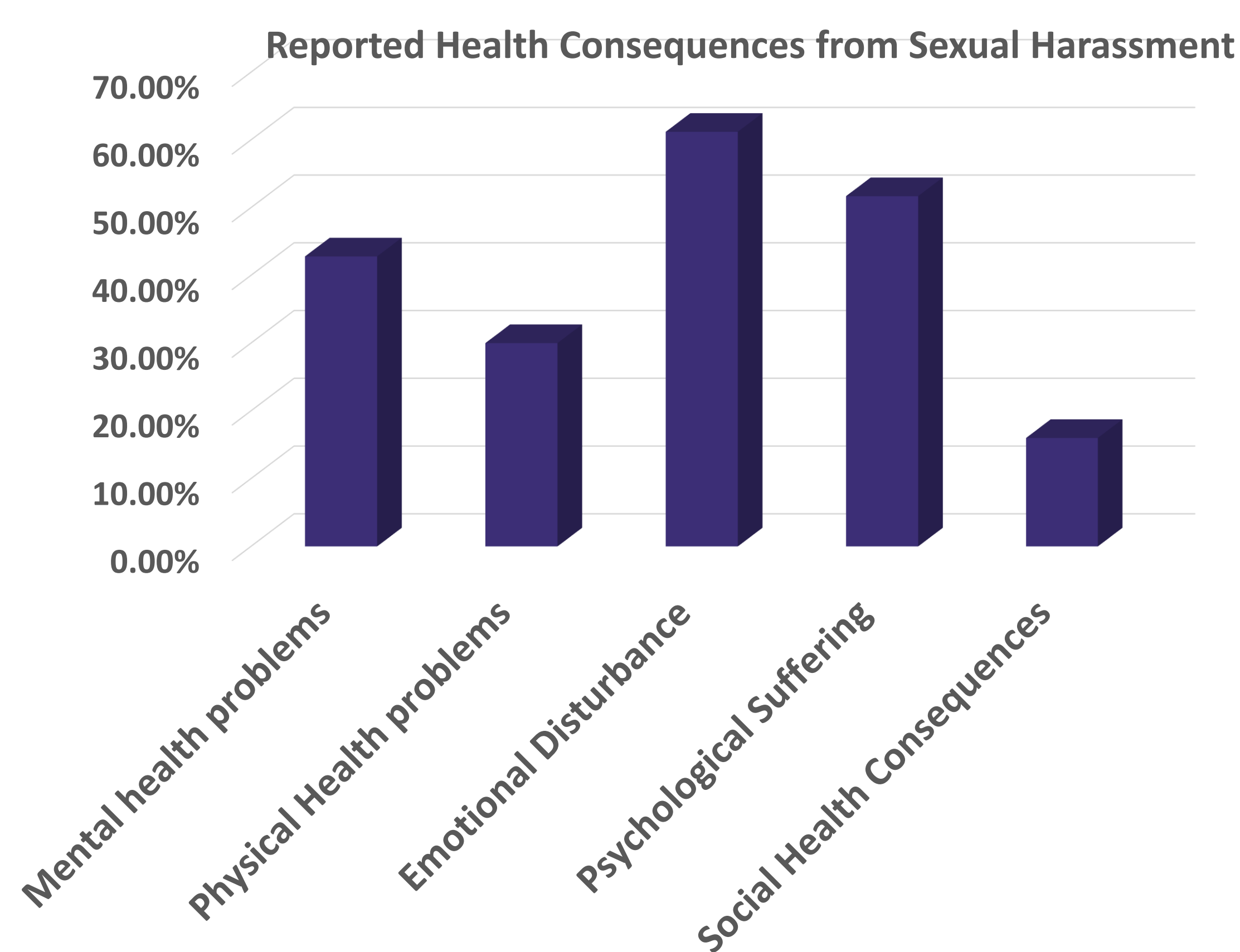# Patient & Visitor Perpetrated Sexual Harassment

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INTRODUCTION

- The purpose of this literature review was to determine the impact of patient perpetrated sexual harassment on healthcare workers and to identify steps organizations must take to prevent and mitigate those effects.

- Sexual harassment from patient to healthcare worker leads to a variety of mental, physical, emotional, psychological and social health consequences.

- Organizations must establish zero tolerance policies, strengthen training, and send a clear message to all customers.

RESULTS

Reported Health Consequences from Sexual Harassment

Bar chart with y-axis from 0.00% to 70.00%. Categories: Mental health problems (~45%), Physical Health problems (~33%), Emotional Disturbance (~64%), Psychological Suffering (~55%), Social Health Consequences (~19%).

(Kahsay, et al., 2020)

THEMATIC ANALYSIS

- Evaluation of nurses' responses to surveys regarding patient perpetrated sexual harassment revealed central themes:
  - Feeling of being objectified
  - Sense that the sacred nurse-patient relationship had been desecrated
  - Lack of support from co-workers and managers
  - Unprotected, lonely, and alienated
  - Failure to report to management due to negative attitudes and minimizing

(Gabay & Tikva, 2019)

From Healthcare Workers:

"He put his hand on my inner thigh, my immediate reaction was to slap it away, which I did and hard. I apologized. **I was afraid I would get in trouble.**"

"The patient pulled down the T-shirt under my scrubs to see my tattoo, 'Oh, that's a nice chest tattoo,' they said. I froze, **I was humiliated and embarrassed. I didn't want to take care of them anymore, but I still did.**"

"This is everyone's responsibility. None of this is OK."

From the literature:

"The employer is liable for harassing behaviors from contracted customers, these require immediate and appropriate action be taken."
The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

"Unless we, as healthcare workers, stand up and defend our rights, change will not occur. **Shame is not on the victims, it is on the harasser.**"
(Minkina, 2019)

"One third of respondents were **unaware of support systems** in their organization."
(Adler, et al., 2021)

"Organizations must develop measures to prevent and mitigate the negative effects of sexual harassment."
(Nielsen, et al., 2016)

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RECOMMNEDATIONS FOR ORGANIZATIONS

1. Focus on prevention interventions
2. Strengthen guidelines and policies
3. Improve reporting and response systems
4. Empower staff to set firm boundaries or defer care
5. Initiate peer support trainings including bystander intervention
6. Train managers how to respond and support healthcare workers
7. Implement debrief techniques
8. Document in patient's records (accountability)

⭐ STAR

Stop – Recognize when you are uncomfortable.

Think – Know your feelings and boundaries are important.

Act - Leave the room, hang up the phone, seek help, tell the person to stop.

Review – Reach out to your Manager/Supervisor and file a report. For additional support and assistance: Employee Assistance, Compliance, Human Resources, Security, and/or Law Enforcement.