

# **Prevention of Sexual Violence developing bystander's responses**

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## **Background**

Sexual violence and particularly sexual harassment have been increasing in Portugal. The use of new technologies, the use of social networks and even the personal contact at school are some of the most commonly used means by offenders. Primary prevention in general, has been described as the best methodology to combat the phenomenon of violence, particularly of this behaviour. Indeed, it has been proved that it might help “shaping” differently new society. Generally, violence prevention programs are directed to youth so that they can learn how to avoid been victims or offenders of such crime. But recently, new researches have proposed to work with bystanders. Bystanders are viewers of violence, who usually don't know how to react in different situations.

## **Aims**

The aim of this communication is to understand if youth are aware of their possible responses when they are put in contact with sexual violence and explore some of the Bystander's responses to primary prevent sexual violence with them.

## **Methods**

A literature review of the already existent bystander's responses will be explored. An online test to youth will be carried to analyse if they would know how to react in specific circumstances. This online questionnaire will be anonymous and confidential.

## **Results**

From these results it is possible to emerge that youth don't, generally, know how to react against sexual violence, and particularly against sexual harassment. From the literature review studied, some activities and polices are already tested, but it is still necessary to develop further this area. The use of social networks is perhaps one of the behaviours that need the most carefully intervention.

## **Discussion**

Projects on violence prevention are usually created and directed to potential victims but it is clear that society could benefit more if it is a program directed to everyone who can watch violence. It is very important to develop work at schools and work with youth these subjects because it is here where the social constructions of femininity and masculinity are learned.

## **Conclusions**

It would be very important to invest more in bystanders programs so that it would be possible

to increase knowledge and awareness on sexual violence between youth, but it is also important to engage professionals so that this work can be sustainable. These programs, should also be concerned with strategies that would motivate and/or increase motivation of bystanders to stop violence in their contexts (schools for example).