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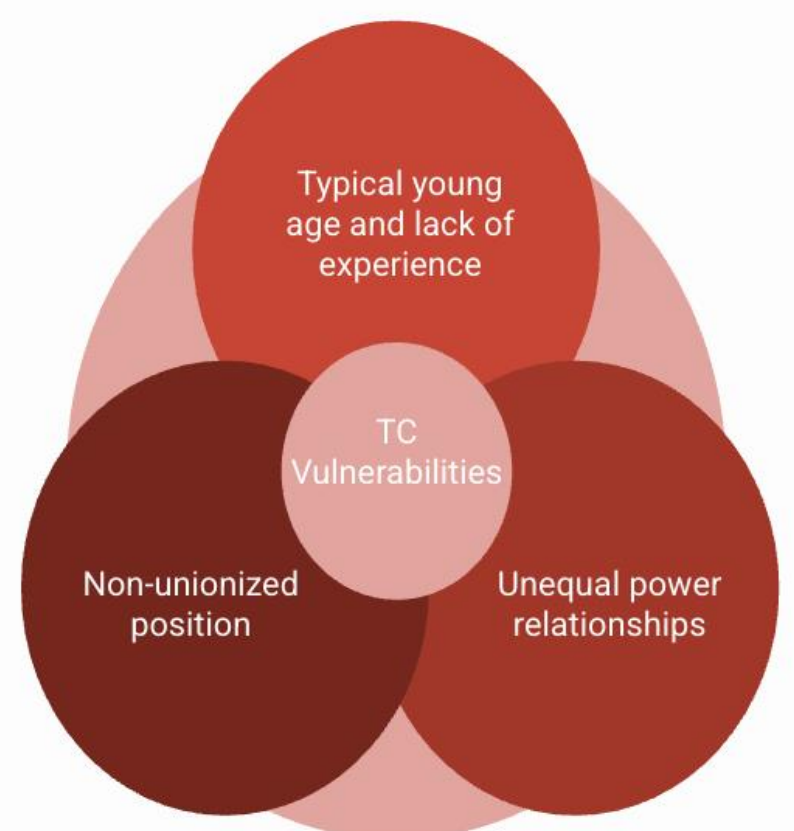
Research Questions

- 1) What are the impacts of SH on teacher candidates' during their program?
- 2) Which factors contribute to TC's decision to report – or not – SH during practicum?
- 3) How do different institutional responses to reported SH impact TCs?

Abstract

Despite increased awareness of workplace sexual harassment engendered by the #MeToo movement, and the emergence of research on sexual harassment in experiential learning placements, there is no substantial published research on teacher candidates' (TCs) experiences of sexual harassment (SH) during mandatory school practicum. TCs are particularly vulnerable due to their typically young age, non-unionized position, inexperience within the educational system and most workplaces, and unequal power relationships with associate teachers (ATs): senior colleagues who supervise and evaluate a TC's practicum. Currently, teacher education programs may lack the resources and supports required to address TCs' experiences of practicum SH; this may jeopardize TCs' mental health, self-efficacy, and success at a critical point in their lives and careers. This thesis investigates how TCs who faced sexual harassment during practicum experienced its impacts, the reporting process (if applicable), and institutional responses, guided by the following research questions:

- 1) What are the impacts of SH on teacher candidates?
- 2) Which factors contribute to a TC's decision to report – or not – SH experienced during practicum?
- 3) How do different institutional responses to reported SH impact TCs? Findings were translated into recommendations to faculties of education to improve SH prevention during practicum and develop supportive response procedures.

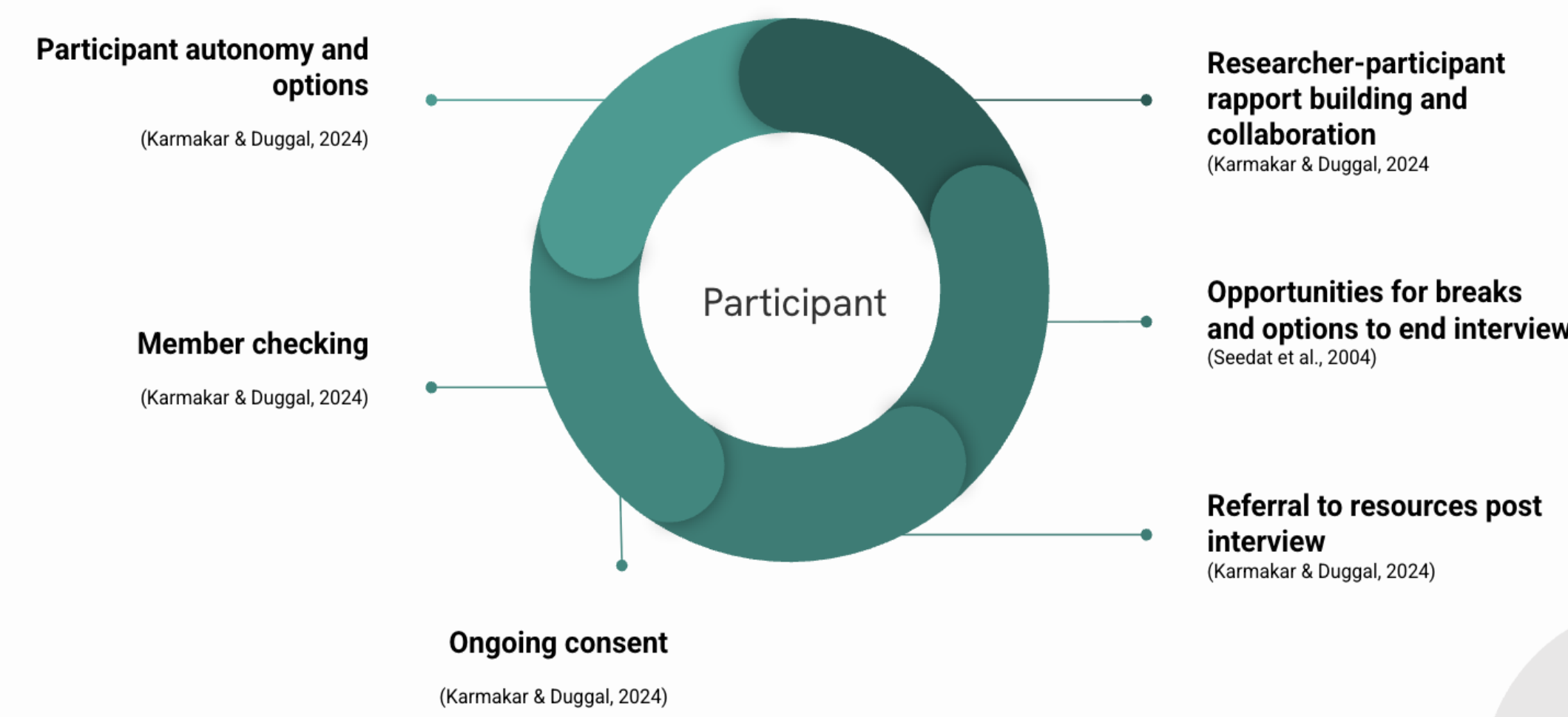


Methods

Participants

- Graduated from an accredited Ontario B.Ed program in the past 5 years.
- Self-selected as having experienced at least one incident of sexual harassment (as defined by the Ontario Human Rights Code) while on practicum.

Trauma-Informed Interviewing



Data Collection and Analysis

- Semi-structured interviews were utilized to allow for the participant to bring forth ideas, themes, and experiences that are important to them
- 60-90 minute long interviews
- 4 participants (n=4)
- Data derived from the semi-structured interviews was transcribed, inductively coded and thematically analyzed using the platform NVivo.
- Analysis focused on finding similarities and differences among participants' experiences with SH, the reporting processes or reasons for not reporting, institutional responses, and general impact on participants.

Example Interview Questions

- As a teacher candidate, did you feel respected, included, and valued amongst staff members?
- Can you describe the incident, or incidents, in which you were sexually harassed?
- What impacts, if any, did this incident have on you professionally/during practicum?
- Did this incident change your feelings towards practicum in any ways?
- How satisfied are you with how your report was handled?

Results

1. Experiencing sexual harassment during practicum caused participants significant emotional distress.
2. The effects of practicum sexual harassment continued beyond practicum and into participants' careers.
3. The decision to report sexual harassment was onerous on participants and made an already challenging experience more stressful.
4. The absence of sexual violence prevention and response policy in teacher education was harmful to participants.
5. School board representatives (administrators and human resources) took meaningful steps to support victimized TCs.
6. Participants' lack of understanding and misunderstanding of unions and union policy led to fear, silence, and isolation.

*"I was **always paranoid if my phone went off** that it was him trying to contact me, but if I didn't have my notifications on I just had this **overwhelming sense of anxiety** like I need to check, I need to see, you know, what's happening and it was always this feeling of when is the other shoe going to drop? **What's happening tomorrow?** And every day just thinking about how I have to go back to somewhere I feel so unsafe."*

*"He had told me, like parents and other people on staff have had issues with him, **he's the union rep so if anything came out of it, he would find out.** Which in hindsight, I've learned that's not true, if it's a union [member] to union [member] conflict, **they can't do that, but I didn't know that.**"*

*I had emailed the practicum office several times saying we need to have a meeting, no response, no response, no response. Eventually, I went in person and said I need to meet with someone. So, we set up a meeting... this incident report is 6 pages, I printed and emailed her the incident report, I told her everything, she said, word for word... **'well you do have a mousey personality, it makes sense that someone would treat you this way.'***

Recommendations

1. All teacher education programs must establish a policy that sets out faculty and staff responsibilities after receiving a disclosure of practicum sexual harassment.
2. Teacher education programs must work to ensure that all staff and teacher candidates have a high level of policy awareness regarding these new practicum sexual violence prevention and response policies and procedures.
3. Teacher education programs should reserve extra placements and Associate Teachers for TCs who require a change of placement during practicum to mitigate disruptions to TCs' practicum completion.
4. Teacher education programs should maintain records of previous Associate Teachers who have victimized Teacher Candidates and disallow them from working with future TCs.
5. Teacher education programs should avoid placing a TC at the same school and with the same AT for every practicum placement.
6. Teacher education curricula must be updated to educate TCs about the potential for sexual harassment and other identity-based harassment, how to respond to this, and related policies and legislation.
7. Teacher candidates should not be Associate Members of the Ontario Teachers Federation, as this status works to silence TCs who experience SH and does not benefit TCs in any way.

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