Analysis of the prevalence and perception of sexual harassment between university students in Colombia

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Abstract: This paper presents an analysis of the prevalence and perception of sexual harassment in women and men at two universities in Medellín, Colombia. The research was conducted by an interdisciplinary team of social psychologists and lawyers with a gender perspective. A mixed design was used and the following data-generating techniques were implemented: surveys, in-depth interviews, and reflection workshops. According to the results, women are the main victims of sexual harassment in university contexts and there are significant differences in the perception of sexual harassment between men and women. It is suggested that this difference is related to the roles of seduction played by men and women, their discrepancies around the interpretation of sexual consent, and the fact that women are mainly harassed by authority figures such as professors and that they experience higher levels of negative affect as a consequence of unwanted sexual advances. In conclusion, sexual harassment becomes part of the university habitus, due to the daily occurrence and the diverse perceptions of the community, which, when trivialized, promote the violation of women’s fundamental freedoms, preventing them from enjoying decent conditions to exercise their self-determination in the educational context, and the right to complete their higher education in an appropriate manner.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
We are an interdisciplinary group of researchers with backgrounds in law and social psychology, we develop research projects to help in the prevention and attention of gender violence in educational contexts. In the last five years we have developed research about sexual harassment, emphasizing the responses of the victims and the feminist movement within educational institutions, the particularities of sexual harassment in virtual environments and the asymmetrical power relations underlying this problem. As a result of this research, protocols for prevention and attention to cases of sexual violence and gender violence have been created in some Colombian universities.

PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT
This paper presents an analysis of the prevalence and perception of sexual harassment in students at two universities in Colombia. We found significant differences in the prevalence and the perception of sexual harassment between men and women. Unlike other studies on the perception of sexual harassment, which focus on the influence of context, ideology, the attractiveness of the victim and the perpetrator, personality, culture and family background, this study makes a contribution from the study of gender roles. We suggested that the difference in harassment perception is related to the seduction roles played by men and women; also by their discrepancies around the interpretation of sexual consent; the fact that women are mainly harassed by authority figures such as professors and finally, that they experience higher levels of negative effects as a consequence of unwanted sexual advances.
1. Introduction

Sexual harassment is the gender-based violence that most frequently affects university students, with women being the main victims of this scourge (Castaño et al., 2010; Hinojosa et al., 2013). Harassment hinders the academic success of victims (Cuenca, 2013) and affects their mental health (Hermann et al., 2017; Hernández et al., 2015). Recently, various feminist collectives in universities have begun to demand the eradication of this form of violence in Latin American higher education institutions. In the case of Colombia, the Constitutional Court (judgment T.478 2018) and the Ministerio de Educación Nacional—MEN (2018) have urged these institutions to take measures for prevention, care, and sanctions in the face of sexual harassment.

In Colombia, sexual harassment is a crime defined in the Criminal Code as follows:

Whoever for his/her own benefit or that of a third party, and taking advantage of his/her manifest superiority or relations of authority or power, age, sex, labor, social, family, or economic position, harasses physically or verbally, for nonconsensual sexual purposes, another person, shall incur imprisonment from one (1) to three (3) years (Article 210A).

However, it is important to clarify that only in the last instance (as a last resort), sexual harassment is addressed by criminal law, since there are different forms of sexual harassment of lower intensity that affect the working or academic life of those who suffer it. For instance, in the university environment, sexual harassment can be considered as a disciplinary offense committed by administrative staff, professors, and students or as a behavior that alters coexistence among members of the university community and therefore requires intervention through psychoeducational tools. Given these considerations, as well as the definitions proposed by other authors (Cuenca, 2013; Hernández et al., 2015; Hinojosa et al., 2013; Navarro-Guzmán et al., 2016), this research understands sexual harassment as any verbal or physical act, by face-to-face or virtual means, of a sexual nature, not consented by the recipient and perceived as threatening, offensive, unreasonable, or exceeding the individual’s coping resources.

In that context, this research aimed to propose psychosocial and legal foundations for university policies for prevention and care of sexual harassment for Universidad San Buenaventura Medellín (USBMED) and Universidad Autónoma Latinoamericana (UNAULA). In order to achieve this goal, the research team proposed, in the first place, to identify the presence and characteristics of sexual harassment situations affecting students at the two universities. It also sought to gain an understanding of the psychosocial conditions that shape situations of sexual harassment, since harassment behaviors are embedded in the interpersonal dynamics of men and women, respond to the cultural policies and practices in force in university contexts, and are permeated by the norms and values of the broader sociocultural environment (Lenhart, 2004).

This article presents an analysis comparing the prevalence and perception of sexual harassment between male and female students. Perception of harassment refers to the fact that participants consider the situations they experience as sexual harassment. Perception is relevant since, in various research and legislations, the subjective component of sexual harassment is recognized, i.e., the fact that victims are the ones who judge that the harassment situation has taken place based on their interpretation of the event, the intentions of the perpetrator, and their own feelings of discomfort or vulnerability (Pereira & Calderón, 2007).
Different research has suggested that the interpretation made by social actors regarding whether a behavior constitutes sexual harassment or not may vary according to the gender of who judges such behavior; the context in which it occurs; the ideology of the perceiver; the relationship between the actors (Bursik & Gefter, 2011, as cited in Herrera et al., 2016); the attractiveness of the perpetrator and the victim (Herrera et al., 2016); the status of the perpetrator in relation to the victim (Blumenthal, 1998; Bursik & Gefter, 2011); and the individual’s experiences, personality, or cultural, religious, and family background (Dekker et al., 2013).

The existence of a significant gender difference in the perception of sexual harassment has been emphasized: women have a broader conception of sexual harassment compared to men and therefore perceive it largely (Blahopoulou et al., 2009; Blumenthal, 1998; Ekore, 2012; Ferrer-Pérez & Bosch-Fiol, 2014; Gutek, 1995). Men tend to perceive as harassment mainly those behaviors that involve physical contact (Cuenca, 2013; Ferrer-Pérez & Bosch-Fiol, 2014) and tend to consider these situations of unwanted sexual attention as rude, but not criminal (Blahopoulou et al., 2009), show greater tolerance for sexual harassment (Dekker et al., 2013; Herrera et al., 2016) and attribute less severity to verbal harassment (Ekore, 2012; Ferrer-Pérez & Bosch-Fiol, 2014; Lizama-Lefno & Hurtado-Quishiones, 2019).

According to Ferrer-Pérez and Bosch-Fiol (2014), the most usual theoretical approaches to explain the differences in the perception of harassment according to gender are the Social Identity Theory and feminist-oriented sociocultural theories. From the Social Identity Theory frame it is proposed that people tend consciously or unconsciously to make judgments that facilitate positive attitudes towards members of the ingroup, in this sense, women are more likely to identify with victims of sexual harassment as these have been more victimized throughout history, while men identify with other men who have historically occupied the place of perpetrators (Bowes-Sperry & O’Leary-Kelly, 2005; Ferrer-Pérez & Bosch-Fiol, 2014; Lenhart, 2004).

Feminist sociocultural theories, including Gender Role Socialization Theory, proposes that patriarchal society imposes roles and norms that determine acceptable and unacceptable behaviors for men and women; according to these guidelines women perceive harassing behaviors as more threatening while men tend to perceive them as more acceptable (Ely & Padavic, 2007; Rotundo et al., 2001). In general, these theories consider that sexual harassment is a consequence of the gender inequality and sexism that exist in patriarchal society, and operates as a mechanism to control and exclude women (Pina et al., 2009).

While most studies address the perception of harassment in hypothetical situations (Dekker et al., 2013; Ekore, 2012; Ferrer-Pérez & Bosch-Fiol, 2014; Herrera et al., 2016), this research has the advantage of investigating the perceptions of harassment in situations directly experienced by the study participants. The results indicated that for some behaviors (e.g., receiving unwanted sexual comments or audiovisual content without consent), women perceive the situation as sexual harassment much more than men. We explain this difference by resorting to both social identity theories and sociocultural theories. We place greater emphasis on the latter since they allow us to conceptualize the most interesting findings of this study, which highlight the importance, for the perception of harassment, of gender differences in seduction roles and sexual consent practices.

2. Materials and methods

The research design was mixed (qualitative-quantitative) and included a gender perspective. We chose this approach, associated with feminist-oriented sociocultural theories because it allows focusing on inequalities and power relations between genders (Facio & Y Fries, 2005). For data generation, three techniques were used: survey, in-depth interview, and reflection workshop. The aim of the survey was to identify and characterize the situations of sexual harassment experienced by the student community belonging to the participating universities. Before applying the survey to the sample, its quality was verified through a pilot test with 44 students of legal age, who provided their informed consent. The survey was administered using a Google form and sent by e-mail, after
approval by the Bioethics Committee of Universidad de San Buenaventura. The final sample included 455 students (75.3% from USBMED and 24.7% from UNAULA), which represented a nonprobabilistic sample of students from the two universities. Data analysis did not include the surveys that were answered by minors or by students who did not give their consent; in addition, for the analyses by sex presented in this paper, the responses of seven participants who preferred not to report their sex were not counted. Excluding these cases, the analysis was performed on 439 surveys.

The survey was divided into three parts. The first collected sociodemographic data (sex, age, degree, university, semester, ethnicity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic stratum, among others). The second part asked the students to indicate whether they had experienced at the universities any of the nine situations of sexual harassment that were defined through a review of the literature (see, Table 1; Buquet et al., 2013; Carvajal & Y Delvó, 2009; Igareda & Bodelón, 2014; Lizama-Lefno & Hurtado-Quíñones, 2019; Mamaru et al., 2015; Moreno et al., 2015; Rozo & Y Torres, 2016; Saénz de Tejada, 2019; Vázquez, 2017). Each time students reported having experienced a type of sexual harassment, they were asked to answer in-depth questions related to the perception of harassment (if they consider that the situation experienced constitutes sexual harassment); frequency of occurrence of the situation; consequences of the situation; how negatively the situation affected them; role of the perpetrator in the institution; if they consider that the person who committed the act used his/her power to do so; the basis of that person’s power; the

| Table 1. Sociodemographic characteristics and prevalence of sexual harassment between male and female students in the university environment |
|---------------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Age (M± SD)                     | 23.53 ± 5.62  | 22.18 ± 4.17  |
| Socioeconomic stratum           | 3 ± 0          | 3 ± 0          |
| University                      |                |                |
| UNAULA                          | 33 (21.4)      | 77 (27)        |
| USBMED                          | 121 (78.6)     | 208 (73)       |
| School                          |                |                |
| Business Sciences               | 8 (5.4)        | 22 (7.9)       |
| Arts                            | 8 (5.4)        | 24 (8.6)       |
| Law                             | 26 (17.6)      | 71 (25.4)      |
| Engineering                     | 34 (23)        | 22 (7.9)       |
| Education                       | 60 (40.5)      | 65 (23.3)      |
| Psychology                      | 12 (8.1)       | 75 (26.9)      |
| Ethnicity                       |                |                |
| Afro-Colombians                 | 5 (3.3)        | 7 (2.5)        |
| Raizal                          | 1 (0.7)        | 2 (0.7)        |
| None of the above               | 147 (96.1)     | 275 (96.8)     |
| Sexual orientation              |                |                |
| Asexual                         | -              | 1 (0.4)        |
| Bisexual                        | 8 (5.2)        | 28 (9.9)       |
| Demisexual                      | -              | 1 (0.4)        |
| Heterosexual                    | 136 (88.9)     | 240 (85.1)     |
| Homosexual                      | 8 (5.2)        | 12 (4.3)       |
| Victim of harassment            | 52 (33.8)      | 206 (72.3)     |
place where it happened; and their reaction to the event. The third part of the survey asked the students whether they reported the incident and about the institutional reaction to the report.

For data analysis, descriptive statistics were used according to the nature and measurement level of the variables: central tendency and dispersion for quantitative variables, and frequencies expressed as percentages for qualitative variables. In order to determine possible differences between men and women with respect to the frequency of harassment experiences and the perception that both population groups have about them, an analytical strategy was designed based on Pearson’s Chi-square test of independence ($\chi^2$). Analyses were performed in the SPSS 23.0 statistical program, assuming a critical level of $p < 0.05$ in all contrasts. In particular, this article presents and discusses the results of the analysis of the relationship between sex and other variables such as the overall prevalence of sexual harassment, prevalence of types of sexual harassment, levels of reporting, and perception of harassment.

Qualitative techniques for data generation were implemented to deepen the understanding of psychosocial conditions, i.e., the meanings and interactions that shape sexual harassment situations. In-depth individual interviews were conducted with 15 students from both universities who reported having experienced situations of sexual harassment. In addition, 64 reflection workshops were held with the participation of 1,789 students from the different schools of the universities involved. With regard to these qualitative techniques, a nonprobability convenience sampling was used. The reflection workshops aimed to collect narratives about cases of sexual harassment experienced by students at the universities, to identify the differences students make between sexual harassment and consensual seduction, and also to raise awareness of the problem among the student population. The reflection workshops were conducted according to the following moments (Gutiérrez, 2002): setting the stage, signing of informed consent, initial construction activity (recognition of situations of sexual harassment at the universities, assessment of their severity, and narration of real cases by subgroups), plenary session, feedback, and contributions from the workshop facilitators. Both in the workshop plenary and in the interviews, questions were included, guided by the gender approach, to understand the perceptions of the participants regarding peer interactions, sexual consent practices, the definition of sexual harassment and its relationship with gender roles. Guidelines were provided to maintain the anonymity of the persons involved in these cases; furthermore, the participants were guaranteed confidentiality of information and the support of the research team in case they gave their consent to activate a care route for sexual violence and gender-based violence.

Audio recordings were made of both the interviews and the workshops; these recordings were transcribed in their entirety and analyzed under the procedure of content analysis. The construction of categories and the interpretation of qualitative data were carried out from a gender perspective (Facio & Y Fries, 2005). Subsequently, qualitative and quantitative data were compared, complemented, and triangulated, which resulted in the mixed inferences presented in this study. It should be noted that this article focuses on presenting the qualitative results included in the category “perception of harassment”; the other categories have been addressed in other publications (Duque, et al. 2019; Cano, et al. 2022).

3. Results

3.1. Sociodemographic characteristics and prevalence of sexual harassment in the university environment

The sample consisted of 439 students of legal age from both universities, 154 men and 285 women. The prevalence of harassment among the sample was 58.8%, meaning that 258 people reported having suffered one or more of the nine forms of harassment evaluated in the survey. Women reported a prevalence of 72.3% ($N = 206$) while men reported a prevalence of 33.8% ($N = 52$) ($\chi^2 = 61.204; df = 1; p < 0.001$). Table 1 describes the sociodemographic characteristics of
the sample analyzed and Table 2 shows the differences in the prevalence and perception of harassment between men and women.

4. Prevalence of harassment between men and women
Based on the results of the survey, the most prevalent types of sexual harassment among women are lewd looks or gestures (54%), on the one hand, and unwanted compliments, jokes, lewd comments, or questions with sexual content (51%), on the other hand. Meanwhile, the types of sexual harassment with the highest prevalence among men are exposure on social media for nonconsensual sexual purposes (e.g., buitreo) (13.6%) and lewd looks or gestures (11.7%). Therefore, it can be inferred that the most prevalent types of sexual harassment are gestural and verbal, generally considered to be of mild severity (Hernández et al., 2015). Nevertheless, the prevalence of unwanted sexual contact (11.9%) experienced by women is striking, which has been considered in the literature as a serious form of harassment (Hernández et al., 2015).

The nine types of sexual harassment investigated by the survey have been suffered by university women, while men reported having experienced eight of them. This indicates a worrying occurrence of serious behaviors in the university environment, such as blackmail and threats, offers of rewards in exchange for unwanted sexual interactions, and pressure to accept invitations of a sexual nature. According to the students’ narratives in the workshops, both men and women recognize that women are harassed more frequently. Men also suffer this type of violence, but in their case, the severity of the event is usually minimized.

5. Differences in the perception of sexual harassment between men and women
In all types of behavior evaluated by the survey, women presented higher levels of perception of sexual harassment compared to men; however, the difference was only statistically significant for types 1, 5, and 6 (see, Table 2 for the responses to the question “Do you consider that what you experienced was a situation of sexual harassment?”). The types of sexual harassment considered more serious (Hernández et al., 2015), such as threats or blackmail to have sexual interactions, pressures to accept invitations of a sexual nature, offering rewards in exchange for unwanted sexual activities, and being forced to have unwanted sexual contact tended to be perceived as sexual harassment by both men and women. In contrast, other types of sexual harassment, generally considered to be milder, were more frequently perceived as sexual harassment by women (see details in Tables 3, 4, and 5).

Data in Tables 3, 4, and 5 indicate that in those cases where women have a higher perception of harassment, they also show higher levels of discomfort and negative affect in comparison with men who suffered the same types of harassment; in addition, they tend to be harassed in greater proportion by professors or people with authority roles.

In agreement with the data presented in Tables 3 and 5, qualitative analyses indicate that one of the factors influencing the perception of harassment is the fact that it was produced in a situation of “abuse of power.” This means students perceive sexual harassment to a greater extent when sexual behaviors are performed by people who have power or authority over the victim. In fact, in all the interviews, victims identified themselves as female students who had been harassed by male professors. This trend also appears clearly in the cases identified during the workshops.

The qualitative analyses also coincided with the quantitative data presented in Tables 3 and 4, which show that women, compared to men, experience higher levels of negative affect as a consequence of unwanted sexual advances. According to participants’ testimonies, women are culturally positioned as recipients of sexual advances and are frequent victims of sexual violence, so they must remain vigilant, continually resisting unwanted sexual advances from men. “For us women, harassment happens every day; this doesn't happen to men … They don't have to stand it every day” (female student, Workshop 26). “It happens to us women, and we don't find it funny. It
Table 2. Prevalence of types of sexual harassment, perception of harassment and reporting situations between men and women

| Types of harassment/prediction of harassment | Men     | Women    | $\chi^2$  |
|--------------------------------------------|---------|----------|-----------|
| Q1. Have you ever received compliments, jokes, lewd comments, or questions with sexual content that made you uncomfortable? | 16 (10.4) | 146 (51.2) | 71.610*   |
| Do you consider that what you experienced was a situation of sexual harassment? | 4 (25)   | 94 (64.4)  | 9.359*    |
| Q2. Have you ever been subjected to lewd looks or gestures that made you uncomfortable? | 18 (11.7) | 154 (54)  | 75.237*   |
| Do you consider that what you experienced was a situation of sexual harassment? | 7 (38.9) | 95 (61.7)  | 3.471     |
| Q3. Have you ever been exposed for nonconsensual sexual purposes on social media or virtual spaces? (e.g., buitreo)² | 21 (13.6) | 51 (17.9)  | 1.322     |
| Do you consider that what you experienced was a situation of sexual harassment? | 5 (23.8) | 21 (41.2)  | 1.945     |
| Q4. Have you ever been pressured to accept sexual invitations? | 5 (3.2)  | 25 (8.8)   | 4.794*    |
| Do you consider that what you experienced was a situation of sexual harassment? | 3 (60)   | 22 (88)    | 2.352     |
| Q5. Have you ever received phone calls, messages, photographs, pictures, illustrations, or videos with sexual content without your consent? | 7 (4.5)  | 40 (14)    | 9.418*    |
| Do you consider that what you experienced was a situation of sexual harassment? | 2 (28.6) | 34 (85)    | 10.582*   |
| Q6. Have you ever been summoned to an office, classroom, or other university location under an academic pretext to have unwanted sexual interactions? | 4 (4.6)  | 14 (4.9)   | 1.362     |
| Do you consider that what you experienced was a situation of sexual harassment? | 2 (50)   | 14 (100)   | 7.875*    |

(Continued)
scares us and that marks a different point in this issue of power relations” (female student, Workshop 26). It is assumed that this state of alertness would make them more perceptive to sexual violence.

On the other hand, the male gender role has placed men as the initiators of sexual interactions, and there is a cultural tendency to assume that men should have a permanent sexual availability and should not feel affected if women make sexual advances; on the contrary, it is considered that they should feel flattered in this situation. In this regard, a student pointed out: “One, as a man, thinks that if the professor tells me to sleep with her so I can pass the course, and she is hot, it is a double win for me” (male student, Workshop 6).

Although some students express their discomfort with this type of sexual advances, men tend to think that reporting a situation of harassment is contrary to their sense of masculinity. Men who complain about harassment are feminized and ridiculed: “Why am I going to report that? That makes you lose the feeling of being a man” (male student, Workshop 26). “So, even though I didn’t like it, my friends will probably tell me that I am a fag” (male student, Workshop 6). “For example,
Table 3. Analysis of differences between men and women in the characterization of the types of harassment: "received compliments, jokes, lewd comments, or questions with sexual content"

|                                | Men     | Women    | \( \chi \) |
|--------------------------------|---------|----------|-------------|
| **How often did this action occur?** |         |          |             |
| Once                           | 6 (37.5)| 29 (19.9)| 2.855       |
| From twice to five times       | 8 (50)  | 85 (58.2)|             |
| More than five times           | 2 (12.5)| 32 (21.9)|             |
| **What was the impact of this action on you?** |         |          |             |
| Sense of discomfort             | 7 (43.3)| 135 (93.8)| 36.056**   |
| Withdrawal from the course      | –       | 1 (1.4)  | 0.056       |
| Distress or fear                | 1 (6.3) | 28 (19.4)| 1.689       |
| Depression                      | –       | 3 (4.1)  | 0.171       |
| Avoidance of places where I could come across that person | 2 (12.5) | 68 (47.2) | 7.055** |
| No impact                       | 10 (62.5)| 7 (4.9) | 50.37** |
| Other (disgust, “becoming serious”) | –     | 2 (1.4)  | 0.112       |
| **How much did this action negatively affect you?** |         |          |             |
| A lot                           | –       | 7 (4.8)  | 26.20**     |
| Too much                        | –       | 20 (13.7)|             |
| Moderately                      | 1 (6.3) | 54 (37)  |             |
| Too little                      | 6 (37.5)| 49 (33.6)|             |
| Nothing                         | 9 (56.3)| 16 (11)  |             |
| **What is the institutional role of the person who did this action?** |         |          |             |
| Professor                       | 2 (13.3)| 71 (50)  | 7.33**      |
| Student                         | 14 (93.3)| 84 (59.2)| 6.75**     |
| Administrator                    | –       | 1 (0.7)  | 0.106       |
| Office staff                     | 1 (6.7) | 3 (2.1)  | 1.133       |
| Cleaning or security staff      | –       | 4 (2.8)  | 0.434       |
| Other (library staff, anonymous) | –     | 2 (1.4)  | 0.217       |
| Do you think that the person who did this action used his/her power, authority, standing, or influence for that purpose? | –       | 73 (50)  | 14.56** |

Note: The dash (-) indicates that no value was obtained. *p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01

if I told a friend, he would tell me to go for it, but what if I don't want to, if I feel uncomfortable? … I took it lightly because it was the way to deal with what was going on” (male student, Workshop 18). Therefore, qualitative analyses indicate that, although women tend to experience higher levels of subjective affect as a result of these experiences, sexual harassment towards men tends to be made invisible, is not perceived as such by them or by others, and is considered less serious.

Qualitative analyses provide two additional hypotheses to understand why women, compared to men, perceive harassment to a greater extent, namely, the difference in seduction roles in men and women and gender differences in the interpretation of sexual consent.

It is clear that sexual scripts and heteronormative seduction roles persist in our culture, placing men as the initiators of sexual interactions (at least verbal and explicit ones) and women as the
ones who receive and consent (or not) to such initiatives. Frequently, women lead the way in seduction interactions, but they do so by drawing attention to themselves, through glances, smiles, or other nonverbal signals that men often interpret as authorization to initiate a verbal interaction (Fernández, 2007; Moore, 1985; Rincón Aponte, 2014). This pattern was widely recognized by the students during the workshops. They say that while women are “seductive,” men are more “direct,” even “rude” in their approaches. By having different forms of seduction, it is also possible to generate different perceptions of what constitutes harassment, as each considers their form of seduction as legitimate. In this sense, one student states:

If a girl sends intimate pictures to a guy, he will probably like it. Maybe a guy … thinks that, since he likes it, a girl will probably love it if he sends her an intimate photo too (male student, Workshop 6).

Table 4. Analysis of differences between men and women in the characterization of the types of harassment: “received phone calls, messages, photographs, pictures, illustrations, or videos with sexual content”

|                          | Men       | Women     | χ          |
|--------------------------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| How often did this action occur? |           |           |            |
| Once                     | 2 (33.3)  | 17 (42.5) | 0.183      |
| From twice to five times | 3 (50)    | 17 (42.5) |            |
| More than five times     | 1 (16.7)  | 6 (15)    |            |
| What was the impact of this action on you? |           |           |            |
| Sense of discomfort      | 3 (50)    | 35 (87.5) | 5.107*     |
| Distress or fear         | –         | 13 (59.1) | 1.35       |
| Avoidance of places where I could come across that person | –         | 15 (68.2) | 1.96       |
| No impact                | 4 (66.7)  | 4 (10)    | 11.66**    |
| Other (blocking)         | –         | 1 (2.5)   | 0.153      |
| How much did this action negatively affect you? |           |           |            |
| A lot                    | –         | 4 (10.3)  | 14.36**    |
| Too much                 | –         | 11 (28.2) |            |
| Moderately               | 1 (16.7)  | 10 (25.6) |            |
| Too little               | 1 (16.7)  | 11 (28.2) |            |
| Nothing                  | 4 (66.7)  | 3 (7.7)   |            |
| What is the institutional role of the person who did this action? |           |           |            |
| Professor                | –         | 2 (5.9)   | 0.310      |
| Student                  | 5 (100)   | 25 (73.5) | 1.721      |
| Administrator            | –         | 5 (14.7)  | 0.478      |
| Other (someone, acquaintance, acquaintance, “I don’t know,” “he was a man, but I never knew his role,” external people) | –         | 5 (14.7)  |            |
| Do you think that the person who did this action used his/her power, authority, standing, or influence for that purpose? | –         | 11 (27.5) |            |

Note: The dash (–) indicates that no value was obtained. *p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01
Table 5. Analysis of differences between men and women in the characterization of the types of harassment: “been summoned to an office, classroom, or other university location under an academic pretext to have unwanted sexual interactions”

| Men | Women | χ² |
|-----|-------|----|
| N (%) | | |
| How often did this action occur? | | |
| Once | 2 (50) | 8 (61.5) | 0.883 |
| From twice to five times | 1 (25) | 4 (30.8) | |
| More than five times | 1 (25) | 1 (7.7) | |
| What was the impact of this action on you? | | |
| Sense of discomfort | 3 (75) | 12 (92.3) | 0.883 |
| Distress or fear | 1 (50) | 2 (40) | 0.058 |
| Depression | 1 (100) | – | 3.000 |
| Avoidance of places where I could come across that person | 2 (50) | 6 (46.2) | 0.018 |
| Positive impact | 1 (25) | – | 3.453 |
| How much did this action negatively affect you? | | |
| A lot | – | 3 (23.1) | 7.969 |
| Too much | 1 (25) | 3 (23.1) | |
| Moderately | 1 (25) | 7 (53.8) | |
| Too little | 1 (25) | – | |
| Nothing | 1 (25) | – | |
| What is the institutional role of the person who did this action? | | |
| Professor | 2 (50) | 11 (84.6) | 2.037 |
| Student | 2 (50) | 1 (7.7) | 3.767 |
| Administrator | – | 1 (7.7) | 0.327 |
| Do you think that the person who did this action used his/her power, authority, standing, or influence for that purpose? | | |
| | 2 (50) | 13 (100) | 7.367 |

Note: The dash (–) indicates that no value was obtained. *p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01

Misconceptions about what the other person might like are present in cases of nonconsensual sexting, as the following story shows:

On one occasion, even without me saying anything to him, he sent me pictures of his penis, and I was like, “Well, who’s asking you for photos of your penis? I haven’t asked you for anything.” He just told me that he wanted to motivate me so that he and I would have sex or so that I would send him things. He wanted me to want him, so that I would say, “Oh, this professor is so hot,” but what I felt was annoyance and disgust (female student, Interview 2).

While some men may feel that sending such photos without prior consent is an appropriate form of seduction, many women who receive them feel harassed. Other studies that have inquired about this difference have found that men have an expectation of reciprocity for sending “dick pics” without prior consent, i.e., they expect to be reciprocated with similar images or sexual behavior. Meanwhile, women view this practice as misguided behavior, based on misconceptions about what they want (Hayes & Dragiewicz, 2018; Waling & Pym, 2017).
Finally, a last hypothesis for understanding the difference in the perception of harassment refers to gender differences in the interpretation of sexual consent. Clearly, sexual harassment refers to nonconsensual behavior. However, men and women do not always agree on the interpretation of those gestural, verbal, or physical actions from which sexual consent or nonconsent is inferred. Men tend to consider that for sexual harassment to exist, the victim has to express verbally his or her lack of consent to the sexual advance:

We can't assume what other people think but only what they express … then sexual harassment can't be claimed if they don't explicitly refuse (male student, Workshop 1).

On the other hand, women are more likely to think that a verbal rejection on the part of the victim is not required to qualify a behavior as harassment:

Gestures also speak, you don't always have to say an explicit “no.” You fear how the other person is going to react (female student, Workshop 1).

In this regard, it should be noted that nonverbal rejections of sexual advances occur especially in professor-student relationships, where female students find it more difficult to explicitly reject the sexual advance of a professor who has authority over them. Moreover, there are multiple reasons for women not to explicitly reject sexual advances, including fear of being seen as “rude,” not wanting to make the person who made the sexual approach uncomfortable, and fear of possible reprisals.

Certainly, this difference in the way sexual consent is interpreted is associated with the difference in seduction roles according to gender. In seduction interactions, whoever plays a masculine role must be active, proactive, and insistent, while the feminine role implies passivity, responsiveness, and resistance (Pérez, 2016); men are socialized to insist on their sexual pretensions even in spite of explicit rejections, while women are made responsible for consenting or nonconsenting. As a result, some men will not consider as harassment their own insistence when women express their lack of consent in an implicit or subtle way. Furthermore, it is often forgotten that the expression of sexual consent or nonconsent, for which women are mainly held responsible, is conditioned by the asymmetrical power relations between men and women, so they often find themselves unable to clearly and explicitly express their lack of sexual consent (Pérez, 2016). Ultimately, this study proposes that the difference in the interpretation of sexual consent—the fact that men tend to emphasize the explicit denial of consent as the basis for defining a situation as sexual harassment and that women take into consideration the implicit denial of consent—would also be a reason why many more situations are read as sexual harassment by women.

In summary, this study proposes four hypotheses to understand women’s greater perception of harassment compared to men: 1) the difference in the seduction roles: men, who are usually the initiators of the sexual interaction, have a broader idea about the type of sexual advances that are admissible; 2) gender differences in the interpretation of sexual consent: women have a broader view of behaviors that constitute a denial of sexual consent; 3) the fact that women are harassed to a greater extent by authority figures such as professors; and 4) the fact that women tend to experience higher levels of negative affect as a result of unwanted sexual advances.

6. Discussion
This study found a statistically significant difference in the prevalence of sexual harassment between men and women; 33.8% of men reported having experienced at least one situation of sexual harassment compared to 72.3% of women. In all types of sexual harassment, women reported higher percentages of victimization compared to men, even presenting a higher prevalence in the most serious types such as threats and blackmail to agree to unwanted sexual interactions and being forced to have unwanted sexual contact such as kissing or touching. This higher prevalence and greater severity of sexual harassment towards women
has also been found in other research on sexual harassment in university contexts (Maida et al., 2006; Fernández et al., 2006; Carvajal & Y Delvó, 2009; Castaño et al., 2010; Buquet et al., 2013; Hinojosa et al., 2013; Vázquez, 2017; Jussen, 2019). This strengthens the idea that sexual harassment is a form of gender-based violence framed in the persistence of a patriarchal culture.

The study found that the most prevalent types of sexual harassment among students were as follows: first, being the object of lewd looks or gestures (54% of women experienced this situation compared to 11.7% of men), and second, being the object of unwanted compliments, jokes, lewd comments, or questions with sexual content that made them uncomfortable (51% of women experienced this situation compared to 10.4% of men). These types of sexual harassment tend to be considered of mild severity compared to other types such as blackmail or offers of rewards (Hernández et al., 2015). However, other studies have also found that these forms of gestural and verbal sexual harassment are the most prevalent in university contexts (Buquet et al., 2013; Echeverría et al., 2017; Hernández et al., 2015; Hinojosa et al., 2013; Horcojo & Pujol, 2014; Igareda & Bodelón, 2014; Lizama-Lefno & Hurtado-Quinones, 2019; Mamaru et al., 2015; Moreno et al., 2015; Rozo & Y Torres, 2016; Saénz de Tejada, 2019).

The results show that 11.9% of women reported having been subjected to unwanted sexual contact such as kissing, hugging, and fondling, making it the third most prevalent type of harassment among them. Despite its severity, physical harassment has also been identified as one of the most prevalent types in various research (Oni et al., 2019; Rozo & Y Torres, 2016; Saénz de Tejada, 2019; Vázquez, 2017). These manifestations of direct sexual harassment are related to the sexual objectification to which women have been subjected in our culture, with the consequent instrumentalization of the female body. The university campus, being a public scenario, becomes a space of widening of violent and patriarchal practices of transaction over women’s bodies (Segato, 2016).

The most prevalent type of sexual harassment among men is exposure on social media for nonconsensual sexual purposes (13.6%), which is even more prevalent among women (17.9%). Other research has also begun to identify sexual harassment practices that take place in virtual environments or social media (Mamaru et al., 2015; Saénz de Tejada, 2019; Vázquez, 2017). Nonetheless, the present research has the particularity of investigating the specific modality of buitreo, which is a practice that is becoming very common in the Colombian environment. It was found that this is the situation least perceived as sexual harassment by both men (23.8% perceive it as harassment) and women (41.2% perceive it as harassment), i.e., it is the most normalized type of harassment in university culture. In the workshops, students noted that although buitreo is a practice that often violates a person’s privacy, it does not always have a clearly sexual purpose.

Regarding the perception of harassment, the study indicated that the most serious forms of sexual harassment are those that are usually perceived as such by both men and women. Other research has also suggested that behaviors such as touching genital areas and explicit requests to have sex—referring to the prejudice derived from refusing (Blahopoulou et al., 2009) or the privileges that could be obtained (Horcojo & Pujol, 2014)—are the conducts most often perceived as harassment.

In general terms, the lack of perception of harassment may be related to the conception that people have of sexual harassment. In this respect, it should be noted that verbal and gestural harassment are not usually recognized as sexual violence, since the conception of the latter may be reduced to stereotypical ideas about rape and physical harassment (Lizama-Lefno & Hurtado-Quinones, 2019), which relates to the fact that little is said and there is insufficient education on the subject (Puigvert, 2008). The lack of perception of harassment may also be associated with a normalization of these behaviors, based on gender role socialization that makes them expected or trivialized (Fernández et al., 2006).
Other studies have also found a tendency for men to perceive fewer behaviors as sexual harassment compared to women (Eksøe, 2012; Ferrer-Pérez & Bosch-Fiol, 2014). In this study, the discrepancy in the perception of men and women is particularly located in relation to verbal harassment behaviors (unwanted sexual comments) and non-consensual sending of audiovisual material with sexual content, behaviors that are perceived as sexual harassment to a greater extent by women.

The present research suggests that, in order to understand women's greater perception of harassment, one must take into account the finding that women tend to experience greater levels of negative affect as a consequence of unwanted sexual advances. This idea is consistent with the results of other studies that have suggested that many men feel calm by the same behaviors that disturb women because they experience them less frequently: they are not subjected to systematic harassment (Kearney & Rochlen, 2012). Accordingly, it has been suggested that when men report being harassed, they usually mean that they have been subjected to unwanted sexual attention and not that they have been subjected to pressure or blackmail, as is more often the case among women. Men do not tend to consider the sexual harassment to which they are subjected as a form of discrimination, so they experience it with less discomfort (Carvajal & Y Delvó, 2009), and some even experience a reaffirmation of their masculinity when they receive unwanted sexual attention (Ramírez and Barajas, 2017; Pérez, 2017). Women, on the other hand, tend to link harassment to discrimination and sexism, and tend to live these experiences with a greater sense of humiliation (Blahopoulou et al., 2009).

These approaches are related to what has been proposed from the theoretical framework of Social Identity: since women are a more vulnerable group, they are more likely to identify themselves as victims of sexual harassment (Blahopoulou et al., 2009; Pryor & Day, 1988). Men, on the other hand, resist considering themselves as victims in order not to feel feminized. From the mandates of hegemonic masculinity, they are expected to have an uncontrollable sexual desire, to develop skills of conquest and persuasion, to take the initiative and to take advantage of any apparent sexual opportunity. In addition, gaining female acquiescence is part of the search for masculine reaffirmation in front of a community of peers (Pérez, 2017).

This study also suggests that the fact that women are harassed to a greater extent by authority figures such as professors may correspond to their greater perception of sexual harassment. This is in line with research indicating that harassment is perceived to a greater extent when it comes from an authority figure or higher status (Bursik & Gefter, 2011; Ferrer-Pérez & Bosch-Fiol, 2014; O'Leary-Kelly et al., 2009).

Other significant contributions of this study include the proposal of two other hypotheses to understand the greater perception of harassment by women. The first refers to the difference in the seduction roles of men and women, given that men, who are usually the initiators of the sexual interaction, have a broader idea about the type of sexual advances that are admissible. This interpretation is supported by theories on seduction roles (Fernández, 2007; Moore, 1985; Rincón Aponte, 2014) which recognizes gender differences in courtship interactions. According to traditional gender roles, inscribed in patriarchal culture, men are in charge of initiating sexual approaches and women are in charge of consenting or not to such approaches, resulting in a “stalker-resistance dynamic”. That dynamic implies that men may pursue and be insistent in their attempts to conquer women while women must resist (Pérez, 2016, 2017). Hence, sexual advances that men consider normal may be perceived as wrong by women and be uncomfortable for them (Hayes & Dragiewicz, 2018; Waling & Pym, 2017). Along these lines, it has also been suggested that many men project their own desires onto women: they are flattered by sexual advances and think that the same is true for women (Tkac, 1995, as cited in Blahopoulou et al., 2009). Moreover, in cultural terms, the myriad of sexual approaches men
make—gestures, rubbing, glances, hints—are considered “normal” or “natural” in everyday interactions.

The second hypothesis concerns gender differences in the interpretation of sexual consent: women hold a broader view of behaviors that constitute a denial of sexual consent. In this study some men asserted that sexual harassment occurs when consent has been explicitly and verbally withheld, whereas women tend to place value on nonverbal signals they themselves emit that indicate lack of consent. It makes sense, then, that many more situations are considered sexual harassment by women, given that in everyday life sexual consent practices (or its denial) tend to occur in nonverbal communication rather than verbally and explicitly (Pérez, 2016). This interpretation could be further supported by other research evidencing that men and women are socialized to communicate and interpret consent differently (Hermann et al., 2017).

7. Recommendations
The most propitious scenario for the manifestation of gender-based violence in higher education is the daily routine in the classroom. Although many universities have internal protocols for prevention and attention to the problem, sexual harassment continues to be normalized due to the tacit learning of students (Jackson, 1994), which is transmitted through the norms, values and social relations underlying the daily school life and that can determine the configuration of convictions and the perpetuation of ideologies that come from the imaginary of their peers or teachers. In this sense, in the educational scenario, students are not only taught knowledge, but also behavioral patterns of deep-rooted social and cultural practice (Devis et al., 2005).

Therefore, we recommend the consolidation of a curriculum that admits a gender perspective as a real practice and guarantor of human rights from diversity. This implies the deconstruction of the collective imaginary of the members of the academic community around gender and gender-based violence.

However, the road is arduous, since for a patriarchal institutional framework, curricular restructuring may be unfeasible, since it implies the dismantling of the episteme that underlies its origin and of the habitus, which facilitate the naturalization of domination practices. However, this is not an obstacle to believe in curricular reform actions, since declaring the gender perspective as a navigation route in the formative process introduces into the institutional agenda the category of gender as a discourse and action (Roblin, 2006).

And while this fundamental transformation is taking place, we propose to develop training activities on gender-based violence, through strategies such as cross-cutting lectures in all programs of the institution, mandatory courses in the curriculum, conferences, discussion groups, forums, for various purposes: creating non-hostile environments for women, promoting solidarity with the victims, empowering members of the educational community to understand their rights, the negative consequences of this violence and how to deal with them. It is recommended that educational strategies be carried out with mixed groups, including men and women, teachers and students (Dekker et al., 2013). Other researchers have proposed the creation of mechanisms that allow early detection of gender-based violence (Blahoulou et al., 2009; Echeverría et al., 2017; Hernández et al., 2015; McGinley et al., 2017).

It should be noted that the Colombian Ministerio de Educación Nacional—MEN (2018) agrees with these claims and also raises the need to incorporate a gender and sexual diversity perspective with a differential approach in curricular plans and academic content, as well as the use of inclusive pedagogies in Colombian higher education institutions. Based on these guidelines, other tasks can be undertaken such as:
Constitutionalize higher education in Colombia, taking as a basis the fundamental rights of women and sexual diversity.

Address in the political and academic agendas of local, regional and national influence, issues and problems with a differential and gender focus that affect women to a greater extent.

Insert feminist methodologies into research practices.

To build affirmative measures from education that allow us to recognize the contribution of women in and for education.

Design institutional policies for the attention, prevention and punishment of sexual violence based on the understanding of harassment behaviors.

To propose intervention strategies other than sanctions for everyday violence, for those typologies that are more persistent in higher education institutions, such as gestures, compliments, looks, obscene words, mockery among others, that are not being intervened.

8. Research limitations

The survey does not inquire about the gender of the people who carried out the harassing behavior but only about the role they play at the university (professor, student); therefore, it was not possible to determine whether there are statistically significant differences in the frequency of harassment according to gender. The explanations proposed for understanding the difference in the perception of harassment between men and women are hypothetical and should be tested in future studies. Probability sampling was not performed, so the study may have a self-serving bias. Finally, few data were collected on sexual harassment in the LGBTQI population; thus, the analyses presented focus on heteronormative relationships.

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Notes
1. There is a persistent discussion in the literature as to whether this type of behavior from men is the product of a “misunderstanding” towards women, whether they have a realistic expectation of reciprocity, or whether their main intention is to reaffirm their masculinity while ignoring the desire and will of women.

2. Buitreo is a practice that takes place in Colombian universities and consists of publishing on social media, generally anonymously, photographs that are taken without the consent of the people who appear in them. These posts include comments of sexual nature or are used to request the personal data of those who are photographed.

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Data availability statement
Due to the nature of this research on sexual violence, participants of this study did not agree for their data to be shared publicly, so supporting data is not available.

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