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**Correlates of Bystander Intentions to Intervene regarding Sexual Harassment by Relational Distance to Perpetrators in a Jordanian University**

By

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## ABSTRACT

### **Correlates of Bystander Intentions to Intervene regarding Sexual Harassment by Relational Distance to Perpetrators in a Jordanian University**

By Ahad Zwoogar

**Background:** Sexual harassment (SH), defined as discriminating behavior based on a person's sex, causes poor physical and mental health among survivors. During college, women's risk of harassment increases and can impact academic performance. Bystander interventions have shown effectiveness in reducing sexual violence among college students. This study explores students' willingness to intervene to stop SH in a large urban campus in Jordan

**Methods:** A systematic sample of male (n=223) and female (n=568) students attending randomly selected general education classes were surveyed as part of a larger mixed-methods study on SH. Descriptive and multivariate regression analyses examined the associations between helping intentions by relational distance to a group of perpetrators and personal, cultural, and environmental factors.

**Results:** Higher sense of responsibility, knowledge to help a SH survivor, perception of school's ability to handle instances of SH, and wasta (social connections) were associated with students' intention to stop SH when perpetrators are strangers. School connectedness was associated with students' intention to intervene when the perpetrators are friends. Gender inequitable attitudes were negatively associated with students' willingness to intervene.

**Implications:** Interventions designed to promote bystander behavior may need to employ approaches that consider different mediators and address students concerns to intervene based on bystander-perpetrator relationship.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Sexual harassment, can be defined as unwelcomed verbal, non-verbal, and physical sexual advances, causes poor physical and mental health among survivors. It can have negative consequences that impact overall quality of life and well-being (Houle et al., 2011; Wasti et al., 2000). Sexual harassment survivors experience severe withdrawal symptoms and dissatisfaction from their surroundings, which negatively impacts their productivity and performance (NASEM, 2018). Women are more likely to face sexual experiences of harassment and violence than men (V. L. Banyard, Ward, et al., 2007; Reilly et al., 1986). Indeed, various forms of sexual violence are found to disproportionately affect college-aged women and gender minorities (Cantor et al., 2015; L. B. Klein & Martin, 2019). During college, women risk of sexual violence (e.g., , sexual harassment) increases and can result in academic difficulties and poor outcomes (Jordan et al., 2014).

Strategies to end sexual violence have been discussed for years in the literature of violence prevention, but not from the perspective of bystander behavior (V. L. Banyard, 2008). The presence of bystanders, observers of unwelcome or violent behaviors, in violence victimization events is reported to be common and most prevalent at schools (Planty, 2002). In recent years, innovative approaches that hold bystanders accountable for witnessing violent events have been widely studied and implemented across different contexts in the U.S and Europe, particularly on college campuses. These bystander interventions show significant improvements in proactive helping behaviors and attitudes regarding sexual violence (Mujal et al., 2019; Palm Reed et al., 2015), and also contribute to reducing sexual harassment and stalking among college students (Coker et al., 2015).

Early efforts to understand bystander behavior started in 1968 by John Darley and Bibb Latané after the horrific murder of Kitty Genovese in New York City. For an hour, she was repeatedly stabbed and raped before her murderer ran away, while neighbors who witnessed the crime did not act to help (Rentschler, 2011). To understand this bystander effect, a situational model was developed to understand the different stages that bystanders might go through before intervening in emergency situations. This framing has been numerously used in bystander studies; however, it solely focuses on individual-level characteristics and situational factors, whereas



more recent findings call for the application of theoretical frameworks that are inclusive of broader factors that influence helping behaviors in violent events (V. L. Banyard, 2011, 2014).

The present study aims to provide preliminary understanding of factors that might influence bystanders' willingness to intervene in a sexual harassment incident within an Arab university context. Considering a bystander approach to sexual violence interventions in the Arab World could be more effective than traditional programs or campaigns, where publicly perpetrated sexual harassment including sexual comments, stalking, or staring was found to be the most prevalent form of gender-based violence in the region preceded by intimate partner violence (UN Women & Promundu, 2017).

This study adds to the literature by filling the gap in bystander studies that lack integrative theoretical approaches to understand bystander behavior on college campuses. It uses the Theory of Triadic Influence to explore the possible factors that contribute to students willingness to intervene in sexual harassment situations. It is also the first to address bystander interventions as an alternative approach for sexual harassment prevention in an Arab context. And it provides unique insights into helping behaviors and the multitiered streams of influence in preventing unwelcomed sexual instances.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### Overview of Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment (SH) is a pandemic that is present in societies all over the world. It is a form of SV and more broadly considered a form of gender-based violence (GBV), which is commonly defined as:

*“Any harmful acts that are perpetrated due to socially ascribed (i.e. gender) differences between males and females. It includes acts that inflict physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion, and other deprivations of liberty...”* (IASC, 2015)

However, definitions of SH vary and are often subjective and situation dependent. Examples of what might be considered SH include a range of moderate to extreme cases of unwelcomed verbal or physical acts. The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) recognized that European and international legal documents suggest that SH “... constitutes a breach of the principle of equal treatment between men and women and its practical realisation, and is therefore recognised as discrimination on the grounds of sex” (FRA, 2014). Although this conceptualization might set a common ground for discussions around SH, due to the to the diversity of social and cultural norms and attitudes, it remains broad and imprecise.

Researchers acknowledge that the absence of universal acts and definitions of SH limits our ability to quantify the prevalence and estimates of SH. For example, in the world’s largest survey on violence against women, participants were asked about their own SH experiences using scenarios such as touching, hugging, kissing, intrusive comments on physical appearance, inappropriate staring, sexual messages, and more serious scenarios such as being forced to watch pornographic materials (FRA, 2014). Other studies might use less serious and implicit scenarios that can be understood differently by participants and thus may not capture comparable experiences of SH. Moreover, factors such as study designs, diversity and size of samples, awareness of the issue, and reporting procedures also contribute to data variability (Hlavka, 2014; L. B. Klein & Martin, 2019; Mellgren

et al., 2018; Runtz & O'Donnell, 2003). Thus, providing statistical estimates of various unwanted sexual contact in one context may not be accurate or generalizable to other contexts.

SH affects survivors' quality of life including their physical and mental well-being (Houle et al., 2011; Wasti et al., 2000). Women are more likely to experience sexual instances of harassment and violence than men (V. L. Banyard, Ward, et al., 2007; Reilly et al., 1986). Such experiences promote their feelings of discomfort, fear of rape, depression, and body shame (Apell et al., 2019; Fairchild & Rudman, 2008). Additionally, survivors' opportunities for uninterrupted educational and career pathways are impacted. For example, studies that have been conducted in the U.S and internationally show that SH survivors experience great withdrawal symptoms and dissatisfaction from their work or educational environments, and that can have a negative impact on their productivity and performance (National Academies of Sciences, 2018; Wasti et al., 2000).

## **Sexual Harassment in the Arab World**

Cases of harassment and violence that take place in crowds or in front of witnesses have been documented across all Arab countries throughout the years (e.g., Abdelmonem, 2015; Amnesty, 2015; Chafai, 2017; Jessa, 2017; Padania, 2006). Additionally, social and traditional media platforms are populated with stories of SH survivors who demand laws and policies that criminalize harassers (e.g., Ahmen, 2019; Whitman, 2014). Where similar to SH movements that took off on social media in North America and other regions around the world, Arabs have also raised their voices about SH in their societies. In 2016, Wba3dein, a large campaign was released in Jordan to address the issue of SH and raise awareness of its consequences in the society. The campaign also targeted gaps in existing laws, policies, and services that are supposed to protect SH survivors (Hamoudah, 2016). Additionally, the social media hashtag, JordanSpeaksUp, gained popularity among Jordanians in the region in 2019 after the release of a documentary that brought SH survivors' stories to the light. Although supportive reactions were prevalent, producers of the documentary faced backlash claiming fabrication of the SH stories sent by survivors (Al-Sa`di, 2019).

It is commonly perceived by the public that a woman's appearance in public drives men to perpetrate SH. A woman's choice of clothing, tone of voice, and smell of perfume are usually the first points of discussion among the public regarding an SH incidence. These attitudes and beliefs are often supported by social traditions and religious proclamations that create a contemptuous image of women in the Arab world (Abu Qumsan, 2009). For example, although principles of religions do not support nor justify SH, religious leaders and Sheikhs have always held women as being mostly responsible for inappropriate sexual behaviors committed by men. The chair of the Sister's Arab Forum for Human Rights states that SH takes place even in extremely conservative communities where women's appearance in public is strongly restricted (Abu Qumsan, 2009). Therefore, justifications that blame women for harassment are invalid and cannot be the root causes of SH. It is, indeed, the societal norms that have been shaped over the years that play a major role at promoting for or restricting SH behaviors. Therefore, effective interventions and SH prevention programs must consider interactions occurring between norms and behaviors.

Although there is a global lack of evidence on bystanders' presence in violent events, such as SH and other forms of violence generally, documented and recorded incidents indicate that passive bystanders are indeed common. A report by the U.S Department of Justice concludes that bystanders are present in more than half of violent crimes, including sexual assault (Planty, 2002). In an Arab context, there also seem to be an absence of literature or reports focused on bystanders. Fortunately, traditional media publications, social media, and a few studies on SV have archived some evidence that lightly address the issue of passive bystanders. Some records go back to the 1990s, when a woman was gang-raped in a public bus station in Egypt. Her case was dismissed regardless of the substantial number of bystanders that witnessed the crime (Joseph et al., 2005). Resources mention that the judge blamed the woman for not wearing the *hijab* (Sepulveda, 2015), and others said that the woman's family was blamed for allowing her to step outside the house unattended (Joseph et al., 2005). Another incidence was video-taped in 2014, when a group of men harassed two women near a university campus in Jordan while bystanders and security personnel did not intervene to help the survivors (Alghad, 2014). Similarly, in 2019, two women in Egypt were physically and verbally harassed in public, by tens of men and in front of cameras that recorded the incidence before a bystander hardly broke into the crowd to help. The case was later waived by the survivors (SkyNews, 2020).

Recently, numerous cases of publicly perpetrated SH incidents are being recorded and reported by survivors and bystanders (*Rainbow*, 2017; *RT Arabic*, 2019), but there are a few to none formal statements that explain the procedures of filing SH complaints for survivors, or even the legal consequences or charges that might face perpetrators. In addition, even though reactions on social media had different views, in all cases, rape myths were prevalent and the survivors were harshly blamed for not wearing the *hijab*, their choice of clothes, and for being in a "wrong" place at the "wrong" time of day. Passive bystander behaviors were prevalent in all previously stated cases, regardless of the size or number of witnesses. These behaviors reflect the work and school environments, and thus, immediate interventions to protect vulnerable populations from SV and harassment are immensely needed.

## **Sexual Harassment on College Campuses**

SH has been increasingly reported and witnessed in college campuses worldwide. Female students' in the US are estimated to be at higher risk for sexual victimization during college years (Reilly et al., 1986). In the middle east, particularly in Jordan, college students have continuously demanded policy makers and leaders to set laws that protect women who are mostly affected by harassment (JNCW, 2017). This also indicates the existence of SH as a problem that face women in educational settings in the region. Indeed, a lawyer from the Jordanian Women Union has stated that SH is not uncommon on college campuses and that she has worked with at least 180 cases in one year (Fanar, 2015).

Males tend to score higher in attitudes and beliefs that support SV perpetration, where more than half of a college campus males were found to be accepting of rape myths such as “When girls go to parties wearing slutty clothes, they’re asking for trouble” (McMahon, 2010). And it is no surprise that perpetrators of SV acts tend to be males, who are responsible for most SV cases on college campuses (Thompson et al., 2011; White & Smith, 2004). While survivors’ academic performance, and future educational and career opportunities can be impacted as a result of victimization (Jordan et al., 2014), perpetrators, on the other hand, might escape punishment and continue committing acts of violence during college and beyond, especially as survivors are less likely to report their own experiences of harassment (Hlavka, 2014).

SH and violence cases are naturally sensitive, more so in conservative societies. In the U.S, it is considered one of the most underreported crimes, where survivors tend to face many barriers and constraints that discourage them from reporting their own experiences (Sable et al., 2006). Examples of that include feelings of shame and guilt, fear of social criticism and judgement, and lack of awareness on reporting procedures and helping resources (Hlavka, 2014; Sable et al., 2006; C. Spencer et al., 2017). In addition, a forthcoming study from a Jordanian campus showed that avoidance of social consequences that might include a girl’s own reputation or that of her family or tribe can be strong barriers to reporting instances of SH (Bergenfeld et al, under review). Although serious steps are needed to improve reporting conditions for survivors, what is most needed are alternative

approaches that hold bystanders accountable for reporting SV incidents. This can lift pressure of reporting from survivors and contribute to safer college environments. However, more research is needed to mitigate potential risks and unintended consequences that might cause more harm than good to both victims and bystanders.

### **Life Course of Bystander Research**

There is a universal lack of literature on bystanders' role in preventing SV. Even in the U.S and Europe, where most bystander and helping behavior research hails, there is still a limited understanding of how factors influence people's decisions to intervene in different contexts. Early efforts to understand bystander behavior started in 1968 by John Darley and Bibb Latané after the famous horrific murder of Kitty Genovese in the city of New York. For almost an hour, she was repeatedly stabbed and raped before her murderer ran away while neighbors who witnessed the crime did not intervene (Laner, et al., 2001; Rentschler, 2011). This incidence has driven the rise of research on helping behavior, the generation of *the bystander effect* concept (Rendsvig, 2014), and the trending use of terms such as *Pluralistic Ignorance* and *Diffusion of Responsibility* in bystander studies (Fischer et al., 2011). Consequently, Darley and Latané created a situational model that consists of five stages that people go through in order to intervene in emergency situations. It starts with an individual noticing the event, identifying a situation as an emergency, taking responsibility to help, deciding how to help, and then acting to intervene (Latané & Darley, 1970).

The usage of *Pluralistic Ignorance* was first used by the social psychologist, Floyd Allport, in the 1920s (Allport, 1924; Halbesleben & Buckley, 2004). It was defined as occurring when a "majority of group members privately reject a norm, but incorrectly assume that most others accept it, and therefore go along with it" (Duque, 2017; D. Katz et al., 1931). This conceptualization of the decision-making process coupled with the concept of *Diffusion of Responsibility* were used in explaining bystanders' behavior. Whereas in the case of Kitty Genovese, passive bystanders' assumption that others inaction is the norm suppressed any potential for intervention and

encouraged the perception that the situation is not an emergency (Pluralistic Ignorance), other passive bystanders indicated that thinking others will act to help is the reason of their inaction (Diffusion of Responsibility) (Latané & Darley, 1970). However, these explanations of helping behaviors focus on understanding passive bystanders rather than active bystanders (V. Banyard et al., 2018). In recent years, bystander studies have shifted away from solely focusing on passive behaviors and individual-level factors (e.g., Laner, et al., 2001; Rabow et al., 1990) to a broader multifactorial understanding of helping behaviors (V. L. Banyard, 2014).

## **Bystander Interventions**

The presence of bystanders in violence victimization events is reported to be common and most prevalent at schools (Planty, 2002). This might explain the focus of current bystander interventions on students in schools and universities. These programs usually incorporate different methods and strategies that students can adapt to intervene in various incidents, including SV. Regardless of the few number of bystander programs' evaluations, existing literature provide promising results. For example, bystander programs have changed students' attitudes regarding SV (Mujal et al., 2019), increased their likelihood of intervention (Santacrose et al., 2020), improved reporting of actual intervention behaviors (Moynihan et al., 2015), and showed lower rates of SH and stalking victimization and perpetration in college campuses (Coker et al., 2015).

SV programs have treated female students as potential survivors and male students as potential perpetrators (Burn, 2009). Traditionally, these programs focused on self-defense and risk avoidance training (J. Katz & Moore, 2013). Although this approach has shown evidence of reducing SV on college campuses, a study has observed an increase in perpetration rates as a result, particularly among high-risk men (Stephens & George, 2009). Albeit this result cannot be generalizable to all traditional programs, it might provide insights into potential unintended consequences and backlash, and encourage alternative violence prevention approaches that are less intimidating.

Unlike traditional programs, bystander interventions promote and motivate helping behaviors among all trainees, and do not encourage avoidance of risky situations when intervening to stop a violent act is necessary.



These programs tend to change participants' attitudes and stereotypes that might be accepting of SV (i.e., rape myth), and then educate and train them in various scenarios for intervening (Coker et al., 2018; J. Katz & Moore, 2013).

### **Bystander Interventions on College Campuses**

Schools have administered bystander training in various ways and methods through in-person and web-based programs, as well as using filmed scenarios depicting proactive behaviors. Findings show that regardless of the used method, bystander interventions are effective in reducing participants' perpetration of sexually violent acts and increased helping behaviors (Coker et al., 2015; Salazar et al., 2014). For example, Bringing in the Bystander (BitB) is a popular SV prevention program delivered in the U.S, Europe and Australia. Training sessions can range between 90 minutes and 5 hours, depending on the chosen version, and are held in-person over a period of time. Through this program, students gain practical skills and knowledge to safely intervene, either before, during, or after an incidence occurs (Moynihan et al., 2010). At the end, students pledge to be proactive bystanders by committing to various responsibilities that include expressing their own outrage of SV in their communities, talking to other members about SV, interrupting sexist comments, paying attention to calls for help and intervene, and changing personal views or behaviors that contribute to SV (Hamby et al., 2015).

One evaluation of BitB that included a of the racially and ethnically diverse sample found that students' changes in attitudes continued beyond the program period when measured 12 months after the end date (Alison et al., 2014). This study also compared the program between two campuses, one which had more male students than female students. Changes in attitudes were observed among females on both campuses, however, changes in males' attitudes were limited on the male-majority campus. The authors explained this by the possibility that male peer norms have stronger influence on attitudes than the BitB intervention. Other studies that evaluated the effectiveness of BitB since 2007 until recently also found positive and yet different results that varied by gender (e.g., V. L. Banyard et al., 2007; Inman et al., 2018).

Although evaluations of bystander programs are limited in number and scope, results are still essential to inform developers and future research areas. Some studies recommend the implementation of gender-specific programs due to variations in student readiness for change and perceived ability to intervene. For example, male students reported more perceived barriers for intervening in SV situations compared with female students (Carlson et al., 2008; Exner & Cummings, 2011). Males also tend to score higher in rape myth acceptance which is associated with less willingness to intervene (McMahon, 2010), and the situations in which males intervene tend to be different from the situations in which females intervene (V. Banyard & Moynihan, 2011). Although other studies (e.g., Inman et al., 2018) found no differences between the same intervention when conducted in single-sex context compared with mixed-sex, previously stated differences should be considered when deciding the best approaches in bystander interventions.

A systematic review that investigated 59 published studies on bystander interventions grouped proactive behavior factors (non-individual factors) into five primary themes: social norms, sense of community, prosocial modeling, policies and accountability cues, and physical environment (McMahon, 2015). These themes provide an overview of various areas of research surrounding bystander behavior in the context of SV, with some being more popular in studies of college students than others. For example, McMahon argues that although it is evident that the levels of cohesion, connectedness, trust, commitment, social networks among people in a community influence their likelihood to intervene in violent events (Merry, 1981; Sampson et al., 1997) limited studies have investigated these factors in college campuses. With that being said, currently available data indicate that higher measures of sense of community, stronger trust in the school system in addition to higher sense of belonging positively impact students' helping behaviors and intentions to intervene in violent situations on college campuses (V. L. Banyard, 2008; Bennett et al., 2014; Sulkowski, 2011)

McMahon also proposes pro-social modeling of peer educators and popular opinion leaders (POLs) as a future research area for interventions because of their proven influence on student bystander behaviors. For instance, students' interactions with POLs either through formal interventions or through informal social networks (ISN) were associated with less SV in college campuses. Furthermore, other proposed areas of bystander research

include examining students' knowledge of existing policies that prohibit inappropriate and violent sexual acts, and how their awareness of electronic or personnel monitoring systems influence their behaviors (McMahon, 2015).

### **Informal Social Networks and Helping Behavior**

*“In comparison with the intrapsychic traits commonly studied, social network variables reflect directly the links between individuals and the social groups in which they participate. The point is not that individual differences are irrelevant to helping, but that researchers may have spent too much time looking at the “wrong” types of individual difference variables.” (Amato, 1990).*

Social researchers believe that helping behaviors are not only motivated by an individual's interpersonal characteristics. For this reason, the use of comprehensive frameworks have been encouraged in recent years by leading researchers in the field (V. L. Banyard, 2014; McMahon, 2015) as traditional bystander studies have mainly focused on interpersonal and situational characteristics. SV studies found that women's informal social networks can reflect their experiences of SV. These social relationships alone do not determine actions or inactions toward violence, but the social norms embedded within the structure of these relationships is what influence someone's response to SV survivors or perpetrators (R. Klein, 2012). Therefore, it is crucial to explore the complexities of relationships and their role in preventing victimization.

In recent years, more studies have examined the role of relational distance in preventing SV on college campuses. Most studies focus on understanding the bystander-survivor relationship, with limited studies that explore bystander-offender relationships in preventing SV (Palmer et al., 2016), mainly due to the contexts of early bystander studies that predominantly looked at non-violent emergencies where perpetrators do not exist (Levine et al., 2002). A recent study found that college students showed increased intervening intentions to stop sexual assault when the victim is a friend and when the perpetrator is a stranger (Franklin et al., 2019). This

finding is consistent with findings from previous studies that examined similar outcomes regarding other types of SV perpetrated on college campuses (Casey & Ohler, 2011; Nicksa, 2014). For this reason, understanding the dynamics between bystanders and offenders or bystanders and victims can provide evidence to guide intervention programs. In fact, understanding how and when social relationships serve or harm survivors is essential to create social change:

*“By targeting social networks on campus, bystander programs are likely to be effective in both changing norms away from condoning violence and potentially decreasing more immediate violence in potentially risky situations.”* (V. Banyard et al., 2018)

One key aspect to understanding bystander behaviors in college campuses is through informal social networks. As discussed earlier, studies found that these relationships might encourage active bystander behavior where people tend to intervene more when they are connected to the survivors. However, less attention is given to scenarios where informal social networks are perceived as barriers for reporting or intervening in risky situations. For example, a perpetrator who is connected to a powerful person through some sort of social ties (i.e., tribe, friendship) can be perceived to be protected from punishment, which can discourage bystanders or survivors from reporting the incidence. Additionally, further research is needed to understand how these networks influence proactive behaviors with the existence of other formal factors (i.e., policies that prohibit SV).

## Theory of Triadic Influence

The influence of individual-level factors on helping behaviors has been recognized to some extent in Western literature. For decades, psychological and neurological studies (laboratory-based) have provided social and biological explanations of passive bystanders' decision-making processes (e.g., Decety et al., 2016; Latané & Darley, 1970). Studies continue to evolve and improve the understanding of the mechanisms of helping behaviors. Hortensius & de Gelder, 2018, for instance, combine evidence from neuroimaging and behavioral studies and propose a new theoretical perspective, which states that someone's passive bystander behavior is influenced by their individual personality. Even though such studies provide profound evidence of individual factors' influence on bystanders, they lack practical strategies for population-based interventions.

Amongst others, previously applied theories to general bystander studies include the Theory of Planned Behavior, the Ecological Model, Theory of Sociopolitical Development model, and the Theory of Self-Categorization (e.g., Abramsky et al., 2018; Hall, 2010; Johnson et al., 2019; Levine et al., 2002; Lim & Hoot, 2015). The Theory of Triadic Influence (TTI) is not as popular in comparison with previously mentioned frameworks, however, it is recommended as a future framework for studies in the field:

*“The theory of triadic influence is an integrated theory and could easily accommodate key variables including depth of processing, behavioral intent, peer norms, individual attitudes, and perceived vulnerability as well as readiness to help and engage that are components of various theoretical models. Using such integrated theories as a platform for research is an important goal for a future research agenda.” (V. L. Banyard, 2014)*

In *Toward the Next Generation of Bystander Prevention of Sexual and Relationship Violence*, Banyard also emphasizes the usefulness of the TTI in bystander research and states that the theory could target different populations according to their different needs and that interventions for college students need to:

*“...harness motivations related to taking care of relationships, fitting in with peer norms, or forming an identity as a helpful person, developmental concerns for that age group that may be a better source of prevention motivation.”*(V. L. Banyard, 2015, chapter 3)

The TTI was first developed by Flay & Petraitis, 1993. It incorporates multiple relevant theories of health-related behaviors (e.g., Health Belief Model, Theory of Planned Behavior, Protection Motivation Theory, Social Learning Theory). Its strength lies within the approach it takes to integrate micro and macro levels factors into one framework and yet simplify the interactions that start from three main streams or ‘Levels of Causation’; Interpersonal, Social/Normative, Cultural/Attitudinal that together form three constructs or ‘Ultimate Causes’; biological/personality, social situation, and cultural environment. These then expand through multiple tiers and pathways explained by distal influencing factors and proximal predictors and more in between. It can be used in the context of bystander research as a comprehensive guidance to explain human decisions/intentions, behaviors, and can also guide further advancement of studies in the field.

## CHAPTER 3: MANUSCRIPT

### Abstract

**Background:** Sexual harassment (SH), defined as discriminating behavior based on a person's sex, causes poor physical and mental health among survivors. During college, women's risk of harassment increases and can impact academic performance. Bystander interventions have shown effectiveness in reducing SV among college students. This study explores students' willingness to intervene to stop SH in a large urban campus in Jordan

**Methods:** A systematic sample of male (n=223) and female (n=568) students attending randomly selected general education classes were surveyed as part of a larger mixed-methods study on SH. Descriptive and multivariate regression analyses examined the associations between helping intentions by relational distance to a group of perpetrators and personal, cultural, and environmental factors.

**Results:** Higher sense of responsibility, knowledge to help a SH survivor, perception of school's ability to handle instances of SH, and wasta (social connections) were associated with students' intention to stop SH when perpetrators are strangers. School connectedness was associated with students' intention to intervene when the perpetrators are friends. Gender inequitable attitudes were negatively associated with students' willingness to intervene.

**Implications:** Interventions designed to promote bystander behavior may need to employ approaches that consider different mediators and address students concerns to intervene based on bystander-perpetrator relationship.

## INTRODUCTION

Sexual harassment, can be defined as unwelcomed verbal, non-verbal, and physical sexual advances, causes poor physical and mental health among survivors. It can have negative consequences that impact overall quality of life and well-being (Houle et al., 2011; Wasti et al., 2000). Sexual harassment survivors experience severe withdrawal symptoms and dissatisfaction from their surroundings, which negatively impacts their productivity and performance (NASEM, 2018). Women are more likely to face sexual experiences of harassment and violence than men (V. L. Banyard, Ward, et al., 2007; Reilly et al., 1986). Indeed, various forms of SV are found to disproportionately affect college-aged women and gender minorities (Cantor et al., 2015; L. B. Klein & Martin, 2019). During college, women risk of SV (e.g., SH) increases and can result in academic difficulties and poor outcomes (Jordan et al., 2014).

Strategies to end SV have been discussed for years in the literature of violence prevention, but not from the perspective of bystander behavior (V. L. Banyard, 2008, p. 208). The presence of bystanders, observers of unwelcome or violent behaviors, in violence victimization events is reported to be common and most prevalent at schools (Planty, 2002). In recent years, innovative approaches that hold bystanders accountable for witnessing violent events have been widely studied and implemented across different contexts in the U.S and Europe, particularly on college campuses. These bystander interventions show significant improvements in proactive helping behaviors and attitudes regarding SV (Reed, Hines, Armstrong & Cameron, 2015; Mujal et al., 2019), and also contribute to reducing SH and stalking among college students (Coker et al., 2015).

Early efforts to understand bystander behavior started in 1968 by John Darley and Bibb Latané after the horrific murder of Kitty Genovese in New York City. For an hour, she was repeatedly stabbed and raped before her murderer ran away, while neighbors who witnessed the crime did not act to help (Rentschler, 2011). To understand this bystander effect, a situational model was developed to understand the different stages that bystanders might go through before intervening in emergency situations. This framing has been numerously used in bystander studies; however, it solely focuses on individual-level characteristics and situational factors, whereas



more recent findings call for the application of theoretical frameworks that are inclusive of broader factors that influence helping behaviors in violent events (V. L. Banyard, 2011, 2014).

Understanding all possible types of relationships that could exist within a violent context is important for both a comprehensive analysis of the situation and for advancing bystander intervention programs (Levine et al., 2002). Still, the types of relationships (e.g., friends vs. strangers; in-group vs. out-group) alone do not determine helping behavior decisions, where community-level influences such as social norms could also affect outcomes (Bennett et al., 2014). Therefore, using an integrative framework such as the Theory of Triadic Influence (TTI) is important due to the various conditions and factors that affect and mediate bystanders behavior.

Studies looking at bystander behavior and relational distance between bystanders, bystanders-victims, or bystanders-survivors are limited (Levine et al., 2002; Nicksa, 2014), and only a handful have looked at this influence regarding inappropriate or sexually unwelcomed behaviors within a university context (Bennett & Banyard, 2016). Further, these studies have looked mainly at the situational and interpersonal influences on helping in emergency and serious situations, and none have incorporated multilateral or integrative frameworks to examine relational distance influence on helping. (e.g., Bennett et al., 2017; Bennett & Banyard, 2016; Gottlieb & Carver, 1980; Levine et al., 2002). Additionally, most of these papers looked at bystander-victim's relationships, albeit acknowledged the need of further bystander-perpetrator investigations.

The present study aims to provide preliminary understanding of factors that might influence bystanders' willingness to intervene in a SH incident within an Arab university context. Considering a bystander approach to SV interventions in the Arab World could be more effective than traditional programs or campaigns, where publicly perpetrated SH including sexual comments, stalking, or staring was found to be the most prevalent form of gender-based violence in the region preceded by intimate partner violence (UN Women & Promundu, 2017).

This study adds to the literature by filling the gap in bystander studies that lack integrative theoretical approaches to understand bystander behavior on college campuses. It uses TTI Influence to explore the possible factors that contribute to students willingness to intervene in SH situations. It is also the first to address bystander

interventions as an alternative approach for SH prevention in an Arab context. And it provides unique insights into helping behaviors and the multitiered streams of influence in preventing unwelcomed sexual instances.

Findings from a qualitative study from the same university suggest the utility of the TTI for this sample. Students' perceptions of the causes of SH perpetration at a Jordanian college include a range of interpersonal and individual characteristics (e.g., location at childhood, tribe, gender), and social and cultural norms and restrictions (e.g., sex segregation, social support and connections 'Wasta') (Bergenfeld et al, under review). The present study aims to 1) explore multi-level factors in relation to bystander helping intentions and 2) explore whether helping intentions are conditioned on relationship with perpetrators.

## **METHODS**

The present study is secondary analysis of data from a larger mixed-methods study on SH in a large urban-setting university in Jordan. The overall objectives of the study were to assess the prevalence, correlates, and perceptions of SH instances among college students in Jordan, and to develop an SH intervention for this targeted population. Qualitative and quantitative data were collected between 2018-2019 through focus group discussions with students, including a participatory data collection tool known as FADFED, stakeholder interviews with staff, and a survey. The study was approved by the Institutional Review Board of Emory University, which also covered local study partners through a reliance agreement.

### **a. Participants and Context**

Participants in this study are a systematic sample of university students (n= 971) from general education classes that were randomly selected over several days in coordination with the campus administration (Table 1). An Arabic version of the survey was distributed to students in 12 classes at the end of the academic year in 2018. Students spent 25-30 minutes on average to complete the survey.

## **b. Measures**

Modules of the survey include scales that were adopted from existing reliable and validated models. However, some scales were modified or developed to meet the cultural context of Jordan.

### **Demographics**

Demographics in this study include gender (male/female), academic year (freshman, sophomore, junior, senior, more than 4 years, other), nationality (Jordanian, Arab, other), marital status (married, single, engaged, divorced, widowed), financial difficulty (very hard, hard, somewhat hard, not very hard), geographic location at childhood (urban, rural, *badia*, refugee camp), and maternal educational level (read and write, less than secondary, vocational apprenticeship, general secondary, intermediate diploma, BA/BS, higher than BA/BS). Academic years: senior, more than 4 years, and other were grouped as senior or above. Single, divorced, and widowed were grouped as single, while married and engaged were categorized as one group of married/engaged. Rural and *badia* were combined. Maternal educational levels were categorized into high school or less, and more than high school.

### **Bystander willingness/intentions to Intervene**

The outcome for this study, bystander willingness to intervene was derived from a scale by Nickerson et al., 2014 based on the 5-step bystander intervention model by Latané and Darley 1979. The first outcome of interest comes from the last step of the model; implement intervention decision, which is based on the following item: “*I would tell a group of my friends to stop making inappropriate comments, jokes or gestures if I see or hear them.*” A second comparable item was added to the scale to examine bystander intervention in the peer context as recommended by Nickerson (Nickerson et al., 2014). and was used as the second outcome of interest for the current study: “*I would tell a group of strangers to stop making inappropriate comments, jokes or gestures if I see or hear them*”. The two outcomes were recategorized as “Yes” if the respondent agreed or strongly agreed to help as a bystander and “No” if they disagreed or strongly disagreed.

### **Attitudes and beliefs toward sexual harassment**

The 20 items of this scale were adopted from the *Attitudes toward Sexually Harassing Behavior* by Lott et al., 1982 and *Gender-Equitable Men (GEM)* by Pulerwitz & Barker, 2008. This is a four-point Likert scale (1. Strongly disagree, 2. Disagree, 3. Agree, 4. Strongly agree). Some questions were reversed during the analysis stage to ensure consistency of scores. Higher scores indicate higher attitudes and beliefs in support of SH. (Cronbach's alpha=0.83)

### **History of sexual harassment**

A 27-item scale was developed and validated as part of the study (R. Spencer et al., Forthcoming). Items measure a range of sexual harassment types that a participant could have experienced by any member of the university community. The scale covers harassment in person, by phone (includes texting), email, and social media. Scenarios include a range of SH acts such as sexual gestures, stalking, staring, whistling and extreme physical harassment such as grabbing, pinching, and touching. In this study, participants were considered to have a history of SH if they had at least one experience with any of the scale scenarios. SH was dichotomized (Yes/No) (Cronbach's alpha=0.91).

### **School climate**

This study uses a 7-item scale adopted from the Perceptions of School Leadership Climate questions by Krebs et al 2016. These questions examine the perceptions of students regarding the school's leadership response in cases of SH. Higher scores on this 4-point Likert scale indicate a better school climate (Cronbach's alpha=0.77).

### **School connectedness**

The 12-item *School Connectedness* 4-point Likert scale (1. Strongly disagree and 4. Strongly agree) was adopted from Krebs et al 2016, with the exception of an item relating to alcohol consumption. This item was replaced by a question on student's knowledge of helping resources on campus: ("*I know where to seek*

*help if I feel unsafe on campus*”). The scale measures participants’ feelings and perceptions of themselves in relation to the school and other students on campus (e.g., *“I feel like I am part of this school, I believe that students at this school trust one another”*) (Cronbach’s alpha=0.82).

### **Social support**

The 7-item social support scale was specifically developed for the original study. It measures students perceived social support following an incident of SH as victims or perpetrators. This 5-point Likert scale (1. Strongly disagree, 2. Disagree, 3. Agree, 4. Strongly agree, 5. Not applicable ‘N/A’) include questions that examine different levels of social support systems for students such as family, tribe, and friends. (Cronbach’s alpha= 0.76). To understand potential influences of social support sources on bystander intentions, study team decided to investigate social support correlation with the outcomes of interest by support type (familial, friends, tribal) as dichotomous variables, except for tribal, where due to the high answer rates of ‘N/A’, this option was not recoded as missing. The three items used are: *“If I experienced sexual harassment on campus, I could rely on my family for help”*, *“If I experienced sexual harassment on campus, I could rely on my friends for help”*, and *“If I experienced sexual harassment on campus, I could rely on members of my tribe for help.”*

### **Wasta**

*Wasta* in Arabic translates to connection, and in the context of this study it means having an important person who could help a student evade a serious situation at the university. The 10-point scale was devised for the original study with 10 being the highest and 1 being the lowest connectedness rating as perceived by the student.

### **Bystander Scales**

The other 4 constructs (first 4 steps from the model: noticing the event, severity perception, sense of responsibility, and knowledge of helping) of the bystander scale were later added to the two regression models, with each

construct being considered as a separate 4-point Likert scale (1. Strongly disagree, 2. Disagree, 3. Agree, 4. Strongly agree); higher scores indicate higher levels of agreement with each statement. Some statements were reversed during the analysis stage to ensure consistency of scores. (Cronbach's alphas, respectively= 0.60; 0.58; 0.68; 0.52).

### c. Data Analyses

Data were entered into an electronic database and translated into English using the original English survey as a reference. Descriptive statistics of all characteristics and factors of interest by intention to intervene for each outcome of interest are summarized in **Table 1**. Initially, age and academic year were considered in the analytical models, however, age was removed due to evidence of multicollinearity using the variance decomposition proportion value ( $VDP1 > 0.7$ ). A two-step multiple imputation method of missing values was performed to allow maximum utilization of available data. This method was recommended for imputing arbitrary patterned continuous variables and models containing mixed covariates (Smith & Kosten, 2017). Multivariate Poisson regressions with robust variance analyses were performed using PROC GENMOD with a log link function to produce prevalence ratio (PRs), 95% confidence intervals (CI), standard errors (SEs), and p-values. Four models were examined with the intention to intervene in each binary outcome. **Models 1.a & 1.b** represent the regression results for the outcome of interest where friends are perpetrators, **Models 2.a & 2.b** represent the regression results for the outcome of interest where strangers are perpetrators (**Table 2**). Models 1.b. & 2.b. adjusted for 4 bystander variables based on the 5-step situational bystander model. Clustering by main faculties ( Humanities, Health, and Sciences) was controlled for in the imputation and regression analyses models. All statistical analysis and imputations were performed using SAS 9.3.

## RESULTS

**Table 1** illustrates the study population characteristics by intention to intervene for each outcome of interest.

- Our study sample included 72% and 28% of female and males students, respectively. The majority of participants grew up in urban areas (79%), and others grew up in rural areas and refugee camps (17% and 3%), respectively. High maternal education was prevalent among students, where 59% reported maternal education of at least a high school. A high percentage of students were single (97%), consisting of unmarried, divorced, and widowed. Freshmen students were 43% of the study sample, followed by sophomore (28%), junior (25%), and senior or above, including one graduate student (4%). SH history was prevalent across all study participants (66%, n= 521).
- As expected, all students were more likely to intervene to stop SH if the perpetrator was a friend, compared with the perpetrator being a stranger (93% vs. 57%). A slightly higher percentage of females intended to intervene compared with males when the perpetrator is a friend (94% vs. 90%). However, when the perpetrator is a stranger, a higher percentage of males reported an intention to intervene compared with females (60% vs. 56%).
- Although positive intentions to intervene are common among the students in the study, some exceptions were observed. Out of all  $\geq$  senior students (n=32), 38% of students reported a positive intention to intervene when the perpetrator is a stranger, which is lower than the average rate of positive intentions to intervene among other school years; freshman (n= 343, 58%), sophomore (n= 221, 59%), junior (n=195, 57%).
- Results also show some differences in intentions to intervene among single (n=763) and married or engaged students (n=28). 58% of single students reported higher positive intentions to intervene when the perpetrator is a stranger compared with 44% for married or engaged students.
- By looking at the mode of responses, most students in this study agreed that the school leadership climate is supportive and responsive to SH complaints. However, less positive perceptions of school leadership to SH instances were observed among students who reported negative intentions to intervene when perpetrators were either friends or strangers.

- Less equitable gender norms attitudes and beliefs were observed among students who reported negative intentions to intervene, although the mean score was much higher for students who lacked intentions to intervene when perpetrators were friends compared with strangers.

**Table 2:** Illustrates results of multivariate regression analyses of bystander intentions to intervene by relational distance to perpetrators (friends vs. strangers).

**Models 1.a & 2.a** presents the association of students helping intentions by relational distance to perpetrators without adjusting for variables based on the 5-step situational model. When perpetrators are friends, female students showed statistically significant intention to intervene in comparison with males. This association by **gender** was not consistent nor significant when perpetrators were strangers. Intentions to intervene were mostly similar across students of different **academic years** when perpetrators are friends, however, senior students were significantly less willing to intervene when perpetrators are strangers. Although not statistically significant, students of Jordanian **nationality**, compared with Arab, showed higher willingness to intervene when perpetrators are friends, but less willingness to intervene when they are strangers. Contrary, non-Arabs showed less willingness to intervene when perpetrators are friends but higher willingness when perpetrators are strangers. Students who reported being single had high a statistical significant greater likelihood of helping intentions that was consistent regardless of their relationship to perpetrators compared to other marital statuses. As for students' **living setting** at childhood, only students who grew up in refugee camps as children had a higher willingness to intervene regardless of relational distance in comparison with those who grew up in urban areas. There was no association between **maternal education level** and helping intentions by relational distance to perpetrators. Surviving at least one **SH experience** was not associated with students willingness to help when perpetrators are friends, but when perpetrators are strangers; these students were significantly more willing to intervene. Both positive perceptions of **school climate** in regard to SH and higher **school connectedness** were positively associated with intentions to intervene regardless of perpetrators, but with stronger affect when perpetrators are were strangers. More gender inequitable **attitudes & beliefs** showed statistically significant associations with less willingness to intervene



regardless of perpetrators, the effect was stronger when perpetrators are strangers. Only students who perceived **social support** from their families were significantly more willing to intervene when perpetrators are friends in comparison with those who did not expect support by their families. When perpetrators are strangers, no associations were found except for tribal support, where students expecting support by their tribe were more willing to intervene (not significant) if perpetrators are strangers, while those who answered “N/A” to tribal support were significantly less willing to intervene when perpetrators are strangers. *Wasta* was associated with willingness to intervene only when perpetrators are strangers, where those with a higher powerful connection were more willing to intervene when perpetrators are strangers.

**Models 1.b & 2.b** examined the association with students helping intentions by relational distance to perpetrators after adjusting for variables based on the 5-step situational model. While the associations were still generally consistent with the models mentioned above, a few associations became statistically significant or insignificant, and none were inconsistent after adjustment, except for the **gender** variable that had a PR of 0.93 in model 2.a and a PR of 1.04 in model 2.b. As for the situational variables: **Observing SH on campus** was associated with higher willingness to intervene only when perpetrators are strangers, and no association was found when perpetrators are friends. Level of **perceived severity** of SH showed statistically significant association with willingness to intervene when perpetrators are friends, but this association was not consistent or significant when perpetrators are strangers. Students’ **sense of responsibility** toward intervening in an SH situation and **knowledge** of ways or resources to help a survivor were associated with higher willingness to intervene, but these associations were not statistically significant when perpetrators are strangers.

## DISCUSSION

In the present study, students reported less willingness to intervene when perpetrators were strangers in comparison with friends. Some strong and statistically significant associations were found between these factors and willingness to intervene when the perpetrators are either friends or strangers. The following discussion touches on each of the 16 examined factors and provides possible explanations and suggestions for future studies in the field.

Over the past few decades, bystander studies have garnered considerable attention to understanding **gender** differences in intervention behaviors, yet such studies have mixed findings on how males and females react under various circumstances (Nicksa, 2014). In our study, females showed higher willingness to intervene in comparison with males when perpetrators are friends, and inconsistent results were observed when perpetrators are strangers. Regardless, women tend to fear more for their safety and are less likely to intervene particularly when the perpetrator is a stranger to oneself or to the other woman being attacked (Laner, et al., 2001). Contextualizing bystander behaviors by a bystander's relational distance to a perpetrator or a victim could provide broader insights into our understanding of these presumably gendered behaviors (Burn, 2009). For example, male students might be more willing to confront strangers as fears of stigma and peer-to-peer sanctions might be less concerning (Casey & Ohler, 2011), while females tend to intervene indirectly (e.g., by reporting) and in safe situations (Laner, et al., 2001; Nicksa, 2014; Rojas-Ashe et al., 2019). Further, men generally tend to underestimate sexually aggressive behaviors committed by friends possibly because of the stigma around SV perpetration (Wamboldt et al., 2019). Therefore, unlike females, males helping decisions in situations involving friends are less straightforward. Overall, SH victimization is thought to be gendered among Arab students when compared to non-Arabs (Zeira et al., 2002), demanding further examination of bystander behavior by gender for this population, which could be guided by TTI's constructs on the *social-personal nexus* that considers the quality and quantity of human connections with others (e.g., *Interpersonal Bonding*).

Students in our sample showed no major differences for intervening decisions by academic year, except those in their senior year or higher, where they showed less willingness to approach strangers. This could be consistent with other studies that found more positive bystander behaviors among young college and high school students compared with older students (V. Banyard & Moynihan, 2011; Ocampo et al., 2007). While these studies looking at bystander behaviors and this variable differed in many ways with our methodological approach and targeted population, and while the results could be consistent, it might not be generalizable to our study sample. A study from a Jordanian university looking at a very similar sample characteristics as the present study found that older students had higher balanced attitudes toward gender roles in the society compared with younger students (Kharouf & Daoud, 2019), affirming that attitudes toward gender equality vary by age and could differentially influence bystander decisions. According to the TTI, this also suggests that a mediator factor (e.g., attitudes) influenced by expectations and evaluations of social consequences play a role into the association resulting in a passive or active bystander behavior.

Students in our sample who grew up in rural areas or refugee camps were more willing to intervene when perpetrators were friends in comparison with the majority of students from urban areas. The result was still true when perpetrators were strangers only among students who grew up in a refugee camp as children. This could possibly be due to higher critical consciousness of injustice and inequalities among minorities (Thomas et al., 2014), which was found to be associated with positive bystander intentions regarding SV among college students (Rojas-Ashe et al., 2019). TTI suggests that the cultural environment shapes communities' norms and expectations and could therefore influence their attitudes and behaviors toward others. Thus cultural differences between urban, rural, and other **living settings** (i.e., refugee camps, informal settlements) might provide insights into environmental influences on helping behaviors. As an example, individuals who grew up in collectivist societies such that of rural areas might show stronger attitudes toward helping others. This might be due to cultural values of rural and less developed areas that are accustomed toward social integration collectivism. Conversely, those who grew up in urban areas might exhibit less prosocial behaviors as urbanization have been linked with individualism and social isolation (Bianchi, 2007; Hofstede et al., 2010). Cultural variations might not notably

exist between urban and rural students in this sample possibly due to the general collectivist nature of Jordanian culture, and that minorities' childhood experiences could differently influence their behaviors in comparison.

Another aspect of discussing students' behaviors is also related to their cultural backgrounds. The inclusion of the **nationality** in the analysis was driven by qualitative findings that proposed major cultural differences between Jordanians and other nationalities. For example, students from more liberal Arab states (e.g., Lebanon) were perceived to behave more comfortably and appropriately around students of a different gender. On the other hand, rural Jordanian males were perceived to have been brought up in conservative areas that encourage gender segregation and thus have less experience interacting appropriately with females. While Jordanian students in this study were more willing to intervene when perpetrators were friends, non-Arabs (mostly Turks) were less willing to intervene in comparison with students of Arab (non-Jordanian) nationality. And when perpetrators were strangers, Jordanians were less willing to intervene and non-Arabs were more willing to intervene. Due to the small cell numbers of all non-Jordanians, these results might have reduced power.

The majority of students in our study reported a single **marital status**, and they were more willing to intervene regardless of their relational distance to the perpetrators. From one aspect, single students might be younger, more connected to the university, and have stronger or larger social network on campus and thus more comfortable at approaching other students. Contrary, married or engaged students might be less willing to engage in conflict that could result in consequences that might be socially harmful to their marriage (e.g., bad reputation). Although this could also be the case for single students, married students reputation could be more of a concern since it is connected to their families and their partners' families.

**Maternal education** levels were high among participants in the present study. Regression analysis showed no differences in willingness to intervene between those with a maternal education that is equal or less than a higher school diploma compared with those of a higher degree. Reports show that women in Jordan are highly educated in comparison with women in other Arab states, and it is even higher among females than males in urban parts of the country (EPDC, 2010). Still, research suggest that higher levels of maternal education influence

children's development and behaviors. For example, higher maternal education level was associated with more gender balanced attitudes among college students in Jordan (Kharouf & Daoud, 2019). The authors also claim that unlike educated mothers who raise their kids with less consideration of "cultural taboos", uneducated mothers tend to stick stronger to old traditions and enforce that on their children. Arguably, maternal education level could serve as a proxy for students' socioeconomic status. Previous studies, in non-violent contexts, suggest higher prosocial behaviors by those of lower class (low maternal education), compared with higher class (high maternal education), especially toward strangers (Piff et al., 2010). It is deemed that lower social class could be more empathetic and compassionate; thus prioritizing others over one's well-being (Piff et al., 2010).

**History of SH** victimization in this study was found to be associated with higher willingness to intervene only when perpetrators were strangers. Generally, bystander studies showed that students with a history of sexual victimization were more likely to intervene (V. L. Banyard et al., 2004) as they might feel some sort of empathy and connections to other victims/survivors (Loewenstein & Small, 2007), and might also hold less rape myth attitudes (RMAs) that justify SH perpetration (McMahon, 2010). In fact, this study found that students who did not intend to intervene were found to hold higher **attitudes and beliefs** that are less gender equitable and constitute of less empathy toward potential SH survivors. More so, these attitudes and beliefs were associated with less bystander intentions to intervene regardless of the relational distance to perpetrators. This is consistent with previously discussed findings regarding RMAs and bystander behaviors, where RMAs among students such as victim blaming predicted less bystander intervention among college students (Burn, 2009). It also affirms that such pernicious attitudes can contribute to less safe school environments by perpetuating SH.

Therefore, understanding the mechanisms that fuel negative attitudes resulting in violent behaviors are necessary in this context. For example, we found that *wasta* (strong connection to a person of power) was significantly correlated with students' willingness to intervene by approaching strangers. This was not the case when perpetrators are friends, suggesting that existing societal hierarchy extends to school environments and could influence behaviors. In other words, while students who are less connected to a *wasta* might avoid intervening, those who are backed up by a strong *wasta* might feel more courageous to help knowing they can

handle any potential consequences as a result of intervention. And while students could use their *wasta* to help a survivor and prevent an SH incident, they might also use it to protect a perpetrator, requiring additional steps to understand how this support system interference could be restricted.

Another aspect of the environmental and cultural influence on behaviors is the influence of interactions with social institutions as addressed by TTI. Coupled with the availability of information, these interactions affect students expectations of their school leadership. We found that regardless of the relationship with perpetrators, positive **school climate** perception to instances of SH was associated with higher willingness to stop inappropriate behaviors perpetrated by a group of friends or strangers. Although past studies on SV and helping provide limited insights into school climate influence, the ones that looked at bullying found supporting results to this association (e.g., Lindstrom Johnson et al., 2013). Therefore, the existence of trust between students' and their school leadership can influence prosocial behaviors.

The level of school connectedness shaped by students' feelings of belonging and worthiness appear to influence intervention. Students in the present study who reported positive intentions to intervene also had the highest mean scores for **school connectedness**. In addition, the regression analysis showed that higher positive connection with the school and trusting school authorities in equally protecting students was associated with willingness to intervene across all models. Consistent with a previous study, this result is promising and indicates the importance of this component to students' helping behaviors on campus (Sulkowski, 2011). Indeed, working toward building better school environments by promoting for stronger students connections with school leadership or teachers might impact prosocial behaviors. For example, students interactions with influential personnel was found to reduce SV on college campuses, and that educators and popular opinion leaders could potentially influence students behaviors outside of the classroom (McMahon, 2015). It can also be argued that disconnectedness from school could affect students' relationships and awareness to existing resources and complaint mechanisms. While our findings adjusting for students knowledge of helping a victim showed a strong association with willingness to intervene, examining how school connectedness interacts with knowledge might add additional insights into the association.

Furthermore, *“The more social roles individuals play-including that of friend, parent, spouse, neighbor, co-worker, club member, and church member-the greater the demands that are placed on them to provide assistance and, consequently, the more helping behavior they are likely to exhibit.”* (Amato, 1990). Hence, it was expected that students who reported higher **social support** by family, friends, or tribe in case of personal SH victimization would be more willing to intervene. This was partially true, where familial support was correlated with willingness to intervene when perpetrators were friends, and tribal support was correlated with willingness to intervene when perpetrators were strangers. It is interesting to find that students who answered “N/A” to level of tribal support they could receive if they experienced SH showed significantly less willingness to intervene by approaching strangers. Considering the strong influence of tribal connections and social hierarchy in formal organizational settings in the Jordan and other parts in the MENA region, lack of such connection might make sense to discourage intervening toward strangers as that might involve negative social consequences.

The **5-step theoretical model** suggests that people must go through 5 stages before they are able to intervene in an emergency. Recognizing or observing an event, perceiving it as an emergency, feeling responsible to intervene to prevent a harm, and actually knowing how to help are all necessary processes that bystanders experience before intervening (Latané & Darley, 1970). Other researchers in the field has also supported this situational model and its influence on the likelihood of intervening in SV situations (e.g., Burn, 2009). In this study, we did not observe any significant associations with willingness to intervene. One reason could be that this variable was measured in the beginning of the study before the survey items that measured SH prevalence. Thus, this might have introduced ambiguity to students as they might not have perceived certain acts that occurred on campus as SH, where the items measuring this construct also did not define specific forms of harassment or provided specific scenarios of the situation.

Furthermore, this study found that higher severity perceptions of an SH situation was only associated with higher willingness to intervene when perpetrators were friends. Generally, higher levels of perceived seriousness of an event can increase bystanders likelihood to intervene regardless of the relational distance to the victim, but with stronger influence among those belonging to a similar social group (Levine et al., 2002). Additionally, we

found that students with high levels of sense of responsibility and knowledge of helping a victim/survivor of SH showed positive association with willingness to intervene regardless of the relational distance with the perpetrators, with a statistically strong association when perpetrators were strangers. Previous studies found that sense of responsibility are related to bystander self-reported behaviors and intentions (V. L. Banyard et al., 2013; V. Banyard & Moynihan, 2011). Further, studies found that empathy and attitudes were in fact linked to accepting responsibility and thus intervening (Nickerson et al., 2014). Others argue that severity of an event can increase perceived responsibility and thus influence a bystander decision to intervene (Fischer et al., 2011). Although sense of responsibility was suggested as key in predicting helping bystander behaviors among college students (V. Banyard & Moynihan, 2011), no study has yet examined this variable by relational distance to perpetrators. As for knowledge, it does not directly affect or change behaviors, but it was found in previous studies and according to TTI as an important factor influencing attitude. By referring to Latane and Darley model, knowledge comes last before making a decision for an intervention, which means that other factors and barriers are rather stronger and more influential on helping behaviors than knowledge itself.

### **Strengths & Limitations:**

One of the limitations in the present study is that the items measuring the outcomes of interest examined willingness to intervene to stop a group of perpetrators, which in itself was found to hinder helping behaviors due to the *Bystander Effect* theorized by the early research of Latane and Darley 1970. This concept, supported by many studies in the field, suggest that people are less likely to intervene with the presence of others. However, Howard & Crano, 1974 suggest that it is also possible that bystanders feeling of safety with the presence of others encourage prosocial helping behaviors. The items measured in this study did not specify whether other bystanders (non-perpetrators) were present, which might have introduced ambiguity to the situation. Future studies might examine bystanders relational distance to perpetrators when other bystanders are also present, and how concepts of *diffusion of responsibility* and *evaluation apprehension* might influence intervening as studying the bystander



effect itself was acknowledged by Latane and Nida 1981 to be impractical to actual bystander interventions (Levine et al., 2002).

Reports of willingness to intervene were very high when perpetrators were friends, which might have been driven by social desirability since helping friends is socially considered a core value to the relationship, and that *“when friends and family are in need, help typically is given, not because of a personality disposition and not because of momentary situational factors, but because the role relationship itself demands such behavior. Helping is simply part and parcel of what it means to occupy certain roles in relation to others.”*(Amato, 1990). Yet, it is still important to look at how this relational distance affects helping, where *“the fact that some individuals may be more generous than others in the context of a relationship should not distract us from the central importance of the relationship itself as a necessary precondition for much of the helping that occurs in everyday life.”* (Amato, 1990). Although less students reported willingness to intervene in a SH situation where perpetrators were strangers, providing additional information regarding the specific context of the situation or the possible consequences that might have faced a victim had help was not provided, different ratios of intervention could have been observed accordingly. This indicates that future studies should continue to evaluate helping behaviors and improve methodologies that could measure the influence of relationships and other social network factors on bystanders

This study sample included more female students than males, this ratio represents the general college population in Jordan which makes the results more realistic. In addition, these findings might be more generalizable to college campuses in Jordan and other parts of the Arab world in comparison with other studies on bystander behaviors that mostly targeted students at North American and European universities. In fact, it provides unique contextual guidance to bystander studies in the MENA region.

The present study looked at friends vs. strangers using one item for each outcome, which does not measure the level of relational distance between students (hypothetical bystanders) and perpetrators. Further, it is recommended that future studies consider less ambiguous measurements, where ambiguity of vignettes in studies, can affect students' perceptions of a situation's severity even in cases of SA (Nicksa, 2014). It is worth noting

that ambiguity could lead to many possible explanations. Ultimately, further assessments using advanced statistical methods such as structural equation modeling is highly suggested for understanding such complex and sequential pathways to bystander behaviors.

Consistent with the majority of bystander studies, this study also measured bystander intentions rather than actual behaviors. While measuring actual behaviors might involve exposing students to harmful experiences (e.g., staged violent events in a lab setting), alternatives such as measuring retrospective bystander behaviors were used in previous studies (e.g., V. Banyard & Moynihan, 2011) and could be used in future research.

Finally, limited linguistic knowledge of Arabic by a few non-Arabs were also reported by the survey facilitators as a barrier to understanding some items.

## **CONCLUSION & IMPLICATIONS**

Students decisions to intervene in SH instances was the result of a combination of multilevel factors that influenced their attitudes toward helping (intentions). And while helping intentions differed slightly by relational distance to perpetrators, previous studies found that examining the other involved parties was found to further affect helping and is therefore necessary (Bennett & Banyard, 2016; Levine et al., 2002). Also, intervening to help does not always indicate reporting an incidence. For example, students in extreme situations such as in physical assault reported intervening to help, but not to report the incidence when a perpetrator is a friend (Ocampo et al., 2007). Future studies might specifically look at bystander behaviors by intervening type to distinguish between the help provided by bystanders and how personal relationships with perpetrators could influence reporting. Evaluating anonymous reporting of incidence might also provide further insights in regard to bystander behaviors by relational distance.

The influence of bystander-perpetrator relational distance on intervening is complex (Levine et al., 2002). Friends, for example, can directly confront a friend perpetrator and advice against their unwelcomed behaviors or attitudes, while a similar spontaneous interaction with a stranger can be perceived as uncomfortable. However,

bystanders decision making process can involve more evaluations of the situation than what constitutes a relationship they have with a perpetrator. A “bell curve” is an example of how changing dynamics of the relationship between a bystander and a perpetrator can longitudinally influence their helping behaviors, where confronting a stranger might be easy at first, gets harder as strangers become familiar, and then gets easier as that relationship develops (Casey & Ohler, 2011). This sheds the light on how different levels of friendships (close friends vs. familiar faces or colleagues) can also influence helping behaviors among college students. This is a potential future areas of research for bystander studies within educational or other professional organizations.

Beside these situational factors, we also found that a combination of personal, cultural, and environmental factors influenced helping intentions in consistent patterns regardless of relational distance. Policies from the university where this study was conducted do not state clear policy for SH, which consequently explains the unacknowledged role of bystanders to preventing SH in this policy. Thus, it is necessary to improve existing policies to address SH as a violation in order to also develop and implement policies regarding bystanders. For example, laws such as the “Good Samaritan Laws” in the U.S protect bystanders from potential consequences resulting from intervening in emergency situations. Implementing similar laws at universities in the MENA region could encourage helping behaviors even among those less connected to a *wasta*. Such policies ensure equal opportunity for students to feel socially competent to intervene regardless of their external status in the society.

In conclusion, further examination is required to develop SH bystander programs that take into consideration students’ personal, social, and cultural concerns and barriers surrounding intervening. This is deemed crucial in order to ensure students’ safety from potential consequences that could be harmful to their health and wellbeing on campus and at home. In addition, schools might Increase transparent and open communication between school leaders and students (e.g., student town halls), incorporate social justice components into their extracurricular activities and SH programs to encourage discussions around social inequalities as that might increase students empathy and compassion toward others and potentially increase prosocial behaviors.

**Table 1:** Tabulation of Study Population by Intention to Intervene by Relational Distance to Perpetrators

	Friend		Stranger		All N= 791 (%)	Min-Max (Mode)
	No n= 55 (7%)	Yes n=736(93%)	No n=337(43%)	Yes n=454 (57%)		
<b>Gender</b>						
Female	6.00	94.00	43.85	56.15	568(71.82)	-
Male	9.54	90.46	39.75	60.25	223 (28.18)	-
<b>Year</b>						
Freshman	5.27	94.73	41.72	58.28	343 (43.31)	-
Sophomore	6.91	93.09	42.11	58.89	221 (27.94)	-
Junior	9.74	90.26	42.95	57.05	195 (24.70)	-
≥ Senior	9.36	90.64	62.37	37.63	32 (4.05)	-
<b>Location at childhood</b>						
Urban	7.36	92.64	42.99	57.01	626 (79.10)	-
Rural	5.27	94.73	43.24	56.76	138(17.42)	-
Refugee Camp	7.51	92.49	33.17	66.83	27(3.48)	-
<b>Nationality</b>						
Jordanian	6.29	93.71	42.87	57.13	701 (88.60)	-
Arab nationality	10.74	89.26	44.21	55.79	75 (9.49)	-
Non-Arab	21.24	78.76	26.99	73.01	15 (1.90)	-
<b>Relationship status</b>						
Single	6.28	93.72	42.21	57.79	763 (96.53)	-
Married/Engaged	27.06	72.94	56.19	43.81	28 (3.47)	-
<b>Maternal education</b>						
≤ High school	7.61	92.39	42.35	57.65	321 (40.63)	-
> High school	6.58	93.42	42.93	57.07	470 (59.37)	-
<b>History of SH</b>						
Yes	7.11	92.89	42.21	57.79	521(65.87)	-
No	6.79	93.21	43.63	56.37	270(34.13)	-
<b>Attitudes &amp; beliefs *</b>	2.35(0.49)	2.01 (0.48)	2.05 (0.48)	2.02 (0.49)	2.03 (0.49)	1-3 (2.18)
<b>School Climate *</b>	2.37 (0.60)	2.57(0.57)	2.44 (0.57)	2.64 (0.57)	2.56 (0.58)	1-4 (3)
<b>School connectedness *</b>	2.57 (0.49)	2.78(0.41)	2.70(0.40)	2.81 (0.42)	2.77 (0.42)	1-4 (3)
<b>Familial support</b>						
Agree	10.34	89.66	44.81	55.19	296 (37.42)	-
Disagree	5.05	94.95	41.26	57.74	495 (62.58)	-
<b>Friends support</b>						
Agree	6.80	93.20	44.01	55.99	309 (39.17)	-
Disagree	7.18	92.82	41.68	58.32	481 (60.83)	-
<b>Tribal support</b>						
Agree	7.36	93.64	44.23	55.77	443 (56.03)	-
Disagree	7.45	92.55	35.65	64.35	248 (31.40)	-
Not applicable	4.49	95.51	52.62	47.38	99 (12.57)	-
<b>Wasta *</b>	5.72(2.97)	5.75 (2.61)	5.09(2.65)	6.24 (2.53)	5.75 (2.64)	1-10 (5)
<b>Observed SH *</b>	2.74(0.59)	2.62 (0.67)	2.62(0.65)	2.64 (0.67)	2.63 (0.66)	1-4 (3)
<b>Severity perception *</b>	3.13(0.67)	3.54 (0.45)	3.47(0.48)	3.53 (0.48)	3.51 (0.48)	1-4 (4)
<b>Sense of responsibility *</b>	2.53(0.70)	2.90 (0.62)	2.60(0.62)	3.07 (0.57)	2.87 (0.63)	1-4 (3)
<b>Knowledge helping a victim*</b>	2.36 (0.60)	2.60 (0.63)	2.35(0.59)	2.75 (0.60)	2.58 (0.63)	1-4 (2.67)

\*Mean (SD) for continuous variables

**Table 2: Multivariate Regression Analysis of Bystander Intentions to Intervene by Relational Distance to Perpetrators**

	1. Friends as Perpetrators						2. Strangers as Perpetrators					
	Model 1.a			Model 1.b			Model 2.a			Model 2.b		
	PR	95% CI	S.E.	PR	95% CI	S.E.	PR	95% CI	S.E.	PR	95% CI	S.E.
<b>Gender</b>												
Female	1.01**	1.00-1.02	0	1.02*	1.00-1.04	0.01	0.93	0.80-1.08	0.08	1.04	0.95-1.14	0.05
Male (ref)												
<b>Year</b>												
Freshman (ref)												
Sophomore	0.99	0.96-1.02	0.02	1.00	0.97-1.03	0.02	0.98	0.95-1.02	0.02	0.99	0.95-1.02	0.02
Junior	0.98*	0.96-0.99	0.01	0.99*	0.97-1.00	0.01	0.98	0.91-1.05	0.04	1.00	0.94-1.06	0.03
≥ Senior	0.99	0.93-1.04	0.03	1.00	0.96-1.06	0.03	0.67***	0.59-0.77	0.07	0.76***	0.67-0.87	0.08
<b>Nationality</b>												
Jordanian	1.05	0.97-1.13	0.04	1.04	0.97-1.11	0.24	0.94	0.88-1.01	0.04	0.91**	0.85-0.04	0.04
Arab nationality (ref)												
Other	0.92	0.80-1.06	0.07	0.93	0.79-1.10	0.08	1.09	0.80-1.49	0.16	1.14	0.91-1.42	0.11
<b>Relationship status</b>												
Single	1.24***	1.15-1.35	0.04	1.23***	1.15-1.31	0.03	1.29**	1.12-1.48	0.07	1.25***	1.12-1.39	0.06
Married/Engaged(ref)												
<b>Location at childhood</b>												
Urban (ref)												
Rural	1.03	1.00-1.07	0.02	1.03	1.00-1.07	0.02	0.97	0.84-1.13	0.08	0.97	0.82-1.15	0.09
Refugee Camp	1.04	0.97-1.11	0.03	1.03	0.96-1.11	0.04	1.23**	1.07-1.41	0.07	1.1	0.96-1.26	0.07
<b>Maternal education level</b>												
≤ High school (ref)												
> High school	1.00	0.99-1.02	0.01	1.00	0.98-1.02	0.01	0.99	0.90-1.10	0.05	0.99	0.90-1.09	0.05
<b>History of SH</b>												
Yes	1.00	0.97-1.02	0.01	0.99	0.97-1.01	0.01	1.09**	1.03-1.15	0.03	1.01	0.94-1.09	0.04
No (ref)												
<b>School Climate</b>	1.02**	1.01-1.04	0.01	1.01	0.99-1.04	0.01	1.15***	1.12-1.18	0.01	1.04	1.00-1.08	0.02
<b>School connectedness</b>	1.09***	1.05-1.13	0.02	1.07***	1.04-1.11	0.02	1.10*	1.01-1.21	0.03	1.04	0.94- 1.16	0.05
<b>Attitudes &amp; beliefs</b>	0.90***	0.88-0.93	0.02	0.94***	0.92-0.95	0.01	0.85*	0.74-0.97	0.07	0.95	0.86-1.06	0.05
<b>Familial social support</b>												
Agree	1.05*	1.01-1.09	0.02	1.04*	1.00-1.09	0.02	0.99	0.89-1.10	0.05	0.98	0.87-1.10	0.06
Disagree (ref)												
<b>Friends social support</b>												
Agree	0.98	0.95-1.01	0.02	0.98	0.96-1.01	0.01	0.99	0.90-1.08	0.05	0.99	0.90-1.10	0.05
Disagree (ref)												
<b>Tribal social support</b>												
Agree	1.00	0.99-1.01	0.01	1.00	0.98-1.01	0.01	1.13	1.00-1.28	0.06	1.12*	1.01-1.25	0.05
Disagree (ref)												
Not applicable	1.01	0.98-1.04	0.02	1.01	0.99-1.04	0.01	0.83***	0.79-0.88	0.03	0.87***	0.81-0.92	0.03
<b>Wasta</b>	1.00	0.99-1.00	0.00	1.00	0.99-1.00	0	1.07***	1.05-1.08	0.01	1.05***	1.03-1.06	0.01
<b>Observed SH</b>	-	-	-	0.99	0.97-1.01	0.01	-	-	-	1.03	0.98- 1.09	0.03
<b>Severity perception</b>	-	-	-	1.09*	1.01-1.15	0.03	-	-	-	0.92	0.83-1.02	0.05
<b>Sense of responsibility</b>	-	-	-	1.03	0.99- 1.07	0.02	-	-	-	1.52***	1.30- 1.68	0.05
<b>Knowledge helping a victim</b>	-	-	-	1.02	0.99-1.04	0.01	-	-	-	1.23***	1.18- 1.28	0.02

\*P-value &lt;0.05, \*\* P-value&lt; 0.01, \*\*\* P-value &lt;0.001

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