



SVF 70: Sexual harassment in schools: A Swedish sexual harassment lawsuit through the eyes of an expert witness

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Outline of the presentation

Sexual harassment in the Swedish context

The case

Normalisation processes



What is sexual harassment

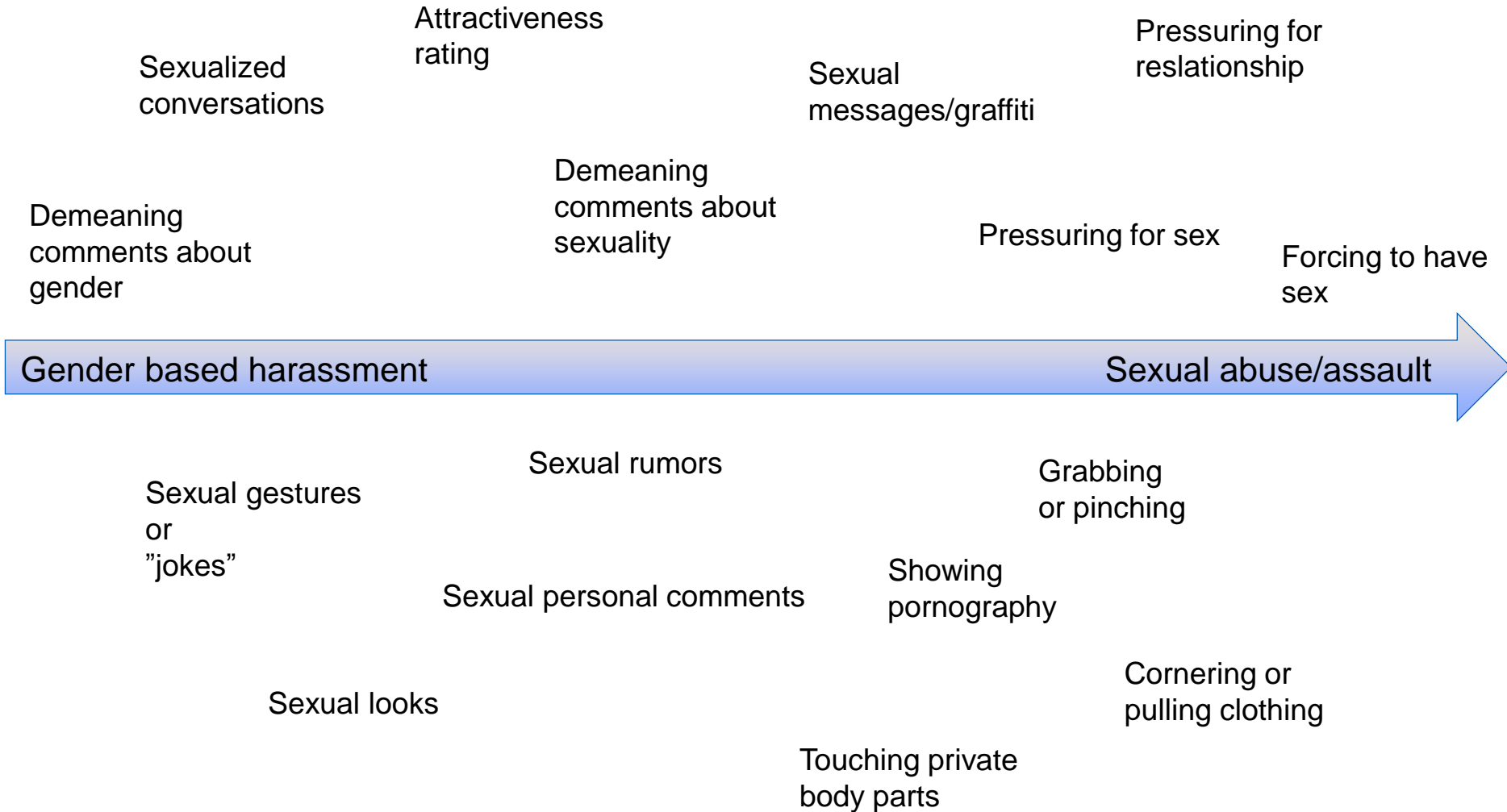
according to the

Swedish Discrimination Act 2008:567 ?

”.....a behavior of a sexual nature which violate someone’s dignity”



...a behavior of a sexual nature.....



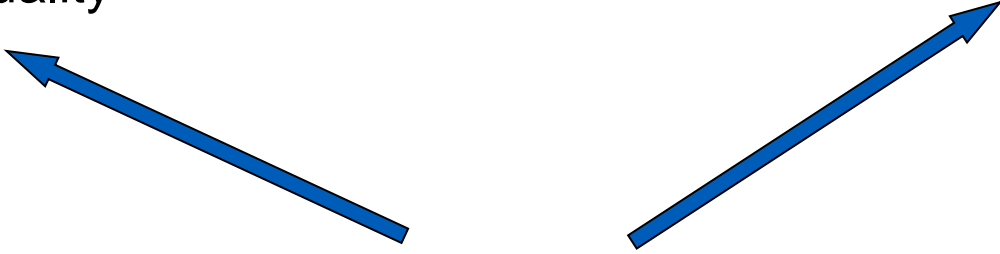


Schools' obligations according to the Swedish discrimination law

- To investigate what happened
- To document actions taken by the school
- To follow up
- To make sure that the harassment stop
- To have a plan against discrimination (including sexual harassment) which is evaluated every year
-and which is developed together with the students

Power asymmetry
Gender inequality
Violence

Democracy
Gender equality
Freedom from violence
Safety



School

Normalisation processes for sexual harassment and other forms of gender based violence



- Dominant discourse of gender equality
- National Curriculum
- Education Act
- Work Environmental Act
- Student Safety Act
- Discrimination Act (1st Jan 2009)



Normalization on different structural levels

Societal level

Lack of laws and policies (or vague), lack of a common definition, invisible in national reports etc...)

Organizational level

No consequences, different norms in school vs. society, making the problem invisible

Individual level

Accepting, expecting, giving up, desensitized (both victim and perpetrator),etc.

The case.....

- Victim = 18 year old girl at a vocational program, 12th grade
- Offender = 18 year old boy in the same class

The school is reported to the Discrimination Ombudsman (DO) by the girl's boyfriend.

Duration of the harassment: about a year

- Verbal, non-verbal and sexual assault

The case....

First case in Sweden taken to court (2012)

The first time the discrimination law was tested in court concerning sexual harassment in a school

The trial 9th of June 2014

Verdict 13th of August

The DO and the girl won the case.



Forms of harassment, some examples....

- Verbal: "You have a nice ass"
- Sexualized comments of her sexual relationship with her boyfriend
- "You want to suck me ?"
- Sexual abuse: thrusting his hips toward her face



The aim

- To analyze factors that contribute to normalization of sexual harassment in schools by using the first lawsuit as a case study.
- To reflect on my role as an expert witness

Methods

Data material:

The defendant's plea, the victim's testimony and reports of the proceedings from the school (i.e. the responsible authority of the school) and the DO. Protocols from meetings with representatives from DO and staff at the school, personal interviews with Kate and telephone interviews with the other girls in the class. The judgement.

Thematic analysis according to Braun and Clarke (2006)

Themes and subthemes that emerged in the text as parts of normalization processes for sexual harassment in a high school at an organizational level.

Themes	Organisational deficiency	Shifting responsibility	Ignorance of gender and power
Sub-themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -not following the law -lack of boundaries and consequences -trivializing -lack of surveillance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -individualisation -blaming the victim 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - acceptance of sexual harassment - ignorance of gender and sexuality

Conclusions

- Complex and multilayered web of processes related to sexual harassment at the organizational level
- The law is clear about schools' obligations regarding sexual harassment but having a law is obviously not enough.
- The school staff need to be more aware of normalization processes on the organizational level in order to promote an environment where students have a safe and healthy learning environment.

Thank you for listening!



Examples of sexual harassment, percent

