims to openly share their experience is very rare (Bennett, et al., 2007).

Research by Ashe (2014) in Ghana also disclosed that most female students become the victims of revenge and retaliation by the perpetrators after attempting to address their experience through legal means. Similar research by Zindi (2002) in Zimbabwe also revealed that, despite the pervasiveness of the problem in higher education, the female students face difficulty in reporting due to the fear of victimization. Similarly, research which has been conducted in Korean universities found out that 65 percent of the individual victims did not report their sexual harassment experience, mainly because they were afraid of future revenge which could include being blamed for the occurrence (Joseph, 2015). Likewise, research by Leach (2013) indicated that some victims of sexual harassment had been reluctant to report because they believed that no action will be taken against the perpetrator if they report because many of the perpetrators are not punished.

Generally, studies about sexual harassment in higher education indicate that the problem of sexual harassment has been among the major challenges of the universities, which negatively affect female students' physical or psychological well-being and academic success. It can occur in any educational settings and under any circumstances. Besides, the problem can take different forms such as from teachers to female students, from students to students, and from student to teachers. However, due to the existence of power differentials, the most common form of sexual harassment in higher education is from male teachers to female students.

Generally, studies indicate that there is no single factor behind the existence of sexual harassment in higher education. The reasons and factors that contribute to the problem of sexual harassment in educational settings varied from country to country as well as from institution to institution. The same is also true with the female students' coping strategies to deal with sexual harassment, which varied from culture to culture. This indicates the influences of the socio-cultural factors on the prevalence of sexual harassment and the female students' coping strategies in the higher education contexts. The implication of these varied factors is that the solutions to alleviate the problem should also be a country and organizational context. Besides, despite the pervasiveness of the problem, silence due to the fear of retaliation was the core strategy employed by the female students, which hinders them from exactly knowing the severity or magnitude of the problem.

2.5 Sexual Harassment Policies in Higher Education

There is a strong agreement among the international community on the need to set up policies and procedures aimed at preventing, minimizing and eradicating sexual harassment in the realm of higher education. However, sexual harassment policies and strategies required to be effectively implemented (Joubert, 2009). Different scholars come up with different sexual harassment policy criteria. Wetzel and Brown (2000), for example, recommends that any sexual harassment policy in higher education should: A) clearly states that sexual harassment is a violation of law; B) sufficiently and comprehensively defines the meaning of sexual harassment; C) clearly postulates that sexual harassment adversely affect students' education or creates hostile educational environment; D) clearly lists all the sanctions and punishments against perpetrators; E) show how sexual harassment cases will be handled; F) put clear deadline for investigating complaints; G) strictly forbids retaliation for these who file complaints, and H) provide a means to appeal the investigators or committee decisions or recommendation. In a similar way with the above recommendation, Reena and Saheab (2012) come up with some criteria that, sexual harassment laws should: A) clearly forbids any forms of sexual harassment; B) provides clearly the punishments for such behaviour; C) reflect a zero tolerance policy for the incident; D) make schools accountable for harassment that occurs on their premises of school-related activities; E) require that all educational institutions should have anti-sexual harassment policy; and F) require that sexual harassment policy information be made available to all members of the school community.

However, developing anti-sexual harassment policies and strategies in an educational setting is not sufficient. Wetzel and Brown (2000) argue that the developed policy must be disseminated to all university community members, including administrators, teachers and most importantly to students. As Joubert (2009) argues also the development of sexual harassment policy should include open public discussion, creates an all-inclusive definition of sexual harassment, the inclusion of different stakeholders, the arrangement of continuous training, the appointment of people is responsible for implementing the policy and regular reviews and evaluation of the policy.

Generally, different scholars argue that the existence of clearly worded sexual harassment policies is a necessary condition to eliminate the problem in higher education. The majority of well written sexual harassment policies in higher education clearly defines sexual harassment, identifies the conducts that constitute sexual harassment, clearly shows how sexual

harassment complaints will be handled, assigns people and structures to facilitate complaints, shows how the people/structures will investigate the allegations, and the sanctions against the perpetrators. Like sexual harassment in other settings, many countries of the world deal with sexual harassment in educational institutions through formulating different laws, including criminal law, code of conduct, and education laws, as well as local policies and disciplinary codes (Reena and Saheab, 2012). Apart from installing policies, different institutions or organs have been organized to implement the formulated policies on sexual harassment (Joubert, 2009; Vohlídalová, 2015).

In the US, for example, under Title IX of the Educational Amendments Act of 1972, higher educational institutions are mandated to develop policies so as to deal with the claims of sexual harassment against students (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). Under the educational amendment act, sexual harassment in the educational settings is a form of gender-based discrimination and unwelcome conduct of sexual in nature that affects the student's ability to fully engage in learning or participate in school activities (U.S. Department of Education, 1997). Consequently, the act of sexual harassment and discrimination is strictly forbidden in all higher educational institutions of the country.

The Government of Pakistan also adopts a policy for protection against sexual harassment of women at workplace act 2010 in 128 public sectors higher educational institutions. The core purpose of the policy is to protect students from threatening, violent and hostile behaviors or be forced by male lecturers to have sex in exchange for grades (Joseph, 2015). In the case of Kenya, likewise, the ministry of education developed policies against sexual harassment in higher education so as to alleviate the problem. This policy serves as a guiding principle for all universities in Kenya to develop their own respective regulations. Thus, the University of Kenyatta implemented a policy on gender-based violence and sexual harassment, which derives its legitimacy from the ministry of education initiatives (Edwin, 2006). The Kenyatta University policy specifically addresses the issue of how sexual harassment cases will handle and who is, in charge of the implementation of the policy.

In the case of Ghana, universities are developing policies on sexual harassment. The University of Ghana, for example, launched its first sexual harassment policy in 2011 with the aim to prevent, minimize and eradicate sexual harassment in the institution (Adu, 2011). The policy discusses what constitutes sexual harassment, the sanctions against the perpetrators and the mechanisms developed to implement the policy. A similar study in 10 higher education

institutions in South Africa also indicates the existence of properly worded sexual harassment policies in these institutions (Joubert, et al., 2011).

Despite the existence of sexual harassment policies in higher education, the problem is still pervasive in universities. This indicates that the existence of a policy is as good as its implementation. For example, despite the Pakistan government initiation to formulate sexual harassment policy, the majority of the universities in the country had not implemented the regulation (Joseph, 2015). This is mainly due to the lack of commitment of the institution and lack of coordination among different stakeholders (Ibid).

Despite the existence of a clear sexual harassment policy in South Africa higher education system, the implementation of these policies is not effective because very few academic staff have received training on the utilization of these policies (Joubert, et al., 2011). In the case of Nigeria, though there are sexual harassment policies, however, due to the existing weak institutional responses, the regulations have not implemented (Taiwo, et al., 2014). In the case of the US, despite the existence of clearly worded policies against sexual harassment, the problem still persists, especially between professors and students (Wilson, 2014). Research in Ghana also reveals that in spite of the universities initiation to organize structures so to manage the cases of sexual harassment on campus, the universities lacked to have adequate expertise and commitment to implement the policies (Apaak and Sarpong, 2015).

Generally, despite countries and universities effort to formulate and implement policies and strategies, sexual harassment is pervasive in educational settings. The implication of the above analysis is that, beyond formulating policies and organizing responsible facilities, structure or people to deal with the problem, the existence of the university's commitment and the staff's awareness is vital. Besides, most of the sexual harassment policies in higher education are similar in content, which indicates they lacked contextualization of the problem into the institutional and cultural level.

2.6 The Victims' Coping Strategies of Sexual Harassment

There are different ways which victims choose to deal with sexual harassment. The choice of these coping strategies varied significantly depending on the nature of the harassment, gender relation and power relationships (Malamut and Offermann, 2001). Besides, the severity of the harassment also determines the victims coping strategies. Likewise, O'toole and Schiffman (1997) argue that victims who are severely harassed tended to use direct or formal coping strategies than those who are not severely harassed. Taking into account the above factors, there are two general coping strategies that employed by victims (Vohlídalová, 2015). The external coping strategies are mainly focused on coping with sexual harassment in the sense of its actual resolution (e.g., ignoring the occurrence and doing nothing, pretending the situation did not occur or had no meaning) and, the internal coping strategies which focuses on managing one's own emotions and mental coping with the situation under investigation such as avoiding the perpetrator, seeking social or organizational support (Ibid).

In a similar way with the above classification, Joubert (2009) also identifies two ways in which victims use to address sexual harassment, i.e. formal or non-formal coping strategies. The formal means of coping strategies focused on following the institutional policies, procedures and mechanisms while the non-formal approach consists of counseling or mediation and it is purposed to lay off the incident (Ibid). Moreover, Gutek & Koss (1993) indicated the modes victims cope with the incident of sexual harassment differ according to the focus of response and the mode of response. The focus of the response can be classified as either self-focused which does not involve the perpetrator, or initiator focused which involves the perpetrator, while the mode of response refers to the amount of outside support the victims seek, and it takes the form of either a self-response that is with no use of outside resources or a supported response that requires the use of outside resources (Ibid).

Generally, the victim's choice of the coping strategies of sexual harassment depends on to a large extent by the different personal and environmental influences, such as occupational status, gender relation, psychological issues, the severity of harassment, and power differential (Malamut & Offermann, 2001). A research conducted in Puerto Rico suggests that the female students use internally-focused responses more frequently than formal and institutional strategies to deal with sexual harassment (Rodriguez, 2010). Popoola (2008) argue that the victims who are exposed to sexual harassment preferred coping strategies which do not involve institutional mechanisms, which might lead them to direct confrontation

with their harassers.

More specifically, Arulogun, et al., (2013) identifies that breaking the relationship with the perpetrator, reporting to school authority, withdrawing from the place and engaging in confrontations with the perpetrators have been some of the coping strategies used by the victims. In a consistent way with the above finding, a study by Popoola (2008) show that avoiding the harasser, so as to minimize unnecessary touching, verbal abuse of a sexual nature and physical assault was the core coping strategy employed by female students. Moreover, most of the victims of sexual harassment hardly tell their perpetrators to stop the harassing. This is because the perpetrators have more physical and organizational powers than the victims (Gutek and Koss, 1993).

Generally, the female students' choice of coping strategies has largely been determined by power and gender relationship between the perpetrators and victims, the nature, and severity of the harassment and the ineffectiveness of institutional response. Since the nature of sexual harassment varied across cultural and organizational contexts, the same is true with the female students' coping strategies.

2.7 Summary of Literature Review

In the literature review part, I have discussed the definitions, forms, and impacts of sexual harassment. More specifically, I have presented the problem of sexual harassment in the higher education contexts. More specifically, I have discussed the forms and causes of sexual harassment in higher education. Furthermore, the literature review part discussed the impact of sexual harassment on victims and their respective institution. I have also presented some sexual harassment policy guidelines along with some practical examples of universities. I have also finally discussed the female students coping strategies.

Despite the extensive studies on the nature, magnitude causes, and impacts of sexual harassment in higher education, much is not known about the institutional policies and female students coping strategies, with respect to the context of Ethiopia and Mekelle University. In other words, the study of the institutional policies, as well as female students' coping strategies, is relatively new and unexplored in the Ethiopian cultural context. Most of the studies on the institutional policies and the female students coping strategies came from the western countries, whereas the existence of such studies on the issue under investigation is very rare in African countries, particularly in Ethiopia higher education context. Apart from

extending previously rarely studied agenda to the new cultural contexts, this study used both socio-cultural and organizational theories to understand the institutional policy and the female student coping strategies, which appear to be uncommon in previous studies.

Methodologically, most of the studies on institutional policies and female students coping strategies have been conducted using quantitative approaches. However, this study is important because it explores the existing institutional policies/mechanisms and the female students coping strategies, using qualitative semi-structured interviews. Moreover, there is a need to deeply examine the factors that determine the female students' coping strategies, considering the socio-cultural factors and the organizational elements between teachers and female students. In this regard, much research is not conducted in Ethiopia cultural context. Therefore, this research is relevant and significant in filling the existing gap about the issue under investigation.

2.8 Analytical Framework

Several theories explain the nature, form, consequences and coping strategies of sexual harassment. However, the selection of these analytical frameworks took place after a careful consideration of how to address the specific research questions of this study. Thus, for the purpose of exploring institutional policies and female students coping strategies, socio-cultural and organizational theories on sexual harassment have been used as analytical frameworks.

2.8.1 Socio-cultural Theory of Sexual Harassment

The Socio-cultural theory explains why the problem of sexual harassment occurs in a society (Paulsen and Smart, 2013). It also discusses how the gender relationship influences the victim's choice of coping strategies to deal with sexual harassment. It posits the idea that sexual harassment is a direct manifestation of a much larger patriarchal system in which men are dominating the society (Paludi, et al., 1991; Hemalatha & Sundaresh, 2013). According to this theory male is more powerful, strong and leaders while females are expected to be attractive and in need of male leadership (Paulsen and Smart, 2013). The current prevalence of sexual harassment is by no means natural, unavoidable and static. This is because the incident of sexual harassment is created as the result of the complex convergence of social and cultural events of the larger society (Fekadu, 2014).

More specifically, the socio-cultural theory holds the view that men and women have socialized in ways that maintain the structure of dominance and subordination (Paludi, et al., 1991; O'Hare & O'Donohue, 1998). Historically, different cultures and society norms throughout the world have developed in a way that males exercise their ultimate dominance over women, basically due to physical, economic and political superiority, and the incident of sexual harassment that we have been observing in any organization is the manifestation of a much larger patriarchal system (Sundaresh and Hemalatha, 2013). More specifically, Vohlídalová (2015:300) argue that “one of the main reasons it has not yet been possible to reduce or eradicate sexual harassment is that it occurs within a gender ideology which actively legitimates sexual harassment.” Individual members of any organizations bring with them biased grouping based on social status into organizations from the surrounding community or society.

Furthermore, the socio-cultural theory is largely feminist in its orientation that examines the broader societal and political context in which sexual harassment is created and occurs (Pina, et al, 2009). Advocates of feminist theories situate sexual harassment within the broader pattern of power, privilege and discrimination (McLaughlin, 2012). Accordingly, the feminist theory posits the view that power is the source of sexual harassment (Tangri and Hayes, 1997). Besides the Feminist Critical Policy Analysis, that postulates similar views with the feminist theory, but with a stronger focus on policy and organizational structure. The feminist critical policy analysis assumes that it is the existing policy apparatus that creates and maintains male-dominated norms that need to be resisted (Marshall, 1999). The eradication of discrimination against women requires critical and gender-based assessments of organizational structure, policies, practices as well as the elimination of speech and interaction that causes aggressive patronizing practices (Bensimon and Marshall, 1997). In relation to higher education institutions, the Feminist Critical Policy Analysis questions the purpose of the academy structure, practices and values in order to reform the disadvantages faced by the women and eliminate the challenges (Marshall, 1999).

Furthermore, the socio-cultural theory of sexual harassment to some extent overlaps with the cultural theory of sexual harassment. However, the former is wider in scope than the latter. The cultural theory of sexual harassment posits the view that it is the belief, attitude and value of the community or school that either fosters or prevents sexual harassment (Wetzel and Brown, 2000). Furthermore, if sexual harassment is to be prevented, reduced and eliminated,

the long-entrenched beliefs, values and attitudes of the community need to be changed or properly addressed (Ibid).

Generally, the socio-cultural theory can determine the nature of sexual harassment in higher education, and more specifically it can influence the female students' choice of coping strategies to deal with the problem. However, the socio-cultural theory has been criticized for the lack of depth in explanation of sexual harassment or empirical adequacy and the absence of internal coherency (Pina, et al., 2009).

2.8.2 Organizational Theory of Sexual Harassment

According to this theory, it is the structural conditions that are found in any organization that provides suitable conditions for sexual harassment or encourages harassment on the basis of organizational norms and entrenched power relations between men and women (Dekker and Barling, 1998). This theory suggests that the problem of sexual harassment is derived from the hierarchical structure of power in which the perpetrators use the opportunity presented by power and authority to harass the victims (Paludi, et al., 1991; Sundaresh and Hemalatha, 2013).

In addition to the hierarchical structure of power, other organizational characteristics are viewed as contributing to the existence of sexual harassment in any organization such as the ratio of males to females in the organization, organizational norms, functions, and availability of grievance procedures (O'Hare & O'Donohue, 1998). Regarding the issue of organizational norms, there are some overlaps between the organizational theory and the cultural theory of sexual harassment. Both theories posit the view that the specific organization's belief, attitude, and values can foster or prevent the incident of sexual harassment. However, the cultural theory is broader in scope than the organizational theory. One aspect of the contextual focus of the organizational theory is the institution sexual harassment policy and grievance procedures and thus, the lack of a sexual harassment policy may suggest a weakness to recognize the problem and address it properly (Dekker and Barling, 1998).

In educational settings like any other organizations, males hold more organization power while female delegates to more subordinate roles, and consequently, the existence of stratification create vulnerable subordinates (Paulsen and Smart, 2013). Such impacts of stratification have created sexual harassment between professors and students. More specifically, according to Kayuni (2009), there are two possible power relationships that can

cause sexual harassment in the educational settings. The first one is “contra-power” and this occurs when the perpetrator has formal or organizational power over the victim. A university lecturer who has abused a student is a typical example of this type of harassment. The second case is "peer" sexual harassment and it occurs when male students harass the female students due to the fact that the male is socially perceived as the power holders (Ibid). Finally, organizational theory recommends the view that those in institutional power must be made aware of the responsibilities accompanying their power and must separate between personal and institutional roles (Lee, et al., 1996).

Generally, the organizational theory posits the view that sexual harassment is predominantly defined by the existence of the power relationship between the perpetrators and the victims. The theory can also define the prevalence of sexual harassment in higher education and it can influence the female students’ choice of coping strategies. However, the organizational theory of sexual harassment is not free from critics by scholars. Pina, et al. (2009), for example, criticized the theory for ignoring for people's individual difference and their influences on the occurrence of sexual harassment. However, the strength of the theory is that it attempts to unify different organizational factors in its explanation of sexual harassment (Ibid).

2.9 The Relationship Between Theories

Even though the socio-cultural theory is very important to understand the incident of sexual harassment from a gender perspective, organizational factors are also important elements that can explore the problem from the institutional contexts. Thus, both theories support each other and their combinational can define the problem of sexual harassment. Accordingly, to Paludi and Denmark (2010), the integration of these two theories can explain the function of sexual harassment in some cases, but not all. According to Bennett, et al. (2007) also, it is the existence of the hierarchical nature of universities coupled with patriarchal cultures that cause sexual harassment and influences its effort to prevent it. Besides, Vohlídalová (2015) argue that the socio-cultural superiority of male extends up to different organizations that members of such organizations would thus maintain their longstanding gender roles, beliefs, and stereotypes that cause sexual harassment. Gender inequality has socialized and institutionalized in such a manner that inequality and prejudice occur against women within the organizations (Ibid).

By taking into account the socio- cultural perspective and organizational theory as an analytical framework, this paper focuses on exploring the existing institutional policies and the female students coping strategies towards sexual harassment. Both the socio-cultural and organizational elements can usefully explain the nature of sexual harassment in the campus as well as they can determine the female students' choice of coping strategy to deal with the problem. Without neglecting the fact that these female students may encounter sexual harassment by the students and the administrative staffs of the university, I only concentrate on the female students' sexual harassment by teachers. Due to the existence of power imbalance between the female students and teachers as well as the limited options of the female students to defend themselves, female students' encountering sexual harassment by male teachers is one of the most severe forms of harassment in the university which wins the high public attention.

Chapter Three

Research Methodology and Methods

This chapter presents the research approach, design, and participants selection strategy. It then discusses the issues of validity and reliability as well as ethical considerations.

3.1 Research Approach

In order to collect the relevant and appropriate data, I employed qualitative research approach. The reason behind selecting qualitative research approach is that it deals with the examination of attitudes, views and experiences of respondents. Similarly, this research intends to explore the experiences of the female students about the coping strategies, and the views of other research participants about the issue under investigation. In other words, as this research seeks to explore institutional policies and female students coping strategies, the study purpose can best achieve through qualitative interviews. As noted by Kothari (2004), in qualitative research, the researcher's insight plays a central role in collecting, analyzing and interpreting data. In other words, qualitative researchers intend to explore the meanings people constructed, and such research deals with how people understand their world and the experiences they possess in the world (Merriam, 2005).

In addition, Creswell (2002) argues that qualitative research is more appropriate if the researcher is interested in researching problems and developing a comprehensive understanding of the main concept, idea, or processes of recent a phenomenon. Similarly, the purpose of conducting interviews in this study is to find out the views, and experiences of the participants about a contemporary and a new issue of sexual harassment in the Mekelle University context. Furthermore, most of the studies that have been conducted on sexual harassment focused on quantitative aspects of the problem. Thus, I chose this research approach because I want to qualitatively explore institutional policies and female students coping strategies on sexual harassment.

3.2 Research Design

Considering the nature of the specific research questions of this study, a case study is an appropriate research design. This is because the case study research intends to analyze a limited number of outcomes or conditions in a very detailed way (Bryman, 2012). It helps an intense study of a specific phenomenon, which is generally challenging and problematic if we use other research designs (Kothari, 2004). Moreover, according to Bryman (2012), the case study research focuses on a single community, school, family, organization, person or event, which fits with the purpose of this study that emphasis on a single campus.

Moreover, the case study is suitable for answering questions that start with why and how and it is best suited for investigating current events (Yin, 1994; Kothari, 2004). This design fits with the specific research questions of the study, i.e. how does the university deal with sexual harassment against female students on the campus, and how do the victims cope with sexual harassment experience in the institution. Furthermore, the emphasis of case study research is an intense investigation or examination of the setting (Bryman, 2012). Likewise, the purpose of this research is to deeply explore institutional policies and female students' coping strategies to deal with the problem. However, as Bryman (2012) discusses, one of the criticisms of case study research is that its finding cannot be generalized, which can be taken as a limitation of this thesis work as well.

3.3 Respondents Selection Method

The study employed a purposive sampling technique to identify all research participants. This is because the study intends to deeply explore both the policies and female students coping strategy, which requires identifying respondents with better knowledge and experience about the issue. In this type of sampling, the researcher purposefully chooses the details for the sample and personal judgments of the researchers play an important role in selecting the respondents (Kothari, 2004). As Bryman (2012) states that purposive sampling is desirable to select participants in a strategic way since the sampled ones are more relevant to the research being studied than others. Consequently, the research participants were selected because they were more relevant and appropriate for the research under investigation than others. In other words, a purposive sampling technique is selected in this study taking into account the need to explore the issue under investigation with a very limited number of respondents who have

good knowledge and experience. Besides, the limited time frame to conduct the research and geographic restrictions are some of the reasons to select a purposive sampling technique. The time frame to conduct the thesis was only five months, including proposal writing and data collection and analysis periods. Moreover, this research is geographically limited to Adi Haki Campas, Mekelle University, which was purposefully selected.

To achieve the purpose of the study, three groups of respondents were selected. The first group involves female students, specifically those who experienced some forms of sexual harassment. The involvement of female students in the study is vital to specifically address the second research question of the study, i.e. how do the female students cope with sexual harassment? Accordingly, 12 female students were selected and approached for the interview.

The second group of respondents includes a gender office director, coordinators, female student union representatives and a member of the anti-sexual harassment discipline committee. I approached the director of the gender office that is responsible for ensuring gender equality in the university. In addition, gender office coordinators of the college of law and governance, social science as well as business and economics, were interviewed. The overall status of sexual harassment in general and institutional policies and mechanisms to deal with the problem, in particular, were the core issues of the interviews. Moreover, one member of anti-sexual harassment discipline committee has interviewed. The member's long involvement in the development of the sexual harassment policy and long experience as the member of the discipline committee necessitated her involvement in this research.

The third group of participants who involved in the study was the female student union coordinators of the campus. The reason that I involved these groups of participants was the union serves as protector of female students' interest, and its main purpose is to prevent, minimize and eliminate any kinds of challenges against female students, including sexual harassment. The union has direct contact with the issue under investigation and serves as a bridge between the victims and the institutional structures to address the problem.

3.4 Data Collection Tools

The major strength of case study research is the opportunity to use diverse sources of evidence, which is important to address a full range of historical, attitudinal and behavioral issues (Yin, 1994). Semi-structured interviews and policy analysis were primarily used to collect the necessary data in this study. Semi-structured interviews were arranged with female

students, gender office director, and coordinators, female student union representatives and a member of the anti-sexual harassment discipline committee. Since this research is a case study, semi-structured interviews were used as the principal sources of data to achieve the specific research questions. This is because semi-structured interviews are the most significant sources of qualitative case study research which help to collect the views and experiences of respondents (Yin, 2009; Bryman, 2012). Moreover, policy analysis was used as a second data collection tool to achieve the purpose of the study. The university gender policy and strategy, as well as the anti-sexual harassment code of conduct, were deeply examined.

3.4.1 Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviewing is qualitative research technique that is vital for conducting intensive interviews with a limited number of people to explore their experiences, views, and attitudes about specific issues (Boyce & Neale, 2006). Semi-structured interviews were primarily used to achieve the purpose of this research. Semi-structured interviews can give the respondents enough time and free room to discuss their views and elicit their personal experiences (Creswell, 2002). Semi-structured interviews are more advantageous because it allows the respondents to express their feelings in their own terms/words and explore new information which the researcher has limited knowledge (Bryman, 2012). Boyce and Neale (2006) support Bryman's (2012) argument that semi-structured interview can provide the researcher with much more detailed information and insights about a specific issue.

To this end, it is possible to argue that semi-structured interview is the appropriate one for the research under investigation. Hence, semi-structured interviews were conducted with twelve female students, one gender office director, three gender office coordinators, one member of the anti-sexual harassment discipline committee, and three female student union representatives. In doing so, the consent of the respondents was asked after the purpose of the research has been clearly explained to them. The anonymity of respondents was guaranteed to give them the chance to freely express their personal experiences of coping strategies to deal with sexual harassment.

In conducting the semi-structured interview, the use of interview guides was significant. Two interview guides have been prepared for managing the overall interview activities with the female students and other respondents. The interview guides were prepared by considering

the stated specific research questions, the analytical framework, and the literature reviews. The interview guide for female students began by asking general questions about the overall status and contributing factors of sexual harassment and goes through the detail experience of female students' coping strategies. Likewise, the interview guide for the gender office director and coordinator as well as other respondents start with general information about their views on sexual harassment and goes specifically about the university initiation to address the problem.

Before the actual interview conducted, I visited different offices and people in the university that related to the issue under investigation. I met with student union representatives, female student union and gender office coordinators, former students and colleagues. The aim of my visit was to identify and select all the research participants. One important step that I have taken was identifying students and colleagues who could help me in selecting the female students who experienced sexual harassment. In this regard, my former students play a vital role in selecting female students.

During my first meeting with the female students, I briefed each of them with the aim of the study and the issue of confidentiality and anonymity of the data. I clearly informed them that they have a right to withdraw from the study at any time. After securing the female student's consent to participate, I had to spend much time on rapport, such as sharing my academic experiences as a former lecturer at Mekelle University and a student of the University of Oslo. I likewise gave them a chance to discuss their campus life. The rapport helps me establish a good relationship with the respondents by motivating and inspiring them to participate in the study. As Bryman (2012) argues, without establishing a proper rapport, the respondents who initially agreed to take part may terminate to do so because the length and type of the interview may not confirm them.

Before the actual interview conducted, I make clear to the respondents about my background and informed them promptly about the importance of this research and its nature in broad terms. I also informed them why they have selected for the study and informed them that the participation is voluntary. Furthermore, I reassured the respondents that confidentiality and anonymity would be protected throughout the research process so that no one can identify their identity. I also provided each respondent with an opportunity to ask any question about the research.

Afterward, I selected calm and suitable places for the interview, taking into account the consent of the sampled female students. In doing so, the participant's consent sheet has been prepared for the participants to sign before the interview conducted. In conducting the interviews, warm up questions and informal discussions play an important role in the process of gaining confidence and creating rapport with the female students. In a situation that necessitated furthered information, probing has been employed such as could you say something more about that point? Or are there any other reasons why you think that way?

The interviews were conducted in the Amharic language. Each respondent was interviewed for about 60 up to 90 minutes. Most of the interviews with gender office director and coordinators were recorded while very few cases, especially the interviews with female students, field notes were taken because they refused to be recorded. In some circumstances when the female students were feeling uncomfortable to talk, I was trying to change the topic for some moments, taking into account the sensitivity of the issue under investigations.

3.4.2 Policy Analysis

Policy analysis is another data gathering tool used in this research. In order to specifically address the stated research questions, two policies on sexual harassment were examined. Policy analysis is important to systematically evaluate documents which can be used in collaboration with the data collected via interviews so as to improve the quality of the finding. Moreover, policy analysis is less time and cost consuming, easy to access and stable that makes it suited for qualitative research (Bowen, 2009). Therefore, I analyzed institutional policies and strategies on sexual harassment. More specifically, Mekelle University gender policy and strategy, as well as the anti-sexual harassment code of conduct, were examined in order to explore the institutional policies to address sexual harassment. In analyzing the above policies, the validity of the documents was measured using the four criteria by Bryman (2012), such as the legitimacy of the origins, the credibility of the evidence, the representativeness and clarity of the documents.

3.5 Research Site

Mekelle University is a one of the secular public universities in Ethiopia, which is situated in the city of Mekelle, located 783 km out from the capital city of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa (Mekelle University, 2016). It was officially launched in 2000 as the outcome of the merger of the two pioneer colleges, i.e. Mekelle Business College and Arid Agriculture College. At present, Mekelle University has seven colleges, nine institutes, and more than 100 undergrad and 80 postgraduate programs and the student intake capacity of Mekelle University have reached 33,000 (Ibid). Adi Haki campus is the second largest campus of Mekelle University, which is the home of three colleges; college of Business and Economics, College of Law and Governance, and College of Social Science and Humanities, with more than 25 departments. Participants of the research were recruited across the Adi Haki campus. I have no provided specific names of the research participants of the campus in order to maintain the anonymity of the research participants.

3.6 Data Analysis

In an effort to analyze the gathered data through interviews, the first thing I did was a careful transcription of the recorded interviews. According to Bryman (2012) transcribing recorded data by the researcher is important because it brings the researcher closer to the data through identifying the key ideas, and differences or similarities between/among participant accounts. After transcription of all the interviews, I repeatedly read through the initial set of transcripts without taking any notes and considering interpretations. I went through the transcribed data several times to get a sense out of it. After repeatedly reading through the transcribed data, I began making general notes that I found very appropriate to specifically address the research questions of this study. Having translated the transcribed data put under each research question into English from the Amharic language, I began identifying the keywords used by the respondents and themes of the data. Then, I start to write the most relevant transcribed data to separate papers. After having the most relevant data, I start to list down all possible topics that are directly related to the research questions. Then, I start clustering of different sub-topics into the comprehensive or major topics. To this end, I coined the most appropriate topics that capture the contents of the transcribed and refined data.

Moreover, policy analysis technique was employed to examine the two institutional policies on sexual harassment, i.e. the gender policy and strategy as well as the anti-sexual harassment

code of conduct. Policy analysis is one of qualitative research techniques in which policies are analyzed and examined by the researcher to give meaning about the issue under investigation. In doing so, I repeatedly read the content of the policies so as to get the most relevant issues, in a similar manner with the way that I analyzed the interview transcripts. While I repeatedly read the policies, I start taking notes about some aspects of the policies that are directly related to the research questions, which help me capture emerging themes or concepts. Then, I list down appropriate topics and sub-topics that are directly related to the research questions. To this end, I identified the most expressive topics for the policies that are appropriate to answer the specific research questions.

3.7 Validity

Validity and reliability are the two most significant elements that any researcher should consider while designing research, analyzing the result and judging the quality of the study (Patton, 2002). Validity refers to the extent to which a test measure which is intended to measure while reliability deals with accuracy and precision of measurement procedures (Kothari, 2004). In order to achieve validity of this research, interview questions were developed that directly related to specific research questions. In order to address the specific research questions of the study, appropriate respondents were purposively selected and approached, which is important to achieve the validity of the study.

Furthermore, respondent validation of the collected data was used to ensure the validity of the study. Respondent validation is a process whereby the researcher provides the research participants the early transcription or finding of the study. The core purpose of respondent validation is to check whether there is a sound correspondence between the early finding study and the perspectives and experiences of the research participants (Bryman, 2012). Accordingly, I provided each respondent with the summarized findings of the study so as to confirm their experiences and impression are congruent with the finding of the study. Generally, by creating coherence to address the proposed research questions, using an appropriate research methodology and methods as well as creating a linkage among research questions, literature reviews and theoretical and analytical frameworks, the main findings and interpretations, efforts have been made to ensure the quality of the research.

3.8 Reliability

Reliability in qualitative research is highly associated with the trustworthiness of the research, in relation to the usage of proper research methods and techniques so as to reach a sound conclusion (Bryman, 2012). Since the processes and procedures of data collection and subsequent interpretations are sufficiently discussed and documented in this study, it helps ensure the trustworthiness of the findings. Moreover, in order to ensure the representation of different perspectives of the issue under study, I have established a comparison of the experiences and perspectives of the research participants by digging out similarities and differences among different views.

Moreover, as a way to ensure the credibility and soundness of the finding of this research, I discussed with different researchers of Mekelle University who have been a long experience of conducting studies on gender and related issues. Accordingly, the inputs and comments of the above researchers play a vital role in the quality of this study. I also invited the female students who participated in this study to comment on the field notes so as ensure whether the final concepts identified adequately and precisely reflect the phenomena being investigated.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

Considering the sensitive nature of the issue under investigation, it is not an easy task to obtain accurate and relevant data without getting the confidence of the female students who experienced sexual harassment and other respondents. All the research participants who were involved in this research were asked their willingness and consent before the interview conducted. According to Bryman (2012), the principle of informed consent means all the research participants should be given as much information as might be needed that help makes an informed decision to participate in the study. Likewise, all the research participants of this study were clarified about purpose, processes and time periods of the interview. Accordingly, the consent of the respondents was obtained through a written agreement. In doing so, interview consent forms and a study information sheet have been prepared, and the participants were able to put their signature in the form.

More specifically, the research participants were well informed that if they do not wish to take part in the study, then they have had a right to withdraw from the research process. Since research that harms participants is regarded as unacceptable as Bryman (2012) claims, the privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality of all the research participants were safeguarded

throughout the study. This strict procedure helps to protect the research participants from any harm. In doing so, I made a due emphasis on protecting the research participants through guaranteeing the confidentiality of data shared and anonymity, by not disclosing the identity of each research respondents, particularly female students.

Furthermore, ensuring the informed consent as well as the confidentiality and anonymity of all the research participants is important to safeguard their privacy. Especially, as Bryman (2012) argues, invasion of privacy is highly related with the notion of informed consent of the research participants because the informed consent provides the participants a detailed understanding of their involvement in the research might entail. Therefore, efforts have been made to safeguard the privacy of the research participants by not disclosing their identity.

3.10 Summary

Since the methodology part is the most key part of the thesis, I chose the appropriate research approach and design. I put good academic reasons for the choices that I have made. I have tried to link the methodology part with different literature so as to clearly explain the reasons behind selecting the methods and the academic basis of all the choices that I have made. The research employed qualitative approach because it deals with the subjective examination of attitudes, views and experiences of respondents. Similarly, the purpose of conducting interviews in this study is to find out the views, and experiences of the participants about the institutional policies and female students coping strategies to deal with sexual harassment. Such data can only obtain through employing a qualitative approach. Moreover, this research is a case study because it intends to analyze a limited number of outcomes or conditions in a very detailed way, which cannot be achieved through other research designs.

Since the study intends to explore policies and female students coping strategies, which requires identifying respondents with better knowledge and experience about the issue, a purposive sampling technique was employed. Consequently, interviews were conducted with the female students, gender office director and coordinators, a member of anti-sexual harassment discipline committee and representatives from the female students' union. Moreover, in order to collect the necessary data, semi-structured interviews and policy analysis were used. In conducting the interviews with the research participants, the issues of informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity were fully safeguarded. Moreover, the methodology part discussed the issues of validity and reliability.

Chapter Four

Presentation of Findings

This chapter presents the main findings of the study about institutional policies and the female students coping strategies on sexual harassment. The chapter is divided into two major parts. First, the chapter examines institutional policies and structures to address sexual harassment. The institution's gender policy and strategy, as well as the anti-sexual harassment code of conduct, were examined and analyzed. The second part deals with the experience of sexual harassment and the choices and rationales of female students coping strategies on sexual harassment.

4.1 Institutional Policies on Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment policies within the realm of higher education are necessary conditions to alleviate the problem (Joubert, 2009). Mekelle University has been using two ways to address sexual harassment. First, the university has been adopted two consecutive policies, i.e. the gender policy and strategy as well as the anti-sexual harassment code of conduct. In addition, the university mainly initiated and organized a gender office, with a power to implement the policies in general and to facilitate complaints handling procedures in particular.

4.1.1 The Gender Policy and Strategy

One of the policies that have been developed by Mekelle University to promote gender equality in the institution is the gender policy and strategy. This policy has been developed within the international and national legal frameworks such as the convention on the elimination of all kinds of discrimination against women, the FDRE constitution, the national policy on Ethiopia women and the Ethiopian higher education proclamation. The policy serves as a general framework for the implementation of different specific strategies, including the anti-sexual harassment code of conduct. Regarding the need to adopt such policy, one of the gender office coordinators said:

It is the need to solve the multi-dimensional and deep-rooted challenges of female students that necessitated the formulation and implementation of the gender policy and strategy in our university. We cannot solve the challenges against the female

students without having a clear guiding principle like the gender policy (Interview with gender office coordinator).

A university, with a massive population of female students and administrative staff, it is highly imperative to adopt and implement gender policy and strategy to promote gender equality. In doing so, the policy clearly identifies the challenges that hinder gender equality such as low female student enrollment, high institutional gender imbalance on academic staff, high attrition and dropout rates of female students, high vulnerability of women to gender-based violence, including sexual harassment, and the fact that female students and staff have little voice and influence on crucial issues and decision about the university (Mekelle University, 2015a). The policy also discusses the rationale behind such long-entrenched challenges for promoting gender equality:

The challenges are the result of the traditional gender role that places female at home. The traditional gender role does not encourage women to expose themselves to the public life, and with the limited knowledge they have about the public life, they tend to lack the skill to relate to the outside environment. The traditional gender role also makes a difference in terms of orientation about the ability to control one's own life. Women have been oriented and encouraged to be homemakers than breadwinner (Mekelle University, 2015a: 4).

In a consistent way with the socio-cultural theory of sexual harassment, the university code acknowledges the impact of traditional gender relationship between men and women on the prevalence of sexual harassment in the institution. The gender inequality that has been commonly observed on the institution of higher education is the reflection of the status of women in the society (Paludi, et al., 1991; O'Hare & O'Donohue, 1998). Moreover, the policy states that female students of the campus are forced into sexual relation by their male instructors. The female students are squeezed between being confident to say no and fear of facing prejudice in the academic results (Mekelle University, 2015a). According to Paludi, et al. (1991), Sundaresh and Hemalatha (2013) and O'Hare and O'Donohue (1998), sexual harassment occurs when people in legitimate positions use their power for pressuring others for sexual favors or propositions.

Regarding the identity of the perpetrators, the policy postulates that the female students of the university are exposed to three groups of perpetrators, i.e. academic and administrative staff,

male students and surrounding community members (Mekelle University, 2015a). However, the policy acknowledges the most common form of sexual harassment came from male teachers towards female students. The policy also claims that some female students have been exposed to the sexual advances of the surrounding community (Mekelle University, 2015a). This is consistent with the arguments of Wetzel and Brown (2000) and Lee, et al. (1996) that, it is the belief, attitude and values of the surrounding community that either fosters or prevents sexual harassment in the educational settings.

The policy also underlines that woman academic and administrative staff of the university are victims of sexual harassment, which mainly derive from the power relationship (Mekelle University, 2015a). Therefore, the policy purposes to create a suitable environment for all members of the university through changing or improving the attitude of the university community about gender equality (Mekelle University, 2015a). The policy also states that ensuring gender mainstreaming, protecting female rights and eradicating gender imbalance among the staff of the institution are vital to implementing the policy (Ibid).

Generally, despite the policy mentions sexual harassment as one of the core challenges of the institution, it gives much more emphasis on ensuring gender equality. To a large extent, the policy covers mainstreaming of gender perspectives in all university operations or activities. The policy focuses on the role of the university in eliminating the gender inequality between male and female members of the institution. The policy gives much more emphasis on the core challenges in achieving gender equality, and it treats sexual harassment as only one of these challenges. However, taking into account the severity of the problem, the policy does not sufficiently and comprehensively address the issue of sexual harassment. However, the gender policy can serve as a general background for the anti-sexual harassment code of conduct.

4.1.2 The Anti-Sexual Harassment Code of Conduct

Even though the existence of policies to address sexual harassment have their own limits, they are necessary conditions for the prevention and elimination of the problem (Vohlídalová, 2015). Any higher educational institution should have a strongly worded sexual harassment policy that clearly shows the specific procedures to be followed when sexual harassment cases occur. Mekelle University has been adopted the anti-sexual harassment code of conduct that specifically addresses the problem. The 1995 FDRE constitution serves as a general

founding stone upon which the code of conduct derives its legitimacy. The code is also grounded on the international and regional human right conventions or agreements that had ratified by Ethiopia, such as the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women and the African Charter on Human and People Right that purposes at eradicating any forms of gender-based violence, including sexual harassment. Most specifically, the code derives its legitimacy from the institution's gender policy and strategy. The code is clearly written both in English and Amharic (the official language of the federal government) languages which are important for readers to grasp the core ideas of the code and enhance their awareness.

Joubert (2009) argues that any sexual harassment policy should start by clearly and precisely worded "zero tolerance" against the problem. Similarly, the university's code of conduct clearly underlines, no tolerance policy against sexual harassment. Regarding why it needs to formulate such code on the institution, a gender office coordinator reflects her thoughts:

The formulation of such code at the university reflects the institution's concern on the issue, and the need to provide guidelines for handling complaints related to sexual harassment. The introduction of such code enhances the understanding of the issue by the university community (teachers, administrative staff, and students) and helps develop a balanced gender relationship (Interview with gender office coordinator).

In addition, the code clearly articulates that it is the need to eradicate gender-based violence and sexual harassment, as well as any act that intends to discriminate, degrade, humiliate and embarrass another individual that necessitated the formulation and implementation of the code (Mekelle University, 2015b). Ensuring equality, enhancing gender balance, providing appropriate mechanisms and systems against sexual harassment are also among some of the specific aims of the code (Ibid). Therefore, the code is clear enough in stating its major purposes, which is an important element of any sexual harassment policy. However, the code does not precisely and comprehensively show how the objectives could be achieved, taking into account country and institutional contexts.

According to Wetzel and Brown (2000), developing a comprehensive definition of sexual harassment is one of the basic steps to address the problem. Similarly, the university code defines the meaning of sexual harassment in plain and simple languages:

Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, other verbal, physical conduct of a sexual nature, when submission to or rejection of this conduct affects a person's employment or education, unreasonably interferes with a person's work or educational performance or creates an offensive learning situation. Sexual harassment may occur in power relationships (Mekelle University, 2015b: 6).

The above definition of sexual harassment is similar in many ways with different definitions that have been developed by scholars and organizations such as Sandler and Shoop (1997), Connolly, et al. (2014), and U.S. Department of Education (1997). Implicit in all definitions is that the act of sexual harassment is characterized by unwelcome or unreasonable sexual advances or propositions, and may include both verbal and physical conducts, and create an offensive working and learning environment. The code states sexual harassment as an act which may occur due to power relationship between the perpetrators and victims, which is similarly explained by the organizational theory. More importantly, the code acknowledges that men or women can become the victims and perpetrators of sexual harassment. However, the existence large of similarity of the code's definition with other definitions that have been developed in other countries indicates that the university definition of sexual harassment is not contextualized, taking into account country and institutional contexts.

More specifically, the code postulates that sexual harassment includes any act of engaging in sexual activity such as intentional sexual touching, with any body part, by any person upon any person, without consent. The code also deeply elaborates the nature of sexual harassment. It may include physical, verbal and non-verbal conduct (Mekelle University, 2015b). According to the code, verbal conduct includes unwelcome intimations, clues, sexual advances, comments with sexual inversions, sex related jokes or graphic comments about a person's body or inappropriate inquiries about a person's sexual life (Mekelle University, 2015b). The non-verbal sexual harassment, on the other hand, includes unwelcome gestures, indecent exposure and sending by electronic means or otherwise sexually explicit pictures or objects (Ibid). While physical harassment includes all unwelcome physical contacts, ranging from touching to sexual assault and rape (Mekelle University, 2015b). One of the strong sides of the code is that the definition is well articulated and different forms of sexual harassment are clearly identified and discussed. However, according to Joubert (2009), the definitions and forms of sexual harassment must be supported by practical examples of prohibited conducts to remove any uncertainty about the nature of the behavior, which is absent from the code.

For the purpose of deep investigation of the issue under investigation, the specific aspects of the code can be discussed by categorizing into the policy-making procedure, complaints handling procedure, examination and decision of the complaints as well as the final sanctions and punishments on the perpetrators.

The Sexual Harassment Policy Making Process

The development of any policy goes through a series of stages and processes. As Joubert (2009) argues, the development of sexual harassment policy should include open public discussion, creates an all-inclusive definition of sexual harassment, the inclusion of different stakeholders, the arrangement of continuous training, the appointment of people and organizing structures and regular reviews and evaluation of the policy. Representatives from all members of the university community, such as the faculty members, university administrators, staff, and student should participate in the policy making process. In the case of Mekelle University, interview results show that the sexual harassment policy making the process of the institution was exclusive, men dominated and non-participatory. All the female students and the female student union coordinators have no knowledge about how the code was drafted and endorsed by the institution. As one member of the anti-sexual harassment discipline committee claims:

A committee has been established shortly composed of five men. No female academic staff or students were involved in the drafting stage, although the women's affairs office of the university was following up closely the drafting process. We (some female academic staff) tempted at a workshop that was arranged to draft the code for discussion and we have shown our concern of women's underrepresentation in the drafting process, but nothing changed (Interview with a member of the anti-sexual harassment discipline committee).

The above respondents view is equally shared by the gender office coordinators that the academic and administrative women staff and female students were inadequately and hardly represented in the policy making process.

The development of the code was organized by the gender office. This was done during the period of May 2011. The university's gender office is responsible for developing a plan of action, and it is also mandated to make sure that the implementation is under way (Mekelle University, 2015a). Despite the importance of including different stakeholders view, the

interview with the participants show that there was no open public discussions and consultations with the university community about the development of the code, and the university hardly arranges continuous awareness raising training and seminars. The implication of fewer stakeholder involvements is that it creates a low sense of ownership of the code by the university members. This low feeling of ownership might be among the factors behind the female students reluctant to attend seminars and workshops that intend to raise awareness. Therefore, it is highly imperative to develop a sense of ownership of the code by the university community which necessitated arranging continuous revision and review of the code's contents through the inclusion of different stakeholders. As Joubert (2009) argues, regularly updating and reviewing sexual harassment policies is a highly important step in alleviating the problem, which is hardly addressed in the code.

Complaint Handling Procedures

In order to address sexual harassment in higher education, an effective and well-organized complaint procedure must spell out the route to be taken when the incident occurs (Joubert, 2009). The sexual harassment handling procedure must be followed by a consecutive process of investigating the incident, and the procedures should also show the time frame and responsible people and structures for conducting the investigation (Ibid). Similarly, the university's code clearly puts the complaints handling procedures. The code states that the university gender office and student support service center directorate jointly have the responsibility to organize an anti-sexual harassment discipline committee under the gender office to facilitate sexual harassment complaints handling procedures (Mekelle University, 2015b). The gender office director remarked on the composition of the anti-sexual harassment discipline committee:

The anti-sexual harassment discipline committee is composed of top university leaders, academic and administrative staff that are directly steered by the gender office. It has the power to take measures against the perpetrators, taking into account the university code of conduct (Interview with gender office director).

The code also postulates that any individual who has been subjugated to any sorts of discrimination and harassment or retaliation can report either to gender office or student support service center directorate (Mekelle University, 2015b). Moreover, interviews with gender office coordinators show that, apart from the gender office and student support service center directorate, the victims can immediately report to gender office coordinators of each

college as well as to the female student union. The existence of different options for reporting sexual harassment cases can be taken as a good element of addressing the problem.

Alexander et al. (2005) argue that the complaint process should make clear that retaliation will not be tolerated. Likewise, the university code also clearly states that retaliation is a violation the code and may lead to severe sanctions (Mekelle University, 2015b). However, the code doesn't fix a time bar for lodging a complaint to gender office or student support service center directorate, which may challenge the prompt and impartial examinations and decision. Generally, the code put it explicitly the procedure of reporting sexual harassment and more specifically, it includes the positions and titles of those who are responsible for handling it.

Examination and Decision of Sexual Harassment Allegations

Any allegation of sexual harassment must vigorously and carefully investigated and examined according to specific policies (Leitich, 1999). The university code states that any accusation of sexual harassment or retaliation must be investigated carefully, promptly and neutrally (Mekelle University, 2015b). The investigation and examination of sexual harassment allegations may include consultations with the parties involved or the victims and perpetrators (Ibid). However, the code does not specifically address how the investigation of sexual harassment allegations could be independent and free from organizational power pressures. The code, most importantly, clearly postulates that the confidentiality of information will be maintained throughout the investigation of the alleged sexual harassment (Mekelle University, 2015b). This is important to enhance victims' trust on the institutional mechanisms.

Furthermore, it is the power and responsibility of the gender office, with the participation of different organs of the university, to set up a temporary commission of senior members responsible for fact-finding and decisions (Mekelle University, 2015b). The code also specifically discusses how the committee engages in the inspection of the alleged harassment. In doing so, the code states that equal opportunity would be given to the accused person to defend him or herself with all legal mean (Mekelle University, 2015b). The anti-sexual harassment discipline committee is responsible for finalizing the examination of the alleged sexual harassment and transfers the recommendation to gender office. The gender office is responsible for notifying the decision of the committee to the perpetrators (Mekelle University, 2015b). Furthermore, the institution's code of conduct discusses the authority of

the university president about the last outcome of the committee:

The university president has the power to form a committee of five individuals who could entertain any cases of appeal. The recommendation/decision of the appellate committee will be considered final when the president approves it (Mekelle University, 2015b: 22).

However, the code does not specify how the above committee will be selected and it does not fix a maximum time for appealing the decision of the committee. The code needs to explain more about how the committee will carry on the investigation as well as the expected professional qualities of the members should be clearly identified. Moreover, the code should also consider the incident of sexual harassment by top-level university leaders, including the president.

Sanctions for Sexual Harassment Offenses

The credibility of any sexual harassment policy largely relied on the effectiveness of the sanctions against the perpetrators (Joubert, 2009; Wetzel and Brown, 2000). If the perpetrator is found guilty, appropriate sanctions should be taken (Leitich, 1999). In a similar way, the university code clearly lists different kinds of sanctions against the perpetrators. Sanctions proportionately based on the severity of the problem, and warnings may be put away for minor incidents (Mekelle University, 2015b), though the code is not clear what minor incidents mean. More specifically, the code states that anyone who violates the code will be exposed to three kinds of sanctions:

Preventive actions such as warning and reprimand; punitive actions such as expulsion or suspension, withholding of promotion or salary increase, reduction of payment, downgrading, reassignment, temporary suspension without pay or termination of employment; remedial actions such as training, referral to counselling, and monitoring of the offender (Mekelle University, 2015b: 22).

Furthermore, the code also includes disciplinary measures against students who violate the code of conduct. Students who violate the code will be subject to warning, restriction in privileges, voluntary project assignment, community services or gender discrimination education, public apology to the aggrieved party, restriction for loss, damage or injury, enrollment hold or cancellation of enrollment, graduation hold, conduct probation and disciplinary dismissal (Mekelle University, 2015b). However, the code does not specifically

discuss which forms of sexual harassment will subject to what sorts of corrective measure. The member of the anti-sexual harassment discipline committee said:

The sanctions for the perpetrators of sexual harassment are not clearly and directly attached to the different forms of sexual harassment. Moreover, the punishments must be supported by examples and illustrations. The university community needs to know the specific punishments for each aspect of sexual harassment (Interview with the member of the anti-sexual harassment, discipline committee).

Generally, the code puts different sanctions against the perpetrators, which is a highly important aspect of any sexual harassment policy.

Summary of the Anti-sexual Harassment Code of Conduct

Based upon the recommendation about what should be included in whatever sexual harassment policy of schools by Wetzel and Brown (2000), and Reena and Saheab (2012), the following conclusions can be taken from the university code. To start with, the code underlines zero tolerance policy against sexual harassment, which can be taken as an important step in any sexual harassment policy. The code also clearly states that sexual harassment is the violation of law. The definition and forms of sexual harassment are sufficiently discussed. However, the similarity of the code's definition with different other definitions that have been developed in other countries indicate that the university definition of sexual harassment is not contextualized, taking into account Ethiopian cultural context. Moreover, for improving its educational value, examples should be used in explaining the nature of sexual harassment. The code is clear in stating that the policy applies to all students and academic and administrative staff and explains that it will also apply to third parties.

Furthermore, the code clearly lists all the sanctions and penalties against anyone who violates the policy. Nevertheless, the code also needs to clarify more about the specific kinds of sanctions to particular forms of sexual harassment. In addition, the code articulates about how and where victims can report. The university's gender office and student support service center directorate jointly have responsibilities to organize an anti-sexual harassment discipline committee to facilitate complaints handling procedures. However, the code does not specifically show how the office and the committee will work together and what criteria will be used to select the members of the discipline committee. The code also underlines that any allegation of sexual harassment or retaliation will be investigated promptly, carefully and

independently by the discipline committee. Nevertheless, the code does not clearly show about the deadline or timeframe for investigating or examining the complaints.

The code also forbids any kinds of retaliation against those who file complaints, but it does not describe the specific sanctions for those who engage in such kinds of retaliatory actions. Furthermore, the code specifies that the gender office should compile a written, factual report on the outcome or decision. Finally, the code provides a clear procedure to appeal the decisions of the discipline committee. This is highly important to safeguard the rights of those who falsely accused.

The interviews with female students suggest that copies of the policies are not sufficiently disseminated to all members of the university, especially to the female students. This creates an awareness gap. Moreover, the code does not clearly establish procedures for regularly reviewing, evaluating, and updating the policy, which is a vital step to include the ideas of different stakeholders so as to improve the sense of ownership of the code by the university community.

4.1.3 Institutional Structures In Charge of Addressing Sexual Harassment

Developing sexual harassment policy in higher education is necessary, but not sufficient condition to solve the problem. It requires the establishment of different structures and assignment of professionals to implement the policies and strategies. The major function of such enforcing offices and/or individuals is to facilitate the complaints process, investigations/examinations of the allegations of sexual harassment and adjudicate or make recommendations (McCann, 2005). Lack of institutional sexual harassment grievance procedures and offices/people may suggest a weakness to recognize the problem and address it properly (Dekker and Barling, 1998). In the case of Mekelle University, the gender office is primarily mandated to facilitate the complaint handling procedures of sexual harassment. The office was first established as a women's affairs office and later renamed as the gender office to comprehensively promote gender equality in the institution. As one of the gender office coordinators commented the purpose of the office:

The office's main work is to support female students on successful completion of their studies. In doing so, we are working to prevent, minimize and eradicate gender-based violence in general and sexual harassment in particular (Interview with gender office coordinator).

Moreover, the code states that the gender office is mandated to promote gender equality in the institution through changing the attitudes of the university community about the equality of male and female (Mekelle University, 2015b). Apart from facilitating complaints handling procedure, the office is responsible for informing the faculties, staff and students about the content of the code of conduct. In this regard, one of the gender office coordinators remarked, “the gender office is mandated to organize seminars, workshops, and awareness raising programs at regular intervals for the university community, especially to the female students” (Interview with gender office coordinators). Interviews with the gender office director and other coordinators show that the gender office has been regularly organizing seminars at the beginning of the first semester, which targets to raise awareness about sexual harassment policies. Nevertheless, since the seminars and workshops were organized voluntary, few female students were managed to attend.

With regard to financial provision towards the gender office, the anti-sexual harassment code states that the university will allocate a minimum of 2% of its total recurrent budget to implement the gender mainstreaming activities of the institution, which have been mainly facilitated by the gender office. The gender office director remarked:

Mekelle University’s gender office is first of its kind in the Ethiopian higher educational system to have its own budget to meet its objectives. One of its objectives is to eradicate sexual harassment, which can’t be achieved without the full support of university leadership. Apart from financial support, the university provided us with technical and material support to alleviate the major challenges faced by the female students (Interview with the gender office director).

Regarding the competence of the gender office coordinators, an interview with the gender office director shows that all the gender office coordinators of the campus have a masters degree in different fields, which is not related to the issue under investigation. However, some gender office coordinators said that they have not had sufficient and continuous training on how to handle the problem. Similarly, a member of the anti-sexual harassment discipline committee noted:

The gender office staff at the university and college levels came long after the adoption of the anti-sexual harassment code of conduct. And no introduction or refreshment course has been given to those staff. Most of them do not have the

required relevant professional skills about the issues of gender. So my impression is that lack of capacity and knowledge of the staff in the gender office is also another challenge to implement the policy (Interview with the member of the anti-sexual harassment discipline committee).

The university has established a central gender office at the main campus and gender office coordinators in each college. All the coordinators, there are around 10, are from a different background as they only represent their colleges. There are three coordinators of gender office in the Adi-Haki campus with a responsibility to promote gender equality in general and to facilitate the sexual harassment complaints handling procedures in particular.

Together with student support services directorate, the gender office is mandated to organize the anti-sexual harassment discipline committee to specifically deal with the examination and decision of the allegation of sexual harassment. An interview with the gender office director and coordinators show that the committee members are composed of representatives from the law school, the college of agriculture, the gender office (main campus) and the students. In investigating the allegation of sexual harassment, the committee has obliged to follow due process of law and weighs carefully all provided evidence (Mekelle University, 2015b). The committee's recommendation on the allegation of sexual harassment will be transferred to the gender office. In the process of investigating the allegations, the member of the anti-sexual harassment discipline committee said:

The investigation starts as soon as we receive the complaints of the victims. We evaluate all the provided evidence and interview both parties before we reach into possible recommendation and decision (Interview with a member of the anti-sexual harassment discipline committee).

In this regard, the gender office director said that the office strictly follows up the overall investigation process of allegation handling procedure to make sure that the committee is adhering to the code of conduct so as to avoid the possible misuse of power by the committee members.

Apart from the gender office and the discipline committee, there are different unions that have been organized to promote gender equality and alleviate any kinds of gender-related challenges against female students. One of the unions is the female student union. The union was organized in 2015 with a clearly worded purpose of preventing, minimizing and

eradicating gender based violence against female students. All the coordinators of the female student union were directly elected by the female students, and their major objective is to defend the rights of the female students.

Victims of sexual harassment can also report to the union, and accordingly the union can file complaints to the gender office and follow the overall procedures. However, the interview result with the coordinators of the female student union shows that the union is not well-organized in terms of human capacity and material equipment. The coordinators of the female student union also have not taken any continuous training about how to address any challenges against female students. Besides, the interview results with the coordinators show that lack of coordination between the union and gender office has been observed. The members of the female student union believe that the gender office does not perceive the union as a supportive and strategic partner to alleviate the challenges of female students. Worst of all, interviews with female students suggest that they have no information about the existence and purpose of such union. This creates a gap between the union and the female students.

In addition, interviews with female students and other participants show that there are no immediate psychological counseling mechanisms organized for the victims of sexual harassment. As one of the gender office coordinators said:

The victims need to be treated well through proper counseling mechanisms to minimize and eradicate the psychological consequences of the problem. Unfortunately, we don't have such functioning system on the campus (Interview with gender office coordinator).

The implication of the absence of proper counseling is that sexual harassment is adversely affecting the psychological well-being of the female students, and directly and indirectly, affects their academic life.

Generally, apart from formulating and implementing policies, the university organized structures to facilitate the sexual harassment allegation handling procedures. Mainly, the gender office is mandated to prevent, minimize and eradicate sexual harassment in the institution. However, the coordinators of the gender office have not taken sufficient training about the specific aspects of handling sexual harassment. Apart from the gender office, the female student union is responsible eradicating any challenges against female

students, including sexual harassment. However, the union has not well-organized, both financially and technically. Moreover, the university community' awareness about the existence and purpose of such union is minimal. In addition, the interview results show that lack of coordination among the different structures to address the problem has been commonly observed. Therefore, since sexual harassment eradication initiatives of the university cannot be achieved by the exclusive effort of the gender office, the office needs to work closely with different stakeholders or/and concerned structures such as the female student union and student council.

4.2 Female Students' Experience of Sexual Harassment

According to Wetzel and Brown (2000), developing sexual harassment policies in higher education is necessary, but not sufficient conditions to address the problem. What matters the most is the implementation of the policies to solve the sexual harassment. In the case of Mekelle University, despite the existence of clearly worded policies and complaints handling procedures, interviews with all research participants and the experience and/or views of the female students show that sexual harassment is pervasive. Nevertheless, due to the lack of comprehensive surveys and previous studies, figures and statistical data about sexual harassment hardly exist in the institution.

Results of interviews show that female students of the campus become victims of various forms of sexual harassment by male teachers. Sexual harassment is more pervasive in the college of business and economics than other colleges. Interviews with gender office coordinators confirmed that the problem is a serious concern in the daily academic life of female students of the mentioned college. Correspondingly, a female student participant who recounted her personal experience said, "though the problem is pervasive on the campus, it is like a taboo to discuss it" (Informant 3: female student). The above student view indicates that as most female students hardly discuss the issue, the magnitude of the problem is not clearly and precisely known. A similar result was reached by Vohlídálová (2011) that the University of Czech female students rarely discussed sexual harassment which contributes to its pervasiveness.

Regarding the occasion on which most cases of sexual harassment occur, all interviewee research participants agree that the incident is more common after the final exam period when teachers began to assign student grades. Besides, the interview results show that the first-year

female students of the campus are the main victims of sexual harassment. When explaining why sexual harassment is more common among the first-year female students, one of the gender office coordinators said, “the fresh students hardly know about the policies and mechanisms to deal with sexual harassment” (Interview with gender office coordinator). Interviews with all female student participants also confirmed that the lack of awareness and knowledge about the policies and strategies exacerbates the scope of the problem. One of the implications of the above view of participants might be that victims did not report due to the lack of sufficient knowledge on how to deal with it.

Besides, when the female students were asked to mention some forms of sexual harassment, most of them merely mentioned sexual requests or proposition. One of the implications of this finding might be that the female students’ understanding of sexual harassment is very limited. In other words, most of the female student participants narrowly define sexual harassment only as it is sexual requests of the male teachers, and they hardly perceive sexual jokes or comments as sexual harassment. This might also indicate the existence knowledge gap among the female students about the specific forms and nature of the harassment, which strictly forbidden in the university code.

The interview with gender office coordinators and female student union representatives confirmed that lack of awareness about the forms of sexual harassment has been commonly observed among the female students. The gender office coordinators said that most female students become easily vulnerable to sexual harassment since the perpetrators use their lack of awareness as an opportunity to sexually harass them. Likewise, one gender office coordinator suggests:

The problem is most forms of sexual harassment such as sexual jokes, comments or verbal abuse of sexual in nature are not considered sexual harassment by the majority of female students. This creates a challenge to exactly know the nature and magnitude of the problem in the university (Interview with gender office coordinator).

The implication of normalizing some forms of sexual harassment by the female students is that the magnitude of the problem is not clearly known. Likewise, research in Czech University by Vohlídalová (2011) disclosed that sexual comments or jokes, sex-based advantages and disadvantages, sexual comments on appearance, and use of lewd teaching

materials do not constitute as sexual harassment in the students' view. This affects to the female students' reaction towards sexual harassment.

According to Vohlídalová (2015), Sundaresh and Hemalatha (2013), Paludi, et al. (1991) and O'Hare and O'Donohue (1998), sexual harassment are the effect of gender discrimination in a society in which most targets are women while most sexual perpetrators are men. Likewise, the female students who participated in this study said that young male teachers are the perpetrators while the female students are the victims (Informant 10: female student). Consistent with the views of the above students, evidence from different studies by Edwin (2009), Hill and Silva (2005) and Ashe (2014) confirm that most perpetrators of sexual harassment were male teachers while the victims were female students.

Perceptions on the forms and types of what constitutes sexual harassment vary among and within societies. Interviews with most female student participants suggest that unwelcome sexual requests in exchange to award better grades were the most common forms of sexual harassment. In a consistent way with the Quid Pro Quo kind of harassment, such behavior occurs when the perpetrator abuses his/her authority and demands sexual favors, or forces the victims to choose between agreeing to the requests or losing a certain opportunity or privilege (AWARE, 2008). The university anti-sexual harassment code of conduct confirms the existence of such misconduct in the institution. Likewise, research by Taiwo, et al., (2014) in Nigeria also proves that sexual requests of male teachers towards female students were the most common form of harassment. The behavior occurs when male instructors demand a sexual pleasure from female students in exchange for better grades.

Regarding the places where sexual harassment specifically occurs, the result of interviews with all female students shows that the teachers' office has mainly been used to harass the female students. Female student respondent said:

When you look at the situation deep down, there are different sorts of sexual harassment that existed on the campus. Most of the sexual harassment incidents took place in the teachers' office and sometimes outside the campus. The perpetrators use their offices as guest houses. I have experienced such incidents in person (Informant 1: female student).

In addition, the interview with gender office coordinators and the female students experience show that the victims of sexual harassment suffered from psycho-social consequences. To this

end, interviews with female students suggest that desperateness, insecurity, fear, frustration, and embarrassment are among the psycho-social results of sexual harassment. One female student said, “after I became a victim of sexual harassment by my teacher, I feel pain and frustration. What makes me more annoyed was no one understands how I feel. It really hurts” (Informant 8: female student). Likewise, an interview with all female students of the study shows that there were all angry and frustrated when they experienced sexual harassment. Similarly, a study by Edwin (2006) identifies that the psychological effect of sexual harassment includes feelings of pain, embarrassment, fear, anxiety and depression.

In addition, the interviews with the female students show that sexual harassment has been negatively affecting the female students’ academic achievements. All gender office coordinators and female student union representatives also confirmed the impacts of sexual harassment in the academic life of female students. Likewise, one female student reveals her experience, “after I refused to go out for dinner with my teacher, he assigns me with “F” grade (informant 3: female student). Similarly, research by Taiwo, et al. (2014) and Edwin (2006) confirms that the incident of sexual harassment can, directly and indirectly, influence and determine the academic success of female students.

Generally, the interview with all research participants shows that, despite the existence of clearly worded policies and strategies, sexual harassment is pervasive in the university. Most perpetrators of sexual harassment are male teachers while the victims are first-year female students. Direct sexual requests and propositions are the most common forms of sexual harassment. However, other forms of sexual harassment are also observed at the university that ranges from verbal to physical kinds of harassment. Furthermore, the lack of knowledge among the female students about what constitutes sexual harassment is a common problem. This lack of awareness also highly influences the female students’ reaction to the problem, i.e. it forces the victims to normalize the incidents and hardly reported their experience. In addition, sexual harassment negatively affects the female students, both psychologically and academically.

4.3 Contributing Factors for Sexual Harassment

Different literature has disclosed that there are multiple factors that have been contributing to the prevalence of sexual harassment in educational settings. Research by Adedokun (2005) identifies lack of academic integrity and the wrong perception about female students' ways of dressing as the major contributing factors to the incident of sexual harassment at Lagos State University in Nigeria. Similarly, Okoroafor, et al. (2014) also identifies that limited social roles of women, blaming of victims, the traditional construct of manhood, societal pressure to secrecy and silences as well as the lack of specific policies were some of the contributing factors for the prevalence of sexual harassment in Nigeria higher education. In a somewhat same way with the above findings, this study confirmed that there are different factors that have been contributing to the prevalence of sexual harassment on the campus. For the purpose of clarification, I classified the factors into four, i.e. social cultural factors, abuse of power, weak institutional responses and the lack of awareness.

4.3.1 Socio-cultural Factors

The interview results with the participants of this study show that among the core factors that have contributed to the prevalence of sexual harassment is the long-entrenched culture and values of the larger society which places women inferior to their men's counterparts and submissive to the stakes and demands of male's sexual interest. The interviews with the female students show that the traditional gender relationship between men and women can be taken as the main factor behind the prevalence of sexual harassment in the campus. A female student said:

Male and female students are not equally treated on the campus. The mentality that the female is inferior to the male is inculcated in the mind of some teachers. Most of the teachers do not accept the equality of men and women. For example, I had a teacher who always discusses male superiority over female in the classroom. No one was brave enough to criticize his ideas as everyone understands its consequences. Moreover, the numbers of women's academic and administrative staffs are relatively low. It is difficult to find women at the top leadership of the university. Everything has been manipulated by a male (Informant 10: female student).

The above student's view and the interview with other participants confirmed that the female

students are victims of the traditional gender relationships that have been entrenched on some teachers of the campus. As one of the coordinators of the gender office comments, “without changing the attitudes of the university community about gender equality, it is difficult to address sexual harassment”. Moreover, the above student’s view that female staff has outnumbered by male counterparts is also confirmed by the gender policy and strategy of the institution. For example, all four top-level university positions are held by men while out of 68 middle-level positions, only two are topped by women (Mekelle University, 2015a). Furthermore, out of the 1522 total instructors of the university, only 10.7% are female, i.e. 163 in number (Ibid). Likewise, O’Hare & O’Donohue (1998) argue that the larger ratio of males to females in any organization contributes to the existence of sexual harassment. Similarly, the large academic staff imbalance of men and women in the campus can also contribute to the prevalence of sexual harassment.

More specifically, one of the gender office coordinators suggests that sexual harassment that exists on the campus is the real reflection of what is happening in the larger society. Another gender office coordinator reflects a similar view that most of the teachers come from the rural regions of Ethiopia and they bring with them a culture of patriarchal relationship that causes sexual harassment. Interview with the gender office coordinators suggests that most of the teachers have less been exposed to modern ideas of gender equality. In most rural parts of Ethiopia, the status of women is low. This is because, the patriarchal mentality is highly engraved in the society that places women to subordinate socio-cultural position, using religion and culture as an excuse (Deyassa, et al., 2010).

According to Paludi, et al. (1991), Hemalatha and Sundaresh (2013) and Vohlídalová (2015), sexual harassment occurs when the members of the society brought sexually stereotyped thinking with them into organizations. The advocates of the socio-cultural theory state that social and cultural norms and values of the societies which emphasize the superiority of male create an environment for the prevalence of sexual harassment in any organization.

4.3.2 Abuse of Power

In addition to the socio-cultural factors of sexual harassment, results of interviews with female students who participated in this study show that unlimited and absolute power of the teachers contributes to the prevalence of sexual harassment. Interviews with the gender office director, coordinators and female student union representatives also confirmed that some

teachers misuses of their institutional power to sexually harass female students. Likewise, Vohlídalová (2011) argue that the power imbalance in higher education is magnified by the age difference between male teachers and female students, as the latter are usually younger and less experienced. Similarly, the interviews with gender office coordinators indicate that the age difference between teachers and female students also influence the victims and contribute to the pervasiveness of the problem. A 19-year-old female student shared her trouble she has undergone:

It is the unlimited power of the male teachers that contribute a lot to the prevalence of sexual harassment. The male teachers are more privileged and powerful than any other staff. Everyone is afraid of the teachers. They expect complete obedience of the students. Moreover, there is a long network of the relationship among the teachers, which contributes a lot to the prevalence of the problem (Informant 4: female student).

In an organizational theory, sexual harassment is the direct result of misuse of formal or organizational power to harass these at the bottom of institutional structure (Vohlídalová, 2011, Paludi, et al., 1991; Sundaresh and Hemalatha, 2013; O'Hare and O'Donohue, 1998; Dekker and Barling, 1998). Moreover, Vohlídalová (2011) argue that sexual harassment begins where one actor who is in an organization higher position (in this case the teacher) applies his dominance over another actor in a lower position (students). Research by Ogunbameru (2006) and Okoroafor, et al. (2014) finds out that misuse of academic power contributes to the exacerbation of sexual harassment in higher education settings.

4.3.3 Weak Institutional Responses

The existence of swift and active institutional response is basic to minimize, prevent and eradicate sexual harassment in higher education. In the case of Mekelle University, interviews with the female students suggest that the institutional response to solve or address the problem is not swift. The implication is that the lack of immediate institutional response exacerbates the prevalence and magnitude of sexual harassment. One of the manifestations of the weak institutional responses is the lack of proper punishment against perpetrators. All research participants of this study agree that the perpetrators of sexual harassment were not properly punished for involving in such kinds of misconduct. The university was not taking appropriate administrative measures against the perpetrators. As one of the female students similarly

claimed, “even though the university knows the identity of perpetrators (as most of them repeatedly committed such crime), they are not getting proper punishments” (Informant 7: female student). The absence of proper punishment creates a room for potential offenders to repeat the mistakes of the perpetrators. Furthermore, one of the gender office coordinators said, “although there are properly worded policies put in place in the institution, the enforcement process is not promising (Interview with gender office coordinator). The above respondent’s view is also confirmed by other gender office coordinators and director that the university’s code of conduct is not properly implemented to address the problem.

Generally, the absence of effective institutional response is another contributory factor to the prevalence of sexual harassment in the campus. Similar studies conducted in Nigeria by Arulogun, et al. (2013) and Taiwo, et al. (2014) concludes that lack of strong sanctions against the perpetrator exacerbates the pervasiveness of the sexual harassment, despite the existing policies against it.

4.3.4 Lack of Awareness about the Policies

The interviews with all participants of this study show that the lack of sufficient knowledge and understanding about sexual harassment policies and structures can be taken as another reason which contributes to the pervasiveness of the problem. This lack of awareness also prevents female students from formally reporting their sexual harassment experience. One of the indicators of this argument is that most female students of the campus become victims of sexual harassment during the first year period. At that time, the students hardly know the university life in general and how to deal with sexual harassment in particular. The interviews with the gender office coordinators suggest that most female students are not well-aware of the policies and strategies of sexual harassment. Because of the lack of the awareness, the perpetrators took advantage and deliberately harass the female students. Likewise, research by Vohlídalová (2011) entitled, ‘the perception and construction of sexual harassment by students of Czech University’ indicates that the lack of awareness and information about the problem as well as the policies and strategies is among the major factors for intensifying the existence of the problem in educational settings.

In general, the incident of sexual harassment against female students is not the result of a single factor or reason, rather multiple factors contribute to the pervasiveness of the problem in the campus. Most importantly, socio-cultural factors such as patriarchal thinking, weak

institutional responses, abuse of organizational power by the male lecturers and lack of sufficient awareness about the policies are among the major factors that contribute to the prevalence of sexual harassment on the campus.

4.4 Female Students' Coping Strategies

There are many coping strategies of sexual harassment that victims choose in the educational settings. The choice of these coping strategies varied significantly depending on the nature and severity of harassment, gender relation, and power differential (Malamut and Offermann, 2001). Joubert (2009) identifies two general ways which victims use to deal with sexual harassment, i.e. formal and informal coping strategies. Formal coping strategies focus on using the institutional policies, procedures and mechanisms while informal approaches consist of counseling or mediation which intends to lay off the incident, without punishing the perpetrator (Ibid).

Based on the results of interviews, female students' choice of coping strategies is mainly determined by the gender and power relationship between perpetrators and victims. The socio-cultural theory argues that one of the core factors that hinders eradicating sexual harassment can be the gender ideology which normalizes the problem (Vohlídalová, 2015). The implication of this view is that normalization of sexual harassment due to cultural pressures of the larger society highly influences the female students' option to deal with the problem. The norms and values of the larger society mainly determine the female students' preferences of coping strategies. In addition, the organizational theory argues that the hierarchical power of the perpetrators can prevent the victims from institutionally addressing their sexual harassment cases (Paludi, et al., 1991; Sundaresh and Hemalatha, 2013). Based on the results of my analysis, there are two ways of coping strategies that have been employed by the victims, i.e. direct and indirect ways. Direct coping strategies are the most rarely used ways victim chooses, which mainly follow the formal or institutional mechanisms. The indirect ways are the most common form of sexual harassment coping strategies employed by the female students.

4.4.1 Indirect Coping Strategies

Indirect coping strategies are mainly the result of the female students' difficulty of reporting their sexual harassment to the gender office and/or the police. There are multiple kinds of indirect coping strategies that have been employed by the female students. In this regard, a gender office director commented that many female students opted to suffer in silence than to report. Interviews with the female students and gender office coordinators also show that normalization of sexual harassment is common among the female students. Most forms of sexual harassment are perceived normal by the female students. This strategy is primarily employed for verbal forms of sexual harassment. This indicates that the nature of sexual harassment determines the female students' choice of coping strategies. The gender and power relationship pressured most female students to perceive different kinds of sexual harassment as normal and acceptable. Likewise, research by Vohlídalová (2015) disclosed that normalization of sexual harassment can be encountered most often in cases of verbal harassment, which are depicted as something common. Research by Okoroafor, et al. (2014) also identifies silence due to societal pressure to secrecy as among the major reaction of the female students in the Nigerian higher education system. Cairns (1997) also argue that normalization of sexual harassment has been the results of societal pressure to accept the misconduct as acceptable because women have learned to accept stereotyped gender relationship.

Apart from normalizing of sexual harassment, some female students opted to leave the campus, instead of reporting to the gender office or the police. One of the former female students said that after having repeatedly experienced sexual harassment, she opted to leave the campus. She furthered recounted:

After the teacher repeatedly refused to submit my grade following my rejection to go out with him, I left the college campus. Following my department head's deterrence and warning not to go to further procedure regarding my harassment report, my parents' advice forced me to leave the campus (Informant 11: female student).

Similarly, interviews with the gender office coordinators and female student union representatives confirmed such experiences. The decision to leave the institution has primarily been taken by the female students who continually became the victims of sexual harassment.

Lack of effective institutional responses to address their problems can be taken among the contributory factors in the female students' choice of leaving the institution.

Confrontation with the perpetrators was another sexual harassment coping strategy that has been employed by the female students. Unlike normalization and withdrawing from the academic institution, confrontation has been a very risky coping strategy for the victims of sexual harassment. This is because the perpetrators held more physical and organization power than the victims. Female student interviewees revealed that confrontation with the perpetrators has been observed only in the most extreme cases. As one of the gender office coordinators claimed, "confrontations are mainly common in severe forms of sexual harassment". The above view of the gender office indicates that the severity of the problem can influence the female students' choice of coping strategy. A third-year female student from the College of Business and Economics recalled her first-year experience:

After the perpetrator withholds my grade, I immediately showed up at his office and warned him to submit. He refused to do so and I could not control my emotion and insulted him and he did likewise. Finally, I informed the situation to my father. My father is a top-level military officer. He immediately discussed the situation with the department head. After a while, my department head informed me that my grade has been submitted to the department (Informant 8: female student).

This female student's experience shows that parent's social class has influenced her coping strategy, confronting the teacher. The interview with all female students further shows that such kinds of confrontation between teachers and female students are mainly observed during the last grade submission period. Nevertheless, confrontation with the perpetrators is a rare incident since the male teachers held more cultural and organizational power than the female victims. A similar research by Arulogun, et al. (2013) and Vohlídalová (2015) disclosed that confrontations are among the coping strategy employed by the female students. But, the case in Mekelle University may be different since very few female students are courageous enough to choose confrontation as a coping strategy due cultural and institutional pressures. Interview results with the female students show that the severity of the consequences of confrontation with teachers discourages many victims to use this approach to deal with sexual harassment.

Dropping a course taught by the perpetrator has been another strategy employed by the female students. The core purpose of such strategy is to immediately avoid the perpetrator. An

interview with the gender office coordinators revealed that there are some female students who decided to drop the perpetrator's course. Such kinds of incidents have primarily been observed in common courses that offer to all students since there are opportunities to retake the courses with other teachers. In this regard, one female student depicted her experience:

After I became a victim of sexual harassment at the beginning the semester, I decided to drop the course and took it the next semester. I had already heard a lot about such behavior of the teacher and decided to drop it. At that time, I didn't have another choice but to immediately avoid the perpetrator (informant 1: female student).

Similarly, the interview results with female students show that sitting for a re-exam for a course which has purposely been given undeserved low-grade by the perpetrator is another coping strategy. The interviews with gender office coordinators and female student union representatives also confirmed this finding. The choice to take re-exams by female students is the result of the students' option to accept the perpetrator's grading decision. There were also exceptional incidents in which female students asked to transfer to another department. Such incidents have been commonly observed among first-year female students. Avoiding the perpetrator is their major reason for the choice of such coping strategy.

The most rarely used coping strategy that has been employed by female students was accepting the sexual request and propositions of the perpetrators. Interviews with female students suggest that there were very few female students who accepted the sexual requests of the perpetrators and so were rewarded with the best grades. One of the female students' claims:

There are very few female students who hardly attended classes and did continuous assessments and group assignments, but finally, scored the best grades. They became intimate friends with the perpetrators (Informant 4: female student).

Most interviewees agreed that each perpetrator was taking advantage of the few female students' poor academic ability to fulfill his sexual desire. However, accepting the sexual harassment propositions is a very rare incident in the campus.

Generally, to cope with sexual harassment, most female students choose indirect approaches.

Silence, normalization, confrontations, dropping of courses offered by the perpetrators and sitting for re-exams, as well as accepting sexual propositions are some of the indirect coping strategies employed by the female students. The implication of this finding is that the female students' difficulty of following the legal or formal procedures exacerbated the pervasiveness of sexual harassment. Likewise, research conducted in Puerto Rico suggests that the female students use internally-focused responses more frequently than formal and institutional strategies to deal with sexual harassment (Rodriguez, 2010). A similar study by Popoola (2008) indicates that normalizing of sexual harassment is the most preferred coping strategy by the female students than the institutional mechanisms. O'toole and Schiffman (1997) also argue that the indirect coping strategies of sexual harassment such as normalization of the experience are the most common coping strategy, but it can only stop the immediate harassment of the victims and it cannot be regarded as an effective and long-term solution to the problem. Without encouraging the female student to use the formal procedures, it is difficult to give a long-term solution to the problem.

4.4.2 The Direct Coping Strategies

Direct coping strategies have been focused on the formal policies, procedures and mechanisms to address sexual harassment. In this study, the interview results show that very few female students brought their sexual harassment experience either to gender office or the police. Most female students hardly follow formal procedures in dealing with sexual harassment. This indicates the existence of a gap between the institutional mechanisms to address the problem and the female students' coping strategies. An interview with the gender office director revealed that from September 2014 up to January 2016, only very few numbers of female students report to gender office. The gender office hasn't had statistical data of the reported sexual harassment cases. But, this does not show sexual harassment to be a rare incident on the campus. Rather, it seems to show that the preference of the female students was indirect coping strategies. One female student who managed to report said, "with the help of my roommates and former Civics and Ethical studies instructor, I managed to report my sexual harassment experience both to the gender office and to the police" (Informant 12: female student). In addition, an interview with the member of the discipline committee shows that the female students' opted to report to the police than to gender office.

Generally, despite the existence of formal or institutional mechanisms to address sexual harassment, very few female students managed to bring their cases to the concerned offices.

However, the formal or direct coping strategies are the best means to address the incident of sexual harassment since they impose proper sanctions against perpetrators and informs potential offenders to learn from their mistakes. Indirect coping strategies are mainly purposed at avoiding the perpetrators or giving an immediate response to the incident, rather than thinking long term solution. The difficulty of female students to formally address their sexual harassment shows the existence of a gap between the institutional mechanisms and the female students' choice of coping strategies. Likewise, O'toole and Schiffman (1997) argue that the victims of sexual harassment can readily use direct response to their experience if there is proper counseling and supportive supervisors are in place in the institution. However, there is not an appropriate counseling system for the victims of sexual harassment in the institution, which may result in the victims' difficult situation to report.

4.4.3 Reasons for Female Students' Choice of Indirect Coping Strategies

Based on the results the interviews, unbalanced gender and unregulated power relationships as well as the nature or severity of the problem are some of the major factors that determine the female students' choice of coping strategies. The socio-cultural factors such as the values and norms of the larger society mainly influence the way victims choose to deal with sexual harassment. The interview results, thus, suggest that there are different reasons for the female students' difficulty of reporting.

One of the reasons behind the female students' difficulty of reporting can be attributed to fear of revenge possibilities from the perpetrators and his colleagues. The students opted to suffer in silence than face the consequences of reporting. A member of the anti-sexual harassment discipline committee claims their difficulty of reporting to be the reflection of societal pressure to accept the traditional patriarchal system. Likewise, one of the gender office coordinators explains that women cultural influence to accept sexual pressures of men can be one of the reasons behind the female student's preference not to report. Moreover, the unregulated power of the male teachers is another major reason that hinders female students from reporting. More specifically, a female student purports a view:

Fear of a possible revenge from the perpetrator and his colleagues was a barrier to reporting my sexual harassment experience. I observed that male lecturers are not given their due whatsoever involvement in harassment they make and the worst of all, no one stops them from avenging the victims who exposed their

misconducts... such circumstances are silencing the female students or preventing them from taking formal procedures (Informant 1: female student).

The interview results show that the perpetrator teachers make a network that makes it difficult to report because they can all together revenge the female students for taking formal procedure. One of the female students said that after the perpetrator was found guilty and punished, all his colleagues gave me unjustifiably low grades (Informant 12: female student). The implication of such female students' stories is that fear of possible retaliation hinders most victims from following the formal procedures. Research by Ashe (2014) in Ghana disclosed that most female students become victims of revenge and retaliation by the perpetrators after attempting to address their experience through legal means. Bennett, et al. (2007) also identified that the prevalence of fear among the victims to complain publicly about the subjection to sexual harassment is part and parcel of the southern Africa countries higher education system. Similarly, a study that was conducted in Korean universities found that 65 percent of the individual victims did not report mainly because they were afraid of future revenge, which could include being blamed for the occurrence (Joseph, 2015).

Besides, fear of being perceived as making wrong assertions can be a reason which forces many female students not to report. One female student explained:

Fear of being accused of making fabricated accusations was the major reason for not reporting my sexual harassment case. The gender office needs concrete and sufficient evidence or witnesses to file a complaint, which is unmanageable to have it at the incident of sexual harassment that often takes place in the perpetrator's office or in the absence of the witness. I already knew one female student who was condemned because of reporting in the absence of tangible evidence. Learning from that, I preferred not to report (Informant 7: female student).

Interviews with female student union coordinators also confirmed the above student's view that they were being blamed for the inability to bring tangible evidence and this discourages the possibility of reporting sexual harassment cases. The interview with the participants of the study also shows that the lack of concrete and reliable evidence or witness about the incident of sexual harassment is another major challenge for female students, which hindered them from filing a formal complaint against the perpetrators. An interview with all research

participants indicate that most victims of sexual harassment found it difficult to provide concrete evidence to the gender office since most of the incidents occurred in the teachers' office. In other words, the incidents of sexual harassment occurred suddenly when the female students show up at the teachers' office. In such situation, it is difficult for the victims to collect concrete evidence or witnesses about the situation so as to file complaints. The female students' lack of concrete evidence to file complaints is mainly the result of the nature of sexual harassment in campus, which is occurring in the teachers' office. This lack of concrete or tangible evidence to file complaints contributes a lot to the students' fear of being perceived as making wrong assertions. In addition, the power relationship between male teachers and female students pressures the female students to develop fear of perceived making untrue accusations against perpetrators. An interview with one of the female students' union coordinator states:

Most female students are aware of the consequences of reporting their sexual harassment experiences. They exactly know the consequences of reporting are more severe than the sexual harassment experience itself. The teachers' power is unquestionable. The university cares too much about the pride of the male lecturers than the suffering of female students (Interview with female student union coordinators).

The above female student view and other participants show that the male teachers' unregulated institutional power also determines and influences the female students' choice of coping strategies. Another female student union coordinator claims:

The female students who experienced sexual harassment are condemned by some university community members for speaking up about their experiences. Most of the allegations are considered dishonest and untrue by these university community members (interview with the female student union coordinator).

The indication of the above respondent's view is that the fear of being perceived as making a wrong assertion creates a difficulty among the female students to report.

Moreover, female students' interview results show that lack of confidence in the institutional mechanisms to address sexual harassment appears to be a reason that hinders the victims from reporting. Even though the institution has policies and implementation mechanism about

sexual harassment, most of the female students who participated in the study noted that they have no confidence in the university's commitment regarding solving the problem. A first-year female student reflected her experience:

I have no trust in the institutional ways of addressing the problem. I am sure that the university knows the perpetrators since most of them repeatedly engage in such kinds of misconducts. Furthermore, the university administration thinks that publicizing such problems would negatively affect its reputation. Even worse, the university tries to normalize the problem, by behaving as if nothing happens (Informant 2: female student).

This view and other opinions of participants show that the university's commitment to address the problem is weak enough, making the victims develop low trust to follow formal coping strategies. The female students' view is supported by one of the gender office coordinators who commented, "most victims did not report because they believed nothing would come out of it. They have been convinced by the situation in the campus that reporting their sexual harassment could bring further problems". Similarly, a member of the anti-sexual harassment discipline committee said:

Most of the time, it is easier for the female students to contact the police than using institutional structures to deal with sexual harassment. This is especially true if it involves male academic staff as the perpetrator. This indicates the female students have no trust with the university system. Without winning the confidence of the female students, it is very difficult to address the problem (Interview with a member of the anti-sexual harassment discipline committee).

The implication of the above respondents' views is that the existence of ineffective institutional responses can be taken as a core reason behind female students' low confidence in the organizational structure to address the problem.

Besides, female students believe that they have no confidence in the institution regarding the confidentiality of their cases. They want their sexual harassment handling procedure to be done secretly and without the awareness of the university community members. However, they are afraid that the institution can in some way leak the information to the perpetrators before the discipline committee starts to examine the allegation.

In addition, the interview with all respondents shows that there is a huge awareness gap regarding the sexual harassment policies and strategies. The female students do not seem to have an awareness of the specific contents of the code of conduct, and they also hardly attend any sorts of awareness raising training on the issue. One female student commented, “I was not aware of the policies on how to deal with sexual harassment” (Informant 6: female student). The implication of the lack of sufficient knowledge of sexual harassment policies and strategies is that it hinders the victims to use formal procedure.

Interview results also show that normalization of sexual harassment by the victims does not motivate the female students to report the cases. The normalization of sexual harassment by the victims mainly occurs as a result of the widely accepted belief in secrecy as far as sex-related issues are concerned. Moreover, the female students’ low confidence in the institutional mechanisms can be a contributing factor to the normalization of sexual harassment. A survey by the Association of American Universities across 27 higher educational institutions indicate that the most common reason for not reporting the incidents of sexual harassment was that it was not considered a serious problem (Association of American Universities, 2015). However, Mekelle University’s case is different from the American context in that the larger society seems to be still influenced by patriarchal culture that may push female students to normalize sexual harassment.

In addition, interviews with respondents suggest that factors like fear, embarrassment, nervousness and lack of confidence are among the major reasons behind some female students’ difficulty of reporting. For example, one female interview participant said, “I was totally nervous and shy to report. Sexual harassment is not an issue that can be discussed freely with other people” (Informant 10: female student). The socio-cultural factors force most victims of sexual harassment not to mention the issue publicly. As one of the gender office coordinator claims, “we have no a culture that encourages people to openly discuss about sex and related issues”. The implication of this view is that most victims found it difficult to openly file a complaint against the perpetrators. This is due to the cultural pressure of the female students not to discuss such issues in public.

The interviews with the female students suggest that the victims find it easier to discuss their sexual harassment cases with their best friends than to the concerned offices. This finding seems in conformity with a study conducted in Nigeria concludes that most victims of sexual harassment feel comfortable to disclose their experience of sexual harassment to their close

friends rather than the school authority (Taiwo, et al., 2014). Likewise, Bennett, et al. (2007) disclosed that the victims' willingness to talk openly to the school authority about their personal experiences of sexual harassment was rare in the southern Africa countries universities.

A gender office coordinator interview participant revealed that the feeling of self-blaming has been observed on some female students, which hinders the victims from reporting their harassment cases. Such self-blaming behavior of some female students can be taken as a direct reflection of the status of women in the society. They have been socialized in a way to accept or normalize any kinds of sexual pressure from the men. In relation to this, O'toole and Schiffman (1997) argue that low self-esteem and self-blame can prevent most victims from directly dealing with sexual harassment experience in some manner. However, in the case of Mekelle University, the socio-cultural factors like patriarchal thinking and organizational factors such as power differentials contributes to the female students' tendency to self-blame.

In short, female students' choice of the indirect coping strategies is largely influenced by the societal pressure to normalize and accept harassment. The unregulated and unbalanced power of the male teachers also determines the female students' choice of coping strategies. Fear of revenge by the perpetrators and lack of trust in the institutional mechanisms are the two most common reasons for the majority of female students to deal with the problem through indirect approaches. Fear of revenge by the perpetrators largely emanated due to patriarchal thinking and the hierarchical power relationship between perpetrators and victims. Moreover, fear of being perceived as making dishonest accusations, low awareness of how to deal with the problem and inability to provide concrete evidence are among the core reasons behind female student option to deal with the problem through indirect strategies.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

This study sought to explore institutional policies and female students' coping strategies on sexual harassment. To achieve this purpose, the study employed qualitative research approach. The university policies and female students' coping strategies were examined in light of the socio-cultural and organizational theories of sexual harassment.

Mekelle University has been using two different ways to address sexual harassment. Primarily, the university formulated and adopted two successive policies, i.e. the gender policy and strategy as well as the anti-sexual harassment code of conduct. Apart from these two policies, the university organized structures and assigned people to address the problem. The gender policy and strategy have been adopted to promote gender equality in the institution through changing the attitudes of the university community about the equality of men and female. The policy recognizes sexual harassment as one of the challenges for promoting gender equality. However, the gender policy does not sufficiently discuss the issues of sexual harassment, which necessitated the formulation of the anti-sexual harassment code of conduct. The gender policy, though, can be taken as a general framework for the formulation of other specific regulations such as the anti-sexual harassment code of conduct.

The anti-sexual harassment code of conduct has been implemented with a clearly worded aim of preventing, minimizing and eradicating sexual harassment. The code clearly and strongly postulates a zero tolerance statement against sexual harassment. The code also comprehensively defines the act of sexual harassment, which is an important step to address the problem. However, the similarity of the code's definition with different other definitions that have been developed in other countries indicates that the university definition of sexual harassment is not contextualized, taking into account Ethiopian cultural context. Moreover, the forms of sexual harassment are not supported by practical examples, which can be taken as an important element to avoid confusions and uncertainties about what constitutes the misconduct. In addition, the process of policy making of the code of conduct has been criticized by the university community as male dominated, exclusive and non-participatory. Most importantly, the university does not properly and sufficiently communicate and disseminate the code to the university community, which makes difficult to create an

institutional culture where sexual harassment cannot be tolerated.

The code of conduct also clearly postulates the complaints handling procedures. The victims can file complaints either to the gender office or student support service directorate. However, the code doesn't fix time bar for lodging complaints, which is vital for prompt and impartial examination and decision. The code also states that any allegation of sexual harassment and retaliation must be investigated promptly, thoroughly and impartially. Still, it does not clearly show how the investigation of alleged sexual harassment will be conducted independently and freely. As it is highly imperative for any sexual harassment policy to set forth sanctions, the code also clearly states different forms of punishments against sexual harassment perpetrators. The sanctions range from warning to the termination of employment agreement. Nevertheless, the proposed sanctions are not clearly and precisely attached to the specific forms of sexual harassment. In general, the university's code of conduct entails the core elements of any properly worded sexual harassment policy, though it lacks depth and context on the nature and forms of the misconduct.

Apart from the formulation and implementation of sexual harassment policies, the university primarily organized the gender office to implement the strategies. The office is mandated to facilitate the overall sexual harassment handling procedure. Together with student support service directorate, the office is mandated to organize an anti-sexual harassment discipline committee with a responsibility to investigate any allegations of sexual harassment. However, the code does not show how the office and the committee will work together on the specific aspects of the sexual harassment handling procedures. Besides, it is not clear how the committee members will be elected and what specific qualification is required.

The gender office is also responsible for raising the awareness of the university community about sexual harassment policies and complaints handling procedures. Nevertheless, the awareness raising activities of the office are not effective enough to attract the interest of the university community, especially female students. In this regard, much work is needed to comprehensively disseminate the code and inform the university community about the content of the policies. In addition, the gender office coordinators have not taken sufficient training about the specific aspects of the policies and complaints handling procedures. Moreover, the female students' awareness about the existence and function of the gender office is minimal, which hinders the office work to address the problem. Apart from the gender office, the female students' union is organized to alleviate the female students challenge on the campus,

primarily the prevalence of sexual harassment. However, the union is not well-organized in terms of trained personnel and financial or material independence. Besides, the interviews with female student union representatives suggest that lack of coordination has largely been observed between the gender office and the union.

Despite the existing policies and structures to address the problem, the interview result with respondents show that sexual harassment is pervasive in the campus. The unwelcome sexual proposition of female students by male teachers is the most common forms of sexual harassment. However, most forms of verbal harassment hardly perceived as sexual harassment by the female students. This indicates the existence of an awareness gap of the female students regarding what constitutes sexual harassment. In addition, interview results of the female students show that sexual harassment causes psychological consequences on the victims such as hopelessness, insecurity, fear, frustration, and shame. Moreover, sexual harassment is affecting the female students' academic performance.

Interview with respondents suggests that the existence of stereotyped gender mentality among some members of the academic community contributes to a lot to the prevalence of sexual harassment in the campus. Some male teachers on the campus do not accept the equality of male and female students, which triggers the existence of the problem. Moreover, the unregulated and unbalanced power relationship between the male teachers and female students can be taken as another factor behind the pervasiveness of the problem in the campus. Some teachers use their organizational power to pressure the female students for sexual favors in return for better grades. The two mentioned reasons relate each other and define the nature and causes of sexual harassment in the campus. In addition, the existence of weak institutional responses and lack of sufficient policy awareness exacerbates the prevalence of sexual harassment in the campus.

The interview results with female students also show that the female students opted to deal with the sexual harassment through two different coping strategies. The most rarely chosen coping strategies employed by the female students have been through direct or formal procedures. Very few female students managed to bring their sexual harassment cases to the gender office and/or the police. However, the absence of reported cases does not show that sexual harassment is a rare incident in the campus. Rather, it indicates the preference of the female students to deal with sexual harassment through indirect ways. These female students who managed to report and follow formal procedures have been regretted due to the

consequence of reporting, i.e. retaliation by the perpetrators. The interviews with the participants of this study also show that the female students opted to report to the police, rather than to gender office. This indicates the existence of a huge gap between the institutional policies and structures and the female students' choice of coping strategies. The implication of the existence of such gap between institutional mechanisms and female students' preference of coping strategies is that the victims' institutional confidence to handle sexual harassment is minimal.

In addition, indirect coping strategies are the most commonly used approaches by the female students. To a large extent, most female students opted to stay silent and normalize the incident, rather than to follow formal or institutional procedures. This is due to the stereotyped gender and unregulated power relationship that pressures the female students to perceive different forms of sexual harassment as normal and opted not to report. Moreover, withdrawing the academic institution, sitting for re-exams, transferring to other departments, confrontation of the perpetrators, and accepting the sexual proposition of the perpetrators are some of the female students' choices of coping strategies. The core objective of the female students' choice of indirect coping strategies is to give an immediate response to the incident. The female students' interest in following indirect coping strategies is to avoid the perpetrators, not to go further legal procedures. However, indirect coping strategies are aggravating and reproducing the pervasiveness of sexual harassment as many of the victims opted to stay silent, and the perpetrators are using the victims' silence as an opportunity to repeatedly engage in such misconduct.

In addition, there are different reasons that influence the female students' choice of the indirect approaches, rather than direct mechanisms. To a large degree, the fear of retaliation and the lack of confidence in the institutional structures are the two most dominant factors behind the female student's difficulty of following formal procedures. The female student fear of retaliation by the perpetrators and his colleagues are mainly caused by the unregulated or unbalanced powers of the teachers. The teachers are more powerful than the victims, which force many female students to develop a sense of fear to bring their sexual harassment experience to gender office and/or the police. What makes the problem worse is that there is no appropriate way to control the power of the teachers. Besides, many female students found it very difficult to report their sexual harassment cases due to lack of awareness on how to file formal complaints. This indicates the lack of policy awareness also determines the female

students' choice of coping strategy. In addition, the fear of being perceived of making false allegations and the absence of concrete evidence to file a complaint are among the major reasons behind the female student's difficulty of following direct procedures. All in all, the above-mentioned factors are highly related each other and pressures the female students to react to the incident of sexual harassment indirectly.

Generally, the interviews with female students and other participants show the existence of a gap between what policies of sexual harassment have been enacted and how practically have been perceived and used by the female students. Therefore, it is highly recommended that Mekelle University must be aware of the existence of such gap and implement measures to correct it. More specifically, it is important that the university should conduct a comprehensive survey research to clearly and deeply examine and understand the specific aspects of sexual harassment in the institution. It is highly imperative for Mekelle University to conduct a critical evaluation of the sexual harassment policies as well as the complaints handling procedures.

Suggestions for Further Research

The pervasiveness of sexual harassment in Mekelle University and Ethiopia higher education system demands future researchers to engage more of the following possible research suggestions:

1. National-level studies should be carried out about the overall aspects of sexual harassment in the Ethiopia higher education system.
2. A comprehensive research is also required to be done on the overall status of sexual harassment in Mekelle University. Taking into account the Ethiopia cultural contexts, a research is needed to identify the causes and specific impacts of sexual harassment in Mekelle University.
3. A research should also be conducted on peer sexual harassment on the campus. More specifically, the harassment of female students by the male students needs to be examined, taking into account the Ethiopia cultural contexts. Besides, the sexual harassment of women administrative staff by the top and middle-level university administrators should also be studied.

Generally, as the existence of single research cannot be perceived as sufficient to understand the complex phenomena of sexual harassment, taking Ethiopia cultural context, it is highly recommended for Mekelle University to conduct continuous and long-term studies to monitor

the overall situation of the incident in the institution.

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Appendix 1: Background of Research Participants

Table 1.1: Background of the Respondent (Female Student Research Participants).

No	Name of Informants	Age	Place of Origin	Educational level
1	Informant 1	20	Addis Ababa	2 nd Year
2	Informant 2	18	Dire Dawa	1 st Year
3	Informant 3	21	Mekelle	3 rd Year
4	Informant 4	19	Addis Ababa	2 nd Year
5	Informant 5	18	Desse	1 st Year
6	Informant 6	21	Awasa	3 rd Year
7	Informant 7	20	Addis Ababa	2 nd Year
8	Informant 8	21	Mekelle	3 rd Year
9	Informant 9	20	Adama	2 nd Year
10	Informant 10	19	Awasa	1 st Year
11	Informant 11	20	Mekelle	Withdraw
12	Informant 12	19	Wukro	1 st Year

1.2: Background of Respondent (Gender Office Director, Coordinators and A member of discipline committee)

No	Position
1	Mekelle University Main Campus Gender Office Director
2	Mekelle University, Adi Haki Campus, Gender Office Coordinator
3	Mekelle University, Adi Haki Campus, Gender Office Coordinator
4	Mekelle University, Adi Haki Campus, Gender Office Coordinator
5	Member of Anti-Sexual Harassment Discipline Committee

1.3: Background of Respondent (Female Student Union Coordinators)

No	Responsibility	Age	Educational Level
1	Female Student Union: Coordinator	22	3 rd Year
2	Female Student Union: Coordinator	21	2 nd Year
3	Female Student Union: Coordinator	21	3 rd Year

Appendix 2: Interview Consent Form

I, the undersigned person, have read and understood the research information sheet provided by the researcher. I also have given the opportunity by the researcher to ask any questions related to the study. I also understood that taking part in the stay may include audio recorded, but I was assured by the researcher that my name and address will not be revealed. I also understand that my views, ideas or personal experiences will be quoted in the research. The researcher also clearly informed me that I have a right to withdraw from the study at any time without explaining the reasons.

Signature of the respondent: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 3: The Participants Research Information Sheet

Thank you so much for your consent and time to participate in this study. This Participant Information Sheet will help you decide if you'd like to take part in the study or not. It sets out with the purpose of the study, the benefits of your participation, and the end results of the research. We will go through this information with you and answer any questions you may have. It is not mandatory to decide today whether or not you want to participate in this study. Before you decide you may talk with family and friends about the study. You will be given a copy of both the Participant Information Sheet and the Consent Form.

The purpose of the study is to explore institutional policies and mechanisms as well as the female students coping strategies to deal with sexual harassment. In order to achieve the purpose of the study, interviews will be primarily used. Consequently, the experiences and ideas provided by you will be used only for this research. If you decide to participate in the research, the interview session will be recorded with your consent and the interview will last approximately one hour. For you to take part in the study, the consent form should be signed. All information which will be collected from you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. The detail of how the research will go about, you will be informed orally by the researcher.

Once again, I would like to thank you for agreeing to take part in the study. If you have any question regarding the study, don't hesitate to ask.

Teodros Solomon Bezabeh

Phone: +251920864730

Mail: teodrossolomon@gmail.com or teddy.civics@yahoo.com

Appendix 4: Interview Guide

Interview Guidelines for Victims of Sexual Harassment

- ❖ Site name_____
- ❖ Place_____
- ❖ Date_____

1. How old are you? Tell me about your birthplace?
2. Tell me about your family background? The probe, what was the initial feeling towards life on campus? How is campus life now?
3. What are your views on gender equality? Are male and female students treated equally on campus?
4. What are the main challenges that you encounter as a female student on the campus? How do you cope with these challenges, if any?
5. How will you describe the problem of sexual harassment in the institution? What do you think about the extent of the problem?
6. Have you ever encountered any kind of sexual harassment on campus? If yes, where and when did these incidents happen to you?
7. What do you think are the conditions that contribute to such sexual harassment?
8. Who are the harassers? What happens to the perpetrators?
9. Did you report it? If yes, to whom? If not, why?
10. How confidential and conducive is the atmosphere for victims to report in the institution?
11. How do you perceive the institutional policies and strategies to cope up with sexual harassment in the campus?
12. Do you think that the persons who are handling sexual harassment cases are autonomous and competent? How about the gender office?
13. What challenges have you faced in reporting the case? How do you deal with these challenges?
14. What do you think should be done on the campus to reduce/avoid sexual harassment of female students? What do you think is the best way forward given all challenges of victims of sexual harassment in the campus?
15. Do you think there are some important issues that you would like to add? Do you have

any question? Thank you for granting the interview. I will get back to you for any further clarification.

NB: Not all the above questions may be applicable to all female students.

Interview Guidelines for Gender Office Director, Coordinators, Member of Discipline Committee and Female Students' union coordinators



❖ Site name_____

❖ Place_____

❖ Date_____

1. Can you please give a brief profile of your office?
2. What is the extent of sexual harassment in the institution?
3. How often do you deal with sexual harassment cases in your institution?
4. What do you think are the causes for sexual harassment? Who are the harassers? What happens to the perpetrators?
5. What has been the role of your office in dealing with sexual harassment cases of the institution?
6. Do you have specific strategies to deal with sexual harassment in your institution? If yes, do you think that existing policies are enough to effectively fight sexual harassment in your institution?
7. How were the strategies formulated? Who participates? How will you describe university community, especially female students' knowledge of the sexual harassment strategy that you have?
8. How is sexual harassment cases handled in your institution? How are victims supported by the gender office and all concerned bodies in the institution?
9. What efforts has your office made to satisfy the interests of the victims?
10. What is the expertise of the gender officers and all concerned personalities in charge of sexual harassment cases?
11. Do you have a comprehensive data/statistics on all reported cases of sexual harassment against female students in the university/campus? (*Is it possible to access it?*)
12. As an office, what are the challenges in dealing with sexual harassment against female

students in the institution?

13. What do you think should be done on the campus to reduce/avoid sexual harassment of female students?

14. Do you think there are some important issues that you would like to say about the problem? Thank you for taking your time to answer the questions. I will get back to you if I need any further information.

NB: Not all the above questions may be applicable to all research participants of the study.