Scientific Research Publishing

Open Journal of Social Sciences, 2026, 14(11), 602-623
https://www.scirp.org/journal/jss
ISSN Online: 2327-5960
ISSN Print: 2327-5952

Prevalence, Self-Identification, and Psychosocial Correlates of Sexual Harassment among Students at an Argentine Public University

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How to cite this paper: Pérez-Belmonte, N., & Folino, J. O. (2026). Prevalence, Self-Identification, and Psychosocial Correlates of Sexual Harassment among Students at an Argentine Public University. *Open Journal of Social Sciences, 14,* 602-623.
https://doi.org/10.4236/jss.2026.1411033

Received: October 23, 2026
Accepted: November 22, 2026
Published: November 25, 2026

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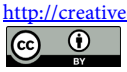

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Abstract

Background: Sexual harassment in higher education is widely documented, but its measurement remains methodologically challenging, and evidence from Argentine public universities is scarce. **Objective**: To estimate the prevalence, forms, and psychosocial correlates of sexual harassment among university students and to describe the contextual adaptation and temporal stability of the ASIES-UNAJ questionnaire. **Methods**: A cross-sectional survey was administered to 757 undergraduate students at the Instituto de Ciencias de la Salud, Universidad Nacional Arturo Jauretche, Argentina. Temporal stability was examined through a test-retest procedure with 35 students over a 14-day interval. **Results**: Overall, 11.8% of students reported at least one behaviorally defined harassment situation during the previous year. The most frequently reported situations were inappropriate sexualized staring (5.8%), excessive bodily proximity (3.2%), repeated sexual insinuations (2.8%), and intimidating sexual comments (2.6%), with percentages calculated relative to the full sample. Verbal harassment accounted for 50.3% of all affirmative behavioral-item responses, followed by non-verbal (27.4%) and physical harassment (20.1%). Harassment was associated with fear or negative anticipation (RR = 2.0), anxiety (RR = 1.2), and exhaustion during classes (RR = 1.2), as well as changes in daily routines. Test-retest agreement across behavioral items ranged from 94.3% to 100%. **Conclusions**: Sexual harassment consisted almost entirely of environmental harassment, with verbal and non-verbal behaviors accounting for most affirmative responses to the behavioral items, and was associated with psychosocial difficulties and changes in students' daily routines. The findings provide preliminary descriptive evidence of the temporal stability and potential usefulness

of the ASIES-UNAJ for research and institutional prevention, although further psychometric evaluation is required.

Keywords

Sexual Harassment, University Students, Higher Education, Prevalence, Surveys and Questionnaires

1. Introduction

Sexual harassment is a persistent and widely documented problem in higher education worldwide (UN Women, 2018). Students may experience various forms of unwanted sexual conduct, ranging from verbal harassment and sexually suggestive comments to coercion, intimidation, and sexual assault (Bondestam & Lundqvist, 2020; Burn, 2019; Igareda & Bodelón, 2013; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine [NASEM], 2019; Valls et al., 2016). Such behaviors may arise in everyday academic interactions involving students, faculty, staff, and authorities (Hill & Kearl, 2011) and have been associated with academic, psychological, and social consequences, including reduced academic engagement, emotional distress, and withdrawal from educational environments (Guarderas-Albuja et al., 2025; NASEM, 2019).

In recent years, sexual harassment among university students has received increasing international research attention. This interest reflects both the greater visibility of gender-based violence in academic institutions and the recognition that universities are not neutral social spaces: gendered power relations, organizational hierarchies, and cultural norms may facilitate or normalize sexual violence when adequate prevention and reporting mechanisms are lacking (Bondestam & Lundqvist, 2020; NASEM, 2019).

Large surveys and systematic reviews show that sexual harassment in universities is a recurring experience affecting a substantial proportion of students across institutional contexts, academic disciplines, and national higher education systems (Bondestam & Lundqvist, 2020; Cantor et al., 2020; Clancy et al., 2014; Fedina et al., 2018; Kelley & Parsons, 2000; Steele et al., 2024). This exposure is not evenly distributed across the student population, as women consistently report higher levels of sexual harassment victimization than men (Bondestam & Lundqvist, 2020; Burn, 2019). This gendered pattern is particularly relevant to health sciences education, given that women have historically constituted the majority of students entering health and welfare programs across many higher education systems (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2017). Health sciences education therefore warrants particular attention because of both the gender composition of its student population and the power dynamics and intensive interpersonal interactions associated with clinical training and academic health environments.

1.1. Measurement of Sexual Harassment

Despite expanding empirical research, measuring sexual harassment remains methodologically challenging, particularly because behaviorally defined experiences do not always coincide with respondents' self-identification as victims. Individuals may report conduct that meets established definitions without labeling it as harassment. Surveys relying exclusively on self-identification may therefore underestimate the prevalence of unwanted sexual conduct (Burn, 2019; Ferrer-Pérez & Bosch-Fiol, 2014; Fitzgerald et al., 1995; McDonald, 2012; NASEM, 2019; Rotundo et al., 2001; Willness et al., 2007). Accordingly, behaviorally defined questions describing concrete situations, such as unwanted sexual comments or persistent invitations after refusal, can reduce interpretive ambiguity and improve reporting accuracy (Burn, 2019; NASEM, 2019).

In Latin America, the Acoso Sexual en las Instituciones de Educación Superior (ASIES) instrument represents a comprehensive effort to operationalize sexual harassment in higher education. Developed through qualitative and quantitative procedures, including expert consultation and content validation, it comprises behaviorally specific items capturing different manifestations of harassment in academic environments (Albuja et al., 2018; Larrea et al., 2020) and has shown adequate reliability and validity in university populations (Guarderas et al., 2023).

However, instruments developed in one national context may require adaptation for use in different populations or higher education systems. Institutional structures, linguistic conventions, academic roles, and sociocultural interpretations of gender relations may affect item comprehension and the reporting of experiences.

1.2. Present Study

Although international research on sexual harassment in higher education has expanded, evidence from Latin America remains comparatively limited (Monsalve Duque et al., 2024), and systematic evidence on its prevalence and characteristics among Argentine university students is scarce.

The present study had two objectives: first, to examine the prevalence, forms, and psychosocial correlates of sexual harassment among students at the Instituto de Ciencias de la Salud (ICS), Universidad Nacional Arturo Jauretche (UNAJ); and second, to describe the contextual adaptation of the ASIES instrument for Argentine university students and examine the temporal stability of the resulting ASIES-UNAJ questionnaire through a test-retest procedure.

An earlier article based on the same survey of 757 students examined the conceptual and institutional context of sexual harassment, described the adaptation of the ASIES-UNAJ questionnaire, and reported descriptive findings covering students' entire university trajectory, together with a general account of psychosocial associations (Pérez-Belmonte, 2026). The present article focuses on behaviorally defined victimization during the previous 12 months, provides detailed statistical analyses of psychosocial correlates, and additionally examines test-retest agreement.

2. Method

2.1. Procedure

A cross-sectional survey study was conducted among university students. Data were collected using a contextually adapted version of the ASIES instrument and additional questionnaire items designed for the present study.

The survey was administered between May and November 2024 during regular class sessions in 42 courses, with groups of approximately 20 students each. A non-probability convenience sampling strategy was used. In coordination with the ICS director, one second-year subject was selected from each of the institute's nine academic programs, and all class groups of each selected subject were visited. Classroom visits were arranged in advance with the responsible teaching staff to minimize disruption to regular academic activities. After a brief introduction, all students present were invited to participate. It was explicitly stated that participation was voluntary and that declining to participate would have no academic or other consequences.

The questionnaire was administered via Google Forms. The first page contained the informed consent form; students who did not provide consent could not proceed with the survey. Participants completed the questionnaire individually using their mobile phones. Following the administration guidelines described by Larrea et al. (2020), adequate spacing between students was maintained to preserve privacy, and internet connectivity was provided by the university. To reduce the likelihood of duplicate submissions, the Google Forms "Limit to 1 response" setting was enabled, requiring participants to sign in to a Google account and preventing multiple submissions from the same account. Email address collection was disabled, so respondents' email addresses were not included in the survey dataset.

To assess temporal stability, 35 participants from the original sample voluntarily completed the questionnaire twice, on 14 and 28 August 2024, with a 14-day interval between administrations.

2.2. Context

The study was conducted at the ICS of the UNAJ, a public and tuition-free university located in Florencio Varela, in the southern area of Greater Buenos Aires, Argentina. Established in 2009, UNAJ is part of the Argentine national public university system, which has expanded in recent decades to increase access to higher education in socially and economically disadvantaged regions of the metropolitan area. UNAJ includes a large proportion of first-generation university students (González Velasco, 2018).

The ICS offers undergraduate programs in several health-related disciplines, including Medicine, Biochemistry, Nursing, Obstetrics, Kinesiology and Physiatry, and Surgical Technology, as well as shorter technical programs in areas such as Emergency and Disaster Response, Hospital Pharmacy, and Clinical Information and Patient Management.

2.3. Participants

Participants were students enrolled in programs offered by the ICS of the UNAJ. According to institutional records provided by the Área de Información y Estadística Universitaria of UNAJ (personal communication, 2025), the ICS had 20,846 regular students in 2024.

A total of 872 students were invited to participate during classroom survey administrations. Of these, 8 declined to provide informed consent and 107 did not submit their responses, resulting in 757 complete questionnaires included in the final sample (response rate = 86.8%).

Participants were recruited from second-year courses across all nine academic programs offered by the ICS. Because of the enrollment and prerequisite structures of these programs, students attending these courses may have been at different stages of progression in their degree programs.

Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 65 years (M = 28.2, SD = 8.2), and 58% were between 19 and 25 years old. Most participants identified as women (80.7%) or men (18.8%), while three participants reported other gender identities and one participant's gender identity was recorded as unknown.

The largest proportions of participants were enrolled in Kinesiology and Physiatry (25.1%), Nursing (21.0%), and Surgical Technology (11.5%), followed by smaller proportions from the remaining programs offered by the institute.

2.4. Measure

The ASIES questionnaire was selected because it had previously been applied in Latin American university populations and specifically assesses sexual harassment behaviors. By contrast, other instruments used in higher education research—such as the EASIS-U (Bosch-Fiol et al., 2011) and the ARC-3 survey (Swartout et al., 2019)—assess sexual harassment as part of broader constructs, including sexual interactions, campus climate, and sexual violence.

The ASIES uses behaviorally specific items to assess a broad range of harassment experiences. Respondents indicate whether they have experienced each situation during their university trajectory. Rather than requiring respondents to identify themselves as victims, the instrument presents concrete situations that may occur in academic interactions. This behavioral approach reduces interpretive ambiguity (Burn, 2019; NASEM, 2019). To reduce potential common method bias associated with self-reported data (Podsakoff et al., 2012), responses were collected without personally identifying information, items were organized into distinct sections, and clear and varied wording was used.

The instrument comprises 22 items in total. Twenty-one items assess experiences of sexual harassment and are organized into four conceptual dimensions: (1) non-consensual verbal sexual behavior (six situations; items 1 - 5 and 17); (2) non-consensual non-verbal sexual behavior (five situations; items 6 - 10); (3) non-consensual physical contact or unwelcome sexual proximity (four situations; items 11 - 14); and (4) abuse of power aimed at obtaining sexual favors (six situa-

tions; items 15, 16, and 18 - 21). An additional item referring to sexual abuse/rape was included in the questionnaire for descriptive purposes but was not incorporated into the dimensional structure or reliability analyses.

For descriptive purposes, questionnaire items were additionally classified according to the widely recognized distinction between environmental harassment and sexual extortion (quid pro quo harassment), as reflected in the guidelines of the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and subsequently adopted by numerous international organizations (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2018; Pérez Guardo & Rodríguez Sumaza, 2013). Environmental harassment refers to behaviors that create an intimidating, hostile, or humiliating academic environment, whereas sexual extortion involves requests for sexual favors linked to an actual or perceived position of authority, in exchange for academic or other institutional benefits or to avoid adverse consequences. This classification was applied solely for descriptive purposes in the presentation of the results and does not constitute part of the dimensional structure of the ASIES instrument.

Previous psychometric studies supported the four-factor structure of the instrument through exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses and reported satisfactory internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.837$; Albuja et al., 2018; Guarderas et al., 2023; Larrea et al., 2020).

In the present study, internal consistency was estimated using Cronbach's alpha. For this calculation, item responses covered participants' entire university trajectory, including experiences reported during the previous year and in earlier years. The additional item referring to sexual abuse/rape, which was not part of the dimensional structure, showed zero variance. One of the 21 dimensional items also showed zero variance and was therefore excluded from the analysis. Internal consistency was consequently estimated using the remaining 20 dimensional items, yielding an acceptable coefficient ($\alpha = 0.74$). Item-deletion analyses indicated that removing any additional item would not substantially improve the coefficient.

2.5. Contextual Adaptation of the Instrument

Prior to implementation, the ASIES questionnaire underwent contextual adaptation to the institutional, linguistic, and cultural characteristics of Argentine public universities. The process involved consultation with the original authors and wording adjustments to ensure clarity and relevance for the target population, without modifying the structure of the instrument. The adaptation was conducted in three stages.

Stage 1: Initial instrument review. In early 2023, the principal investigator reviewed the questionnaire in detail. Because the original ASIES was designed for all members of the university community—including students, faculty, administrative and service staff, and authorities—it referred to both academic and employment-related contexts. The review assessed the relevance of its sociodemographic variables and the suitability of its wording for a population composed ex-

clusively of university students.

Stage 2: Expert review. At the end of 2023, six specialists in gender studies and sexual violence in higher education reviewed the instrument. Each expert completed an online version while responding as if they were a university student and subsequently provided individual feedback on item clarity, the relevance of the situations described, and the instrument's suitability for capturing sexual harassment in university environments. Their observations contributed to refining the wording and contextual relevance of selected questions.

Stage 3: Student comprehension assessment. Between March and April 2024, three undergraduate students from UNAJ's Víctor Ierace Volunteer Program participated in training and questionnaire review sessions with the principal investigator and an ICS faculty member. After signing confidentiality agreements, they completed the questionnaire and provided feedback on their experience. As members of the target institutional context, their observations helped identify potential comprehension problems and assess the instrument's linguistic adequacy.

2.6. Modifications Introduced in the ASIES-UNAJ Version

As a result of the adaptation process, the general structure and behavioral content of the original questionnaire were preserved while several contextual modifications were introduced. These included minor wording adjustments, the removal or adaptation of expressions referring exclusively to employment-related circumstances, and the incorporation of additional contextual variables relevant to university students.

In addition, an introductory question was incorporated to assess respondents' subjective identification of sexual harassment. Participants were asked whether, according to their own understanding of the phenomenon, they had experienced sexual harassment at any time since entering the university. The behavioral section of the questionnaire subsequently presented 22 specific situations. For each situation reported, participants were asked whether it had occurred during the previous year or at an earlier point in their university trajectory.

For the analyses presented in this article, behaviorally defined victimization was restricted to students who reported at least one of these situations during the previous year. Self-recognition of sexual harassment was then examined within this subgroup. Responses to the initial general question were used to determine how many of these students had identified themselves as having experienced sexual harassment at some point since entering the university.

A detailed description of the modifications introduced in the ASIES-UNAJ version is available from the authors upon request.

2.7. Psychosocial Indicators and Changes in Daily Routines

Psychosocial indicators and changes in daily routines were assessed using items from the ASIES questionnaire (Larrea et al., 2020).

Psychosocial indicators referred to the previous four weeks of regular academic

activity. Participants answered "Yes" or "No" to each of 12 items addressing concentration difficulties, studying more slowly than usual, exhaustion during classes, reduced interest or pleasure, difficulty relaxing, fear that something very bad might happen, nervousness or anxiety, feeling down or hopeless, personal worries unrelated to studying, errors in academic tasks due to worries or distress, comments from instructors about their performance, and difficulties or disagreements with peers over uncompleted academic tasks. Each affirmative response was classified as positive for the corresponding indicator.

Changes in daily routines referred to the previous 12 months and were assessed through nine items covering fear of attending the place of study; changing telephone numbers or email addresses or closing social media accounts; changing routes or frequently visited places; moving residence or changing faculty or degree program; considering leaving university; temporarily withdrawing from university; restrictions in social life; significant disruption of sexual or affective life; and seeking psychological or psychiatric support. Each item had "Yes" and "No" response options, with affirmative responses classified as indicating the presence of the corresponding change or experience. Participants could answer affirmatively to more than one item. These questions did not explicitly attribute the reported changes to sexual harassment.

2.8. Ethical Considerations

The study was approved by the Bioethics and Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Medical Sciences, Universidad Nacional de La Plata (COBIMED), UNLP. Written authorization was also obtained from the Director of fhe Instituto de Ciencias de la Salud, Universidad Nacional Arturo Jauretche. Participation was voluntary, based on informed consent, and responses were collected anonymously.

2.9. Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to characterize the sample and to estimate the prevalence of sexual harassment experiences during the previous year. This 12-month reference period was adopted to facilitate comparisons with prevalence estimates reported in the international literature on sexual harassment in higher education (Cantor et al., 2020; NASEM, 2019).

The prevalence of each behavior was calculated as the proportion of the full sample endorsing the corresponding item for the previous year. Percentages describing the distribution of harassment forms, dimensions, and types were calculated using the total number of affirmative responses to the behavioral items referring to the previous year as the denominator. These responses do not represent a count of distinct incidents, because each endorsed item may encompass repeated experiences and different items may refer to behaviors occurring within the same incident.

Witness information was analyzed across participants' entire university trajec-

tory. For each endorsed behavioral item, respondents indicated the number of other people who had seen or heard what happened (0, 1, 2, 3, or four or more). Witness percentages were calculated using the 450 affirmative behavioral-item responses as the denominator. The unit of analysis was an endorsed item reported by a participant, rather than an individual student or a separately recorded incident.

Comparative analyses between students who reported victimization during the previous year and those who did not were performed using Pearson's chi-square tests for categorical variables and independent-samples *t* tests for continuous variables. Risk ratios (RRs) with 95% confidence intervals were calculated by comparing the prevalence of each psychosocial indicator among students who reported sexual harassment victimization during the previous year with its prevalence among students who did not report victimization. For these comparisons, *p* values were obtained from Pearson's chi-square tests without continuity correction, whereas 95% confidence intervals for RRs were calculated using the Wald method on the logarithmic scale. Because these procedures are not inferentially equivalent, their conclusions may differ for associations close to the significance threshold. Statistical significance was assessed using the Pearson chi-square *p* values, with a threshold of 0.05.

Additional analyses estimated age- and gender-adjusted prevalence ratios (aPRs) with 95% confidence intervals using separate Poisson regression models with a log link and robust sandwich variance estimates for each outcome (Zou, 2004). Each model included previous-year harassment victimization, age as a continuous variable, and gender identity. These analyses included 753 participants identifying as women or men (88 with and 665 without previous-year victimization). Three participants reporting other gender categories were excluded because of sparse observations, and one whose gender identity was recorded as unknown was also excluded. Descriptive and unadjusted analyses retained all 757 participants. Adjusted statistical significance was assessed using two-sided robust Wald tests at $p < 0.05$.

Because the questionnaire items were categorical and affirmative responses were infrequent, chance-corrected coefficients such as Cohen's kappa may produce unstable estimates under highly asymmetric distributions. Percentage agreement has therefore been recommended as a descriptive indicator of temporal stability in test-retest designs involving nominal data (Gisev et al., 2013; Sim & Wright, 2005). Accordingly, percentage agreement between administrations was calculated for each ASIES-UNAJ item.

All statistical analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics (version 26; IBM Corp., Armonk, NY, USA).

3. Results

3.1. Prevalence of Sexual Harassment

According to the behavioral items of the ASIES-UNAJ, 11.8% ($n = 89$) of the total

sample reported at least one behaviorally defined harassment situation during the previous year. Of these students, 38 (42.7%) had self-identified as having experienced sexual harassment at some point since entering the university, whereas 51 (57.3%) had not. The 38 students who reported both behaviorally defined victimization during the previous year and general self-identification represented 5.0% of the total sample.

Among the 89 students who reported harassment during the previous year, 49.4% endorsed one form of sexual harassment, whereas 50.6% endorsed more than one form: 22.5% reported two forms and 28.1% reported three or more.

Across the entire university trajectory, 14 of the 179 students with behaviorally defined victimization who answered the institutional reporting question indicated that they had reported an experience through an institutional channel or to an institutional authority (7.8%). Four additional students with behaviorally defined victimization had no recorded response to this question.

Regarding witness presence during participants' entire university trajectory, 243 of the 450 affirmative behavioral-item responses indicated no witnesses (54.0%), whereas 207 indicated at least one witness (46.0%). Four or more witnesses were reported for 80 responses (17.8%). These figures describe witness information associated with endorsed items and do not represent counts of distinct incidents or individual students.

3.2. Forms and Types of Sexual Harassment

The most commonly reported situation was inappropriate sexualized staring, reported by 5.8% of students ($n = 44$). Other frequent situations included persistent following or excessive bodily proximity (3.2%, $n = 24$), repeated sexual insinuations (2.8%, $n = 21$), and intimidating sexual comments (2.6%, $n = 20$). These situations accounted for 24.6%, 13.4%, 11.7%, and 11.2% of all affirmative behavioral-item responses, respectively.

When grouped according to the dimensions measured by the instrument, verbal harassment accounted for 50.3% of all affirmative behavioral-item responses, followed by gestural or non-verbal harassment (27.4%), physical harassment (20.1%), and situations involving abuse of power (2.2%). The full distribution of reported harassment situations and their corresponding dimensions and types is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of affirmative responses to sexual harassment behavioral items referring to the previous year, by item, dimension and type.

Situation	Dimension	n	% of students (N = 757)	% of affirmative responses (total = 179)	Theoretical classification
1. Sexual messages, calls, emails, notes, SMS, or chat	Verbal	16	2.1	8.9	EH
2. Intimidating sexual comments	Verbal	20	2.6	11.2	EH
3. Repeated invitations to intimate dates	Verbal	16	2.1	8.9	EH

Continued

4. Repeated sexual insinuations	Verbal	21	2.8	11.7	EH
5. Sexual jokes, questions, or comments	Verbal	16	2.1	8.9	EH
6. Inappropriate sexualized staring	Non-verbal	44	5.8	24.6	EH
7. Sexual signs or gestures	Non-verbal	1	0.1	0.6	EH
8. Being forced to view the display of sexual organs	Non-verbal	1	0.1	0.6	EH
9. Being sexually spied on	Non-verbal	2	0.3	1.1	EH
10. Being forced to view sexual or pornographic images	Non-verbal	1	0.1	0.6	EH
11. Being kissed or hugged	Physical	12	1.6	6.7	EH
12. Being touched on intimate body parts	Physical	0	0.0	0.0	EH
13. Being forced to sexually touch another person	Physical	0	0.0	0.0	EH
14. Excessive bodily proximity	Physical	24	3.2	13.4	EH
15. Being forced to dress in a provocative manner	Abuse of power	1	0.1	0.6	EH
16. Being coerced into intimacy within an educational context	Abuse of power	2	0.3	1.1	EH
17. Explicit request to engage in sexual relations	Verbal	1	0.1	0.6	EH
18. Being forced to undress or expose one's body	Abuse of power	0	0.0	0.0	EH
19. Negative consequences for refusing sexual proposals	Abuse of power	1	0.1	0.6	SE
20. Rewards offered in exchange for sexual favors	Abuse of power	0	0.0	0.0	SE
21. Blackmail, intimidation, or threats to prevent reporting	Abuse of power	0	0.0	0.0	SE
22. Forced sexual intercourse	Sexual abuse/rape	0	0.0	0.0	Not applicable
Total		179	—	100.0	

Note. Frequencies represent the number of students who endorsed each behavioral item for the previous year. Percentages of students were calculated using the full sample (N = 757), whereas percentages of affirmative responses were calculated using the total number of item endorsements (179). Students could endorse more than one item; therefore, percentages of students do not sum to 100%. Item endorsements do not represent counts of distinct incidents. EH = environmental harassment; SE = sexual extortion. Percentages were rounded to one decimal place; totals may therefore differ slightly from 100%. Item 22 refers to sexual abuse/rape and was therefore not classified as either environmental harassment or sexual extortion. The classification into environmental harassment and sexual extortion was applied by the authors for the descriptive presentation of results, based on a widely recognized conceptual distinction in the sexual harassment literature, and does not form part of the original structure of the ASIES instrument.

Regarding typology, 99.4% (n = 178) of affirmative behavioral-item responses corresponded to situations classified as environmental harassment, whereas 0.6% (n = 1) corresponded to a situation classified as sexual extortion.

3.3. Psychosocial Correlates of Sexual Harassment

Students who reported sexual harassment during the previous year were significantly younger than those who did not report victimization (M = 25.76 vs. M = 28.56, t(755) = 3.02, $p = 0.003$).

Students who reported sexual harassment showed differences across several psychosocial indicators related to emotional well-being, academic functioning, and interpersonal relationships. The distribution of these indicators according to harassment victimization is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Psychosocial indicators by sexual harassment victimization during the previous year.

Indicator	No harassment n (%)	Harassment n (%)	χ^2	p	RR	95% CI
Emotional indicators						
Personal worries	547 (81.9%)	77 (86.5%)	1.16	0.281	1.06	0.97 - 1.16
Nervousness or anxiety	477 (71.4%)	77 (86.5%)	9.14	0.003	1.21	1.10 - 1.33
Difficulty relaxing	420 (62.9%)	65 (73.0%)	3.52	0.061	1.16	1.01 - 1.33
Low interest or pleasure in activities	309 (46.3%)	52 (58.4%)	4.66	0.031	1.26	1.04 - 1.53
Depression or hopelessness	262 (39.2%)	44 (49.4%)	3.40	0.065	1.26	1.00 - 1.59
Fear or negative anticipation	191 (28.6%)	50 (56.2%)	27.54	<0.001	1.96	1.58 - 2.45
Academic indicators						
Exhaustion during classes	457 (68.4%)	75 (84.3%)	9.45	0.002	1.23	1.11 - 1.37
Difficulty concentrating	437 (65.4%)	64 (71.9%)	1.48	0.224	1.10	0.95 - 1.27
Slowing down in study	432 (64.7%)	62 (69.7%)	0.86	0.353	1.08	0.93 - 1.25
Errors in tasks	234 (35.0%)	35 (39.3%)	0.63	0.426	1.12	0.85 - 1.48
Interpersonal indicators						
Teacher observation	56 (8.4%)	12 (13.5%)	2.50	0.114	1.61	0.90 - 2.88
Peer conflicts	51 (7.6%)	7 (7.9%)	0.006	0.939	1.03	0.48 - 2.20

Note. "Harassment" refers to students who reported at least one form of sexual harassment during the previous year ($n = 89$); "no harassment" refers to students who did not report victimization during that period ($n = 668$). Percentages were calculated within each victimization group. RR = risk ratio; CI = confidence interval. p values correspond to Pearson's chi-square tests without continuity correction. Confidence intervals for RRs were calculated using the log-Wald method. Statistical significance was determined from the Pearson chi-square tests; discrepancies with confidence intervals near the null value reflect the different inferential procedures.

Several psychosocial indicators were positively associated with harassment victimization. The strongest association was observed for fear or negative anticipation: students who reported harassment during the previous year were approximately twice as likely to report this indicator as students who did not report harassment (RR = 1.96, 95% CI [1.58, 2.45]). Significant associations were also observed for low interest or pleasure in activities (RR = 1.26, 95% CI [1.04, 1.53]), nervousness or anxiety (RR = 1.21, 95% CI [1.10, 1.33]), and exhaustion during classes (RR = 1.23, 95% CI [1.11, 1.37]).

Students who reported harassment during the previous year also reported changes in their daily routines and experiences compatible with possible psychosocial consequences more frequently than those who did not report harassment. Their distribution according to harassment victimization is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Changes in daily routines and experiences compatible with psychosocial consequences according to sexual harassment victimization during the previous year.

Change reported	No harassment *n* (%)	Harassment *n* (%)	χ^2	*p*	RR	95% CI
Limited social life	130 (19.5)	30 (33.7)	9.6	0.002	1.70	1.2; 2.4
Modified routes or avoided places on campus	40 (6.0)	27 (30.3)	57.7	<0.001	5.10	3.3; 7.8
Sought psychological or psychiatric support	73 (10.9)	19 (21.3)	8.0	0.005	1.95	1.24; 3.08
Considered leaving the university	79 (11.8)	19 (21.3)	6.3	0.01	1.80	1.1; 2.8
Fear of attending university	22 (3.3)	14 (15.7)	26.8	<0.001	4.80	2.5; 9
Sexual or affective life disturbance	39 (5.8)	15 (16.9)	14.4	<0.001	2.90	1.7; 5
Changed phone number or contact details	25 (3.7)	13 (14.6)	19.4	<0.001	3.90	2.1; 7.3
Temporary university withdrawal	67 (10.0)	12 (13.5)	1	0.32	1.30	0.76; 2.38
Moved or changed faculty/major	59 (8.8)	9 (10.1)	0.16	0.69	1.10	0.6; 2.2

Note. Percentages represent the proportion within each group (victims: $n = 89$; non-victims: $n = 668$). Participants could report more than one change in their daily routines; therefore, percentages do not sum to 100%. The survey items did not explicitly ask whether these changes were directly attributable to harassment experiences. *p* values correspond to Pearson's chi-square tests without continuity correction. Confidence intervals for RRs were calculated using the log-Wald method. Statistical significance was determined from the Pearson chi-square tests; discrepancies with confidence intervals near the null value reflect the different inferential procedures.

Among students who reported harassment during the previous year, the most frequent changes included limiting social activities (33.7%), modifying usual routes on campus (30.3%), seeking psychological or psychiatric support (21.3%), and considering leaving the university (21.3%). The strongest associations were observed for modifying routes or avoiding places on campus (RR = 5.1, 95% CI [3.30, 7.80]), fear of attending university (RR = 4.8, 95% CI [2.50, 9.00]), changing telephone numbers or contact details (RR = 3.9, 95% CI [2.10, 7.30]), and disturbances in sexual or affective life (RR = 2.9, 95% CI [1.70, 5.00]). Temporary university withdrawal and changing faculty or major were not significantly associated with harassment.

In additional analyses adjusting for age and gender, victimization remained associated with fear or negative anticipation (aPR = 1.85, 95% CI [1.49, 2.30]), nervousness or anxiety (aPR = 1.21, 95% CI [1.10, 1.33]), and exhaustion during classes (aPR = 1.21, 95% CI [1.09, 1.33]). Difficulty relaxing was also statistically significant in the adjusted analysis (aPR = 1.19, 95% CI [1.03, 1.36]), whereas low interest or pleasure was not (aPR = 1.19, 95% CI [0.98, 1.44]). Seven of the nine changes in daily routines remained significantly associated with victimization; temporary withdrawal and moving residence or changing faculty or degree pro-

gram were not. Complete adjusted estimates are provided in Supplementary Table S1.

3.4. Test-Retest Agreement

Agreement between administrations ranged from 94.3% to 100% across the behavioral items. Table 4 presents the percentage agreement for each ASIES-UNAJ item.

Table 4. Test-retest Agreement of the ASIES-UNAJ Survey (14-day interval, $n = 35$).

Situation	Matches	% Agreement
Overall experience of sexual harassment at the university	33/35	94.3
1. Sexual messages, calls, emails, notes, SMS, or chat	33/35	94.3
2. Intimidating sexual comments	33/35	94.3
3. Repeated invitations to intimate dates	33/35	94.3
4. Repeated sexual insinuations	34/35	97.1
5. Sexual jokes, questions, or comments	33/35	94.3
6. Inappropriate sexualized staring	34/35	97.1
7. Sexual signs or gestures	35/35	100.0
8. Being forced to view the display of sexual organs	34/35	97.1
9. Being sexually spied on	35/35	100.0
10. Being forced to view sexual or pornographic images	35/35	100.0
11. Being kissed or hugged	34/35	97.1
12. Being touched on intimate body parts	35/35	100.0
13. Being forced to sexually touch another person	35/35	100.0
14. Excessive bodily proximity	35/35	100.0
15. Being forced to dress in a provocative manner	35/35	100.0
16. Being coerced into intimacy within an educational context	35/35	100.0
17. Explicit request to engage in sexual relations	35/35	100.0
18. Being forced to undress or expose one's body	35/35	100.0
19. Negative consequences for refusing sexual proposals	35/35	100.0
20. Rewards offered in exchange for sexual favors	35/35	100.0
21. Blackmail, intimidation, or threats to prevent reporting	35/35	100.0
22. Forced sexual intercourse	35/35	100.0

Note. Percentages were rounded to one decimal place; totals may therefore differ slightly from 100%. Agreement percentages represent the proportion of participants who provided identical responses in the first and second administration of the questionnaire.

4. Discussion

The findings provide empirical evidence on the prevalence and characteristics of sexual harassment among university students in the institutional context studied. Approximately one out of every nine students reported experiencing at least one

behaviorally defined form of sexual harassment during the previous year. This prevalence is consistent with previous international studies indicating that sexual harassment remains a significant concern in higher education institutions (Bondestam & Lundqvist, 2020; NASEM, 2019).

Approximately half of the students who reported harassment during the previous year endorsed multiple forms of sexual harassment. This co-occurrence suggests that different harassment behaviors may cluster within students' experiences, although the data do not establish whether these behaviors occurred within the same incident or in separate episodes.

Among students who reported at least one behaviorally defined harassment situation during the previous year, 42.7% had self-identified as having experienced sexual harassment at some point since entering the university, whereas 57.3% had not. This finding is consistent with previous research showing that individuals may report behaviors corresponding to established definitions of harassment without necessarily applying that label to their experiences (Fitzgerald et al., 1995; NASEM, 2019). Behaviorally specific questions may therefore identify experiences that remain unrecognized or normalized when respondents are asked only to identify themselves as victims.

However, the self-identification question covered the respondent's entire university trajectory, whereas behavioral victimization was restricted to situations reported during the previous year. An affirmative response to the general question cannot therefore be linked with certainty to the same situation captured by the behavioral items. The findings indicate a discrepancy between behavioral reporting and general self-identification, but do not demonstrate that respondents failed to recognize the same event as sexual harassment. Future studies should use equivalent temporal reference periods and explicitly link self-identification to the behaviorally reported situations.

The predominance of inappropriate sexualized staring and verbal harassment indicates that environmental forms accounted for most affirmative responses to the behavioral items in this sample. Harassment victimization as a whole was associated with anxiety and exhaustion during classes (**Table 2**), as well as with changes in daily routines and other experiences compatible with possible psychosocial consequences. However, the analyses did not examine whether particular forms of harassment were independently associated with these indicators. Moreover, because of the cross-sectional design and the absence of explicit attribution of the reported changes to harassment experiences, these findings indicate co-occurrence rather than causal effects.

These associations nevertheless have potential implications for university support services. While preventing harassment should remain the primary institutional objective, students who experience harassment may also benefit from timely psychological, academic, and institutional support. Responses aimed at addressing the emotional, academic, and behavioral difficulties associated with victimization may therefore complement primary prevention efforts.

The low level of formal reporting and witness presence associated with a sub-

stantial proportion of affirmative behavioral-item responses also illustrate the social and institutional complexity of harassment in university settings. Because formal reporting and witness information were analyzed separately and at different levels, these findings do not establish whether experiences involving witnesses were more likely to be formally reported. Nevertheless, witnesses were indicated in a substantial proportion of affirmative behavioral-item responses, while formal reporting remained uncommon overall. This pattern highlights the potential role of bystanders and underscores the need to strengthen institutional mechanisms that facilitate reporting and intervention (Bondestam & Lundqvist, 2020; Burn, 2019; NASEM, 2019).

Beyond these substantive findings, the study contributes methodological evidence through the contextual adaptation of the ASIES instrument for an Argentine public university. This process sought to preserve the instrument's conceptual structure while improving its clarity and contextual appropriateness for the target population.

The test-retest assessment showed a high proportion of identical responses across the analyzed items over the two-week interval. However, given the categorical nature of the variables and the low frequency of affirmative responses, percentage agreement should be interpreted as a descriptive indicator of response consistency rather than a conclusive estimate of test-retest reliability. The observed level of agreement may have been substantially influenced by agreement on negative responses (Gisev et al., 2013; Sim & Wright, 2005).

These results complement previous studies of the psychometric properties of the ASIES. Earlier research provided evidence of content validity, internal structure, and internal consistency in university samples (Albuja et al., 2018; Guarderas et al., 2023). The present study extends that work by providing preliminary descriptive evidence of response consistency when the instrument is applied in a different national context.

Despite the high overall agreement, a small number of responses changed from "No" to "Yes" between administrations. One possible—but untested—explanation is that initial exposure to behaviorally specific questions encouraged some respondents to reconsider interactions previously perceived as ambiguous or normalized. Previous research indicates that behaviorally specific questions can facilitate recognition of experiences that respondents may not spontaneously label as harassment (Burn, 2019; Fitzgerald et al., 1995; NASEM, 2019). However, the present data cannot determine whether these changes reflected reconsideration, differences in recall or interpretation, response variability, or new experiences occurring during the interval between administrations.

A smaller number of responses changed from "Yes" to "No." These variations may similarly reflect differences in recall or item interpretation, momentary uncertainty, or contextual factors operating at the time of questionnaire completion. Because the instrument relies on retrospective self-reports of complex interpersonal experiences, some variability between administrations should be expected.

Strengths and Limitations

The study has several strengths. First, it provides a detailed description of the process used to adapt an existing measurement instrument to a new national and institutional context. The involvement of both experts and university students in this process and the description of the resulting modifications contribute to methodological transparency and may facilitate comparisons across higher education systems. Second, the use of behaviorally specific items alongside a general self-identification question made it possible to examine the discrepancy between reported experiences and subjective identification as having experienced sexual harassment. Third, the test-retest assessment provides preliminary descriptive evidence of response consistency over a fourteen-day interval in this specific population.

Several limitations should also be acknowledged. The test-retest analysis was based on a small subsample, which limits the precision and scope of the conclusions that can be drawn about temporal stability. In addition, affirmative responses were infrequent across most items; consequently, the high overall agreement may have been driven predominantly by agreement on negative responses. Percentage agreement should therefore be interpreted as a descriptive indicator rather than a conclusive estimate of test-retest reliability. Future studies should use larger samples and report measures that distinguish agreement on affirmative and negative responses.

The study was conducted exclusively among students from the health sciences institute of a single public university. The convenience selection of subjects and recruitment of students present during classroom visits may have introduced selection bias. Participants were recruited from second-year courses; however, enrollment in these courses did not necessarily indicate that they were at the same stage of progression in their degree programs, and most participants identified as women. These characteristics limit the generalizability of the findings to students from other academic disciplines, institutions, stages of study, and gender compositions.

The reliance on self-reported experiences constitutes another limitation. Responses may be influenced by recall, individual interpretations of interpersonal interactions, and willingness to report sensitive experiences. Although behaviorally specific wording reduces reliance on respondents' subjective identification of harassment, it cannot completely eliminate these potential sources of reporting variability.

Finally, the cross-sectional design does not permit causal inferences regarding the associations between harassment victimization and the psychosocial indicators examined. This limitation is particularly relevant to the reported changes in daily routines: the questionnaire did not explicitly ask whether participants attributed these changes to their harassment experiences. They should therefore be interpreted as changes associated with victimization or compatible with possible psychosocial consequences, rather than as demonstrated consequences of sexual harassment.

5. Conclusion

The present study contributes empirical and methodological evidence to research on sexual harassment in Argentine higher education. Affirmative responses to the behavioral items corresponded predominantly to environmental forms of harassment, with verbal and non-verbal behaviors accounting for most responses, and harassment victimization was associated with psychosocial difficulties and changes in students' daily routines. Formal reporting was uncommon, while witnesses were indicated in a substantial proportion of affirmative behavioral-item responses. Together, these findings provide information relevant to understanding the individual and institutional dimensions of sexual harassment in this university setting.

The study also describes the contextual adaptation of the ASIES instrument for use among Argentine university students. The observed test-retest agreement provides preliminary descriptive evidence of response consistency, although larger and more diverse samples and measures that distinguish agreement on affirmative and negative responses are required before firm conclusions can be drawn about test-retest reliability. By incorporating questions about witnesses, formal reporting, and subjective self-identification, the ASIES-UNAJ also broadens the possibilities for examining institutional and perceptual dimensions of sexual harassment.

Taken together, the findings support the need for university policies that combine primary prevention with accessible reporting procedures and effective psychological, academic, and institutional support. Future research should evaluate the ASIES-UNAJ in diverse institutional contexts, replicate the observed prevalence and association patterns, and further examine its factorial structure, internal consistency across populations, test-retest reliability, and measurement invariance. Such evidence may contribute both to the continued psychometric evaluation of the instrument and to the development of institutional responses to sexual harassment in higher education.

Acknowledgements

The authors gratefully acknowledge María Azul Macchi for her valuable collaboration throughout the development of this research, her critical review of the manuscript and insightful comments, and her support in facilitating institutional contacts and contributing to the understanding of regulatory and institutional aspects.

This article reports partial results from a Master's thesis currently in progress at the Faculty of Medical Sciences, National University of La Plata, Argentina.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization, N.P.-B. and J.O.F.; methodology, N.P.-B. and J.O.F.; formal analysis, J.O.F.; investigation, N.P.-B.; data curation, N.P.-B. and J.O.F.; writing—original draft preparation, N.P.-B.; writing—review and editing, N.P.-B. and

J.O.F.; supervision, J.O.F. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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Supplement

Table S1. Age and gender-adjusted associations of previous-year sexual harassment victimization with psychosocial indicators and changes in daily routines.

Indicator	aPR	95% CI	*p*
Psychosocial indicators			
Personal worries	1.08	0.99 - 1.18	0.090
Nervousness or anxiety	1.21	1.10 - 1.33	<0.001
Difficulty relaxing	1.19	1.03 - 1.36	0.016
Low interest or pleasure in activities	1.19	0.98 - 1.44	0.084
Depression or hopelessness	1.20	0.95 - 1.51	0.119
Fear or negative anticipation	1.85	1.49 - 2.30	<0.001
Exhaustion during classes	1.21	1.09 - 1.33	<0.001
Difficulty concentrating	1.05	0.91 - 1.20	0.509
Slowing down in study	1.06	0.91 - 1.23	0.484
Errors in tasks	1.13	0.86 - 1.50	0.380
Teacher observation	1.59	0.89 - 2.85	0.116
Peer conflicts	0.92	0.44 - 1.93	0.818
Changes in daily routines			
Limited social life	1.65	1.19 - 2.28	0.003
Modified routes or frequently visited places	4.33	2.74 - 6.83	<0.001
Sought psychological or psychiatric support	1.87	1.19 - 2.95	0.007
Considered leaving the university	1.80	1.15 - 2.84	0.011
Fear of attending university	4.34	2.27 - 8.30	<0.001
Sexual or affective life disturbance	2.80	1.63 - 4.84	<0.001
Changed phone number or contact details	3.64	1.93 - 6.86	<0.001
Temporary university withdrawal	1.43	0.80 - 2.56	0.227
Moved or changed faculty/major	1.12	0.58 - 2.16	0.735

Note. aPR = adjusted prevalence ratio; CI = confidence interval. Each row represents a separate Poisson regression model with a log link and robust sandwich variance estimates, adjusting for continuous age and gender identity. No previous-year victimization was the reference exposure category. Analyses included 753 participants identifying as women or men, including 88 with previous-year victimization. Confidence intervals and *p* values were obtained using robust Wald inference.