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The Impact of Active Bystander Education on Intended Responses to Staff-Perpetrated Sexual Harassment among Female Medical Administration Students in Japan

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ABSTRACT

Medical administration personnel, involved in nearly all departments in healthcare institutions in Japan, play a crucial role in supporting victims of staff-perpetrated sexual harassment as active bystanders. This study aimed to evaluate the impact of active-bystander education on medical administration students' intended responses when witnessing such harassment. A pre-post intervention study targeted 51 female students (aged 18–24) attending a Tokyo college's medical administration programme. The participants were instructed to read an original leaflet explaining the 5D's of active bystander responses: Distract, Delegate, Document, Direct and Delay. The authors categorised the participants' free-text responses about their intended actions in hypothetical staff-perpetrated sexual harassment scenarios into these five responses, plus "Do nothing". Stewart–Maxwell tests were performed to analyse changes in the response distribution before and after the intervention. Prior knowledge and post-intervention understanding about active bystanders were also assessed.

Of 43 respondents (80.4%), only one (2.3%) had pre-intervention familiarity with the active-bystander concept. Following the intervention, 8 and 24 participants (18.6% and 55.8%) respectively reported strong and moderate understandings of active-bystander principles. The response distribution significantly differed ($\chi^2=12.633$, $p=0.027$). The most prevalent post-intervention response, "Do nothing", increased from 4 (9.8%) to 12 (29.3%).

Merely explaining active-bystander principles paradoxically led to more students feeling unable to act against staff-perpetrated harassment. Further research should explore this perceived inability and identify strategies for empowering students as active bystanders.

Keywords: Medical College Students; Gender-based Violence; Generation Z; Human Right; Workplaces Harassment