

Harassment Risks in Fieldwork: Prevention and Countermeasures

I. Introduction

Fieldwork is a core activity of the education and research that takes place in ASAFAS. As part of fieldwork, students conduct research while living with the people they are studying. During this process, students must be aware that various forms of harassment may occur. The term “harassment” here refers to any comments made or actions taken toward others that make them feel uncomfortable, hurt their dignity, or cause them disadvantage, regardless of the original intention. For example, those of us who go to a research site as researchers are at risk of becoming the perpetrators of harassment (i.e., “research [site] damage”) against others (i.e., the people of the research site) (Ankei 1991; Miyamoto and Ankei 2008). Conversely, there is also a risk of researchers being subjected to harassment because the practice of fieldwork is inseparable from the human relationships that may develop in the field.

This document provides basic information on how to recognize the risks of becoming either a perpetrator or victim of harassment during fieldwork and how to prevent and deal with harassment, should it occur. (For more information on basic approaches to and initiatives regarding harassment within the university, please refer to the “Harassment Policy at Kyoto University” guidelines: <https://www.kyoto-u.ac.jp/en/about/human-rights/harassment-policy-at-kyoto-university>). If you would like to know more about how to deal with harassment, or if you are currently experiencing harassment, please consult a faculty member designated as Counselling Office in ASAFAS. In addition, if you wish to consult Counselling Staff outside ASAFAS, you could also access the “Consultation Office in General Student Support Center.”¹

Students who plan to conduct fieldwork in the future are expected to prepare well for fieldwork by discussing their research plan with their supervisors and senior students, based on this document. Students are also expected to read the sources listed in this document’s reference list.

¹ <https://www.kyoto-u.ac.jp/sites/default/files/inline-files/harass.e-202104-2-b21fb5dd52473a3c177b3095326e4660.pdf>

II. Preventing yourself from becoming a perpetrator of harassment while conducting academic research

1. Before conducting your fieldwork:

- Be fully aware that there may be situations in which you, as the researcher, could potentially violate the dignity of the person(s) being researched and/or exploit their resources (e.g., labor, time, and knowledge).
- Think carefully about *who* your research is for and *what* it is about and discuss it with your supervisor, senior students, and fellow classmates.
- Read the ethical guidelines related to your field of research and prepare accordingly.¹
- In some cases, it may be desirable to undergo a research ethics review, depending on the research theme and subject. Therefore, please consult thoroughly with your supervisor.

2. Points of consideration during your fieldwork:

- Relationships at the research site are not only about the research but involve *people*. Therefore, proceed with your research in accordance with basic manners and etiquette.
- Remember that social etiquette and manners vary from society to society and that fieldwork is also a process of learning such etiquette. Furthermore, be careful not to offend people at your research site by imposing your own value judgments.
- Sufficiently explain your research interests and objectives to those who will cooperate in your research. Keep in mind, however, that it is not the fact that you explain your study that is important but, rather, *how* you explain it. As such, consider your words carefully when attempting to convince participants to participate and in deciding *how* and *when* to explain concepts. It is also important to recognize that the other party has the right to refuse to cooperate with and in your research. If a party refuses, you cannot force them to take part.
- When conducting interviews and similar data collection practices, take care to reduce the burden of the subjects as much as possible by considering the circumstances and daily lives of the people at the research site.

3. Points to consider upon completion of your fieldwork:

- As the researcher, you are responsible for the appropriate management of the confidentiality, privacy, personal information, and intellectual property of the people at your research site. In addition to taking the utmost care in the storage and use of data, you should consider the legitimacy of conducting the research using such data as well as the potential social impact of your research.
- Think about how to give back the project's accomplishments to the concerned parties in the research site as well as to the wider society.

² For example, when conducting anthropological fieldwork, refer to the Japanese Society of Cultural Anthropology Ethical Guidelines (2008 in Japanese) <http://www.jasca.org/onjasca/ethics.html>

III. Preparing for the risk of being a victim of (sexual) harassment during fieldwork

1. Before undertaking fieldwork

1-1. Information gathering:

- Gather information from faculty members, senior students, available literature, and the internet on gender-based codes of conduct and general gender relations in your field of research. In addition, gather information on the situation and the methods of addressing (sexual) harassment in and around your research site.
- It is advisable to ask for an introduction to a reliable local person in advance (Note: it is recommended that female researchers be introduced to a local woman). If this is not possible, try to find one as soon as possible after arriving in the area. Maintain regular contact with your local contact person—not just during the trip but both before and after the trip, if possible—to maintain the relationship.

1-2. Travel plan

- **Create multiple research site plans.** In fieldwork, you may be forced to change your research site because of harassment or other unexpected events. Therefore, it is advisable to identify at least one area, apart from your chosen research site, where it would be possible to conduct research under similar conditions or on a similar theme. If there are issues, such as obtaining permission to conduct your research, it would be best to search in a neighboring area. However, if such an area is not available, it would be best to identify a remote area. If you are planning to conduct research in a rural area, you should also identify a place to stay in an urban area where you can take refuge, should this be necessary.

2. During travel

2-1. To prevent harassment:

- Try not to deviate too much from local gender norms in terms of appearance and behavior. In this way, you may be able to reduce the risk of becoming a target of harassment, at least to some extent.
- If there is even the slightest concern about harassment, avoid situations where you are alone with somebody else.

- If you go to an interview alone, tell someone you trust about your plans, including details of who, where, and when you are meeting.
- Be aware that homestay destinations are not always safe (cf. Kloß 2017) and select one carefully (Note: if you are a woman, look for a family with women). Do not hesitate to change your homestay destination if you think that something is wrong.
- Be aware that you may be victimized by local Japanese people. If you feel that something is not right between you and another Japanese person(s), you should review your relationship with them and consider being away from them.

2-2. If harassment has occurred:

- Consult with someone as soon as possible (e.g., your supervisor), or notify the relevant points of contact for addressing harassment during fieldwork.
- Do not tell yourself that it is “not a big deal” or try to be considerate of people in general (i.e., everyone at the site). Leave the place where the harassment occurred as soon as possible and, in case of emergency, leave all your belongings behind and simply run away.
- Take refuge in a hotel in the urban area that you identified beforehand, or in the home of a trusted acquaintance, and take some time to “regroup.” If necessary, do not hesitate to return home (Japan).
- Once you have taken some time to process the event, talk to a trusted local person about how to proceed with addressing the event at the site. If there is a Japanese embassy or similar entity in the city, consider consulting with them.
- Avoid dealing with the perpetrator alone. Instead, devise a countermeasure by consulting with a trusted person or faculty member (Note: try to refrain from spreading word about the harassment in the area, as this may lead to outing.²)

2-3. Post-harassment: Stay and research

- Discuss the future of your research with a faculty member (e.g., supervisor and/or contact point for harassment). Consider whether or not to continue your research in the same area or change your plans.

Example: You start a homestay program to study organic farming in Village A (Plan A). Six months later, you are subjected to sexual harassment during your research.

⁴ The act of exposing a person's sexual orientation to a third person without the consent of the person is called an “outing.”

- Since Village A is large, you determine that there is no risk of contact with the perpetrator. In this case, it is possible to simply arrange another homestay in a different part of Village A and continue your research. (This case, at least in terms of the research, is remedied by changing the living arrangement.)
- You determine that it would be difficult to continue your research in Village A. In this case, you can continue your research by changing your research site to Village B, which similarly engages in organic farming (i.e., you move to Plan B).
- You determine that it would be difficult to continue your research. After taking refuge at a hotel in your predetermined urban area, you go back home (i.e., you move to Plan C).

Your own choice should be prioritized when deciding whether or not to stay and complete your research. However, if you are experiencing fear from being persistently pursued, being repeatedly subjected to unnatural physical contact, or if the damage is serious, it is advisable for you to proceed with returning home as quickly as possible.

3. Upon returning home:

- No one is allowed to suffer harassment under any circumstances. Do not feel like you have to suffer alone. It is impossible to avoid 100% of all harm, and anyone, regardless of gender, has the potential of becoming a victim. Therefore, do not blame yourself if you have been victimized.
- Consult with your supervisor or the harassment contact office about your future plans.
- Consult with a specialist and/or the Kyoto University General Student Support Center and/or the Counseling Office³ (no medical fees apply) on campus. If you are unable to make an appointment, ask a faculty member to find another contact point for you.

IV. Conclusion

- In most cases, interacting directly with people through and during fieldwork offers a valuable experience. If you are too cautious and fear being harassed, you risk missing out on potentially valuable and positive encounters and will not be able to form good relationships with your subjects. However, if you are completely defenseless against and/or unprepared for harassment, should it occur, you will not protect yourself (cf. Sagawa 2018). This ability to balance action with preparation is something that can only be cultivated through field experience. It is advisable, therefore, to always act with caution. Conversely, to avoid becoming a perpetrator of harassment while conducting fieldwork, you should always remember to be grateful to and respectful of those who cooperate with you during your research.

³ <https://www.gssc.kyoto-u.ac.jp/counsel/english.html>
<https://www.kyoto-u.ac.jp/en/education-campus/facilities/international-student-advising>

- Be aware that the risk of becoming a victim or perpetrator of harassment exists not only in cases where fieldwork takes place overseas, but can also occur in domestic fields and/or in your own daily life (e.g., Fujita and Kitamura 2013, “Part 4: Problems Encountered in the Field”).
- Remember that faculty members will support you, so that you will not be obliged to give up your research if you experience harassment during fieldwork. Please understand that experiencing harassment will not and does not constitute a “failure” of your research or fieldwork.
- Remember that your mind and body are much more important than research, and that's why you should try to prevent harassment and act first to protect yourself in the unlikely event that it happens.

【参考文献】

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