Sexual Harassment of University Students in Bangladesh: A Case on Dhaka University

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Abstract

This study achieves two-fold objectives: (1) finding the rates of sexual harassment (SH) in higher education (i.e., in universities) of Bangladesh and (2) exploring the fears of female students to report (SH) in Bangladesh. A survey was conducted online with 210 female Dhaka University students. Moreover, 17 in-depth interviews (IDIs) with victims of SH were conducted. The study found that the rate of SH in higher education was very high, with the rate of verbal SH (60%) being higher than the rate of non-verbal SH (51.4 %). The majority of victims were subjected to verbal or nonverbal sexual harassment by male students, strangers, or university faculty. Eighty-nine percent of victims did not report against perpetrators to any legal authority. Dread of academic difficulties, shame, distrust of legal processes, and, most crucially, fear of social stigma were the reasons for remaining silent. The prevalence of SH in Bangladesh's higher education would increase due to the culture of silence regarding SH.

Keywords: Sexual harassment, Higher education, Reporting, Social stigma, Bangladesh.

Introduction

Sexual harassment is a global and multifaceted social problem that women in all societies encounter to varying degrees. Sexual harassment is defined as any unwanted, inappropriate, and insulting physical, verbal, or nonverbal action of a sexual nature or based on sex that affects the dignity of women and men (ILO, 2000). One in every three women worldwide has been a victim of physical or sexual violence perpetrated by another (UN Women,

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2019). Sexual harassment has garnered considerable attention in Bangladesh as a social and legal problem over the last two decades.

Sexual harassment has reached epidemic levels in the world's higher education systems (Bondestam & Lundqvist, 2020; Dziech & Weiner, 1984). Students and women are frequently victims of gender-based sexual violence in higher education (Bondestam & Lundqvist, 2020). Cantor et al. (2016) reported that 47.7 percent of students experienced sexual harassment from matriculation through post-graduation; yet, most of the incidences of sexual harassment and rape went unreported (UN Women, 2019). Bondestam & Lundqvist (2020) stated that more than half of victims of sexual harassment in higher education did not disclose the incident to legal authorities; Johnson et al. (2016) also found 71% of women do not report sexual assault. Most (victims) do not report considering how society would treat them. They often attempt to protect their family's reputation, self-respect, and social acceptance (Jeremiah et al., 2017).

Various recent studies showed the high occurrence of sexual harassment and the reasons for students at European and American institutions' unwillingness to report sexual predators (Bondestam & Lundqvist, 2020; Klein & Martin, 2019). However, in Bangladesh, no scholarly studies have been undertaken on sexual harassment in higher education or why students do not report incidents of SH, even though it has become a major concern in higher education. Between 2011 and 2019, 2830 girls in Bangladesh were subjected to various forms of sexual harassment (Odhikar, 2019). According to ASK (2020), 258 girls were victims of SH in Bangladesh in 2019. Additionally, 1413 females experienced rape attempts in 2019, and 224 were raped. According to (ActionAid, 2019), almost 80% of surveyed women had experienced or witnessed sexual harassment and abuse at work; nonetheless, Bangladeshi females continue to tolerate sexual harassment or remain silent about it out of fear of social shame (ASK, 2016). Thus, our study aims to ascertain the prevalence of sexual harassment in higher education; the fundamental research question is, 'Do female students report sexual harassment?' If not, why not?

Moreover, the objectives of the study are (1) to find the rates of sexual harassment in higher education (i.e., in universities) of Bangladesh and (2) to explore why female students do not report against SH. The study has selected "Dhaka University" as a study area for collecting primary data.

Methodology

In this study, data were collected using quantitative and qualitative methods (mixed method). Both primary and secondary data sources were used to explore the study objective. Our selected study area was Dhaka University. Primary data was collected by conducting an online survey based on semi-structural questionnaires to collect preliminary data; the online survey was conducted using Google Forms. The targeted respondents of the survey were only female students of Dhaka University. In total, 210 female students (aged 19-29 years & above 30 years old) participated voluntarily and provided their opinions on sexual harassment based on their experiences (Table 01). The online survey selected academic years (first enrolled) from 2010-2020. Among the respondents, 64.3 percent were undergraduate students, 30 percent were graduate students, and other (i.e., students of professional master's degree and MPhil students) 5.7 percent.

A comprehensive literature analysis was conducted for secondary data by reviewing journals, reports, edited volumes, policy documents, and other publications. Secondary data sources were mainly used to understand the concept of sexual harassment; to enrich our research objectives. It helped us with the validation of collected data through cross-checking

Table 01: Demography of survey participants

	Characteristics	**N (=210)**	**Percentage**
Student Affiliation	Undergraduate	135	64.29
	Graduate	63	30
	Others	12	5.71
Age	Age 19-29	6	97.14
	Above 30	204	2.86
Enrollment	Before 2010	6	2.86
	2010 or later	204	97.14

Sample Selection criteria

The study primarily utilized three sampling methods to collect survey data and qualitative field data. First, we collected survey data using convenience sampling and simple random sampling because the survey was conducted

via digital platforms. Only female students of Dhaka University were the target group of the study. Therefore, we disseminated the Google form, including the survey questionnaire, via Facebook posts and messenger to the female friends of Dhaka University. We excluded men and people of other sexual orientations from the sampling criteria. The sample selection criteria were (a) being a female student at Dhaka University and (b) being between the ages of 19 and 29 or older than 30.

For conducting IDIs, we added another criterion: a female student who was the victim of sexual harassment (SH). After completing the survey, we identified the victims of SH and contacted those who voluntarily provided their contact addresses. Moreover, we used methods of purposive sampling to select participants for IDIs.

In-depth Interview (IDI)

The study also used a qualitative approach to explore the nature and the reasons why respondents don't want to report sexual harassment. Following the objectives, we conducted 17 IDIs with respondents. In total, 17 IDIs respondents were selected from the survey data, which said they were victims of sexual harassment. Among 17 IDIs, 7 were conducted face-to-face interviews maintaining COVID-19 compliance, and the other 10 were shown via the ZOOM.com App. Ethical issues were considered strictly. Respondents were voluntary in the interview process, and we recorded the interviews with their consent.

Table 02: Demography of IDIs participants

Serial	Affiliation with university	Respondents Code	Age	Method
1	Graduate	G-1	19-29	IDI
2	Graduate	G-2	Above 30	IDI
3	Graduate	G-3	Above 30	IDI
4	Graduate	G-4	Above 30	IDI
5	Others	OTH-1	Above 30	IDI
6	Others	OTH-2	Above 30	IDI
7	Others	OTH-3	19-29	IDI
8	Undergraduate	UNG-1	19-29	IDI

9	Undergraduate	UNG-2	19-29	IDI
10	Undergraduate	UNG-3	19-29	IDI
11	Undergraduate	UNG-4	19-29	IDI
12	Undergraduate	UNG-5	19-29	IDI
13	Undergraduate	UNG-6	19-29	IDI
14	Undergraduate	UNG-7	19-29	IDI
15	Undergraduate	UNG-8	19-29	IDI
16	Undergraduate	UNG-9	19-29	IDI
17	Undergraduate	UNG-10	19-29	IDI

Data analysis

This study used descriptive statistical analysis to analyze the quantitative data. The descriptive data offered critical information about the prevalence of sexual harassment in the study area. For example, it indicated the percentage of respondents who had encountered SH on the Dhaka university campus, the frequency of SH occurrences, and respondents' attitudes about reporting SH.

The study used IDIs, to do the exploratory textual analysis of qualitative data. We primarily used the open coding technique to evaluate textual or qualitative data. We examined the textual data line by line for similarity and dissimilarity between data coded as concepts and themes. We applied the process of thematic analysis to derive theme-based findings from the qualitative data.

Limitations

The study has some limitations; firstly, we covered one public university area to understand the situations of other universities in Bangladesh. Secondly, the number of respondents in the survey was few, and the possible reason behind the low response could be the voluntary nature of the survey. Hence, some students opted not to participate because many female students are unwilling to share incidents of sexual harassment. Furthermore, we have failed to reach more respondents to collect primary data due to the nationwide lockdown to combat covid-19.

Literature review

Sexual harassment intends to harm an individual's dignity and create an intimidating, uncomfortable, demeaning, insulting, or offensive situation (UN Women, 2019). Sexual harassment makes traumatic life memories and sociological impacts on the victims. It makes the victims feel helpless and powerless, which affects their self-esteem (Kalra & Bhugra, 2013). Over 35 percent of women worldwide have encountered physical or sexual partner abuse or non-partner sexual assault, according to a survey (WHO, 2013). WHO (2013) also reported that 2 percent of women in India and East Asia, 6 percent in Africa, 10 percent in Central Asia, and 14 percent in Latin America and the Caribbean formally revealed their abuse experiences. In Indonesia, 85 percent of questioned female workers expressed fears about sexual assault in the workplace (Better Work, 2014). Ergöçmen et al. (2013) stated that women seeking help against sexual harassment and violence are very low. As only 3 percent of assaulted women asked for police assistance, the percentages range from 10 percent in Moldova and Ukraine to fewer than 1 percent in six nations, including Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Haiti, Mozambique, Nigeria, and Zimbabwe.

Garment workers are not only victims of sexual harassment; students of colleges and universities are also victims of sexual harassment (SH) (Klein & Martin, 2019). The incidences of sexual harassment on campuses have been established at the epidemic levels (Dziech & Weiner, 1984). The first research on this topic reported that 20% of university-level female students had faced sexual harassment by male tutors (Benson & Thomson, 1982). Numerous students have recently shared their incidents of sexual harassment on campus using the #MeToo hashtag (Hardy, 2018). According to a study of the colleges affiliated with the Association of American University, 47.7 percent of students have encountered SH since enrolling (Cantor et al., 2016). Most respondents experienced SH in the form of offensive remarks, jokes, and statements about their physique and appearance. From 3.7% in the previous year (Cantor et al., 2016), nearly 90% of victims had suffered this type of abuse (Krebs et al., 2016; Yoon et al., 2010). The percentage of respondents who have received sexually inappropriate images or videos was 21%, according to the findings of three studies (Rospenda et al., 2000), 18 percent (Hill & Silva, 2005), and 21.6 percent (Krebs et al., 2016). Kelley & Parsons (2000) stated that male undergraduate or graduate students sexually abused most female

undergraduate students, and most female graduate students were harassed by faculty members. Similarly, Wood et al. (2018) mentioned that graduate students were more vulnerable to sexual harassment by university faculty or employees. As 19 percent of offenders were university teachers; hence undergraduates were more likely to be assaulted by their peers (Wood et al., 2018). Furthermore, Clodfelter et al. (2008) found that most incidents related to sexual harassment occurred in isolated areas of campus (62.5 percent), especially in classrooms or labs (25 percent), university's residential quarters (20.8 percent), or outside of classroom or gym (16.7 percent).

Despite being rated so high, most SHs and rapes remain largely unreported as victims, bystanders, and witnesses are afraid to come forward, fearing consequences (UN Women, 2019). Bondestam & Lundqvist (2020) explained that more than half of the victims of sexual harassment in higher education do not report the incidents to law enforcement. Several scholarly studies showed various reasons for remaining silent against SH. Sexually harassed victims most often do not report to law enforcement agencies because of fear, doubts, scrutiny, blame, and social stigmatization they have to experience (Foster & Fullagar, 2018). Moreover, fear of social stigmatization and shame are the salient reasons for suppressing emotions and remaining silent against SH (Kalra & Bhugra, 2013; Tyson, 2019). Social stigma refers to the negative perception, inferiority, and relative incapability collectively harmonized by society to people of a particular group (Herek, 2009). Consequently, they (victims of SH) avoid attending classes, and it often leads victims to lower academic performance (Huerta et al., 2006).

In the case of Bangladesh, a total of 2830 girls were subjected to different forms of sexual harassment from 2011-2019 (Odhikar, 2019). ASK (2020) reported that 258 females were the victims of SH in 2019 in Bangladesh. Almost 60% of Indian and Bangladeshi textile manufacturing workers reported having experienced sexual harassment on the job (Fair Wear Foundation, 2013). Similarly, in Bangladesh, 80 percent of surveyed women said they had experienced sexual harassment and abuse in the workplace (ActionAid, 2019). Women in Bangladesh are still tolerant or remain silent against sexual harassment because they fear social stigma and innuendo (ASK, 2016; Naved et al., 2006). Nevertheless, in Bangladesh's case, no scholarly reports or studies have been conducted on sexual harassment in higher education. So, the purpose of this paper is to explore

sexual harassment in higher education in the context of Bangladesh. If the incidences of SH occur, why do victims not report against predators?

Result Analysis

This study found that 51.4 percent reported female students had experienced non-verbal sexual harassment by force since their enrollment in the university (Table 03). They experienced non-verbal persecution, such as pinching and touching the body by force. One of the victims of SH stated,

> *"He (the predator) was a re-admission student in my department. He forcefully tried to kiss me in one of the varsity buses while showing me around campus. After talking to my seniors, it was confirmed that he did such inappropriate behaviors toward many girls within the faculty."*

> (Respondent Code- UNG-4, An IDI participant)

The incidents of verbal sexual harassment (SH) were higher than non-verbal sexual harassment. The analysis found that 60 percent of the female students were victims of verbal SH, such as whistling, blinking, and ogling. They also got inappropriate sexual jokes, photographs, and videos over email, SMS, phone calls, and instant messages (Table 03). The majority of verbal sexual harassment has occurred through online media such as Facebook and Messenger via text messages and the sending of pornographic images and videos. As a respondent stated,

> *"One of my seniors sexually harassed me. He texted me, literally forced me to meet and text him. He used so many tricks to frighten me not to tell others and emotionally blackmailed me. As a newcomer to the university and resident of a rural area, I was too young and weak to protest against it."*

> (Respondent Code: UNG-8, An IDI participant)

Another victim of SH who was harassed through online media (e.g., Facebook) stated that,

> *"It was the first year of my university. One of my Facebook friends (who was also a student at my university) used to text*

me, but I did not reply to him. One day, he sent me a link and some pictures. And when I found out that it was a link to a porn video and those photos were screenshots of porn. I was just bewildered and blocked him immediately on Facebook. Even after that, the incident hunted me for a few months."

(Respondent Code: G-3, An IDI participant)

In the study, 72 percent of surveyed female students experienced both non-verbal and verbal forms of sexual harassment. A female respondent had experienced both non-verbal and verbal sexual harassment by a person and stated that,

"Once I was having a drink with some of my friends. It was midnight, and we stayed overnight on campus. We sang and danced. So, after some time, we sat together to rest. A junior friend of mine started kissing my hand and touching my waist and breasts. I was shocked and panicked and pushed him away, and he left. None noticed it, and none even wanted to believe me as I was drunk. But I was sure that I was in my senses. However, there was another guy I was used to working with within a club. He was junior to me, and I was the team leader. This guy started saying unusual things, like he was a Satanist. He sent photos of his erect penis. I did not reply to anything and blocked him immediately."

(Respondent Code: G-2, An IDI participant)

Most female students experienced sexual harassment (non-verbal SH and verbal SH) incidents more than two times on the university campus. The study showed that 70.3 percent of victims of SH experienced SH more than two times, and 13.5 percent faced SH about two times or less (Table 03).

Table 03: Scenario of Sexual harassment in higher education in Bangladesh

Percentage of (surveyed) victims of non-verbal SH since enrolling in Dhaka University	
	%
Yes (Victim)	51.4
No (Non-victim)	48.6
Percentage of (surveyed) victims of verbal SH since enrolling in Dhaka University	
	%
Yes (Victim)	40
No (Non-victim)	60
Distribution of victims of how many times they have faced such incidences (SH) (percent) since enrolling in the University	
	%
Once	16.2
Two times	13.5
More than two times	70.3
Percentage of perpetrators by whom the surveyed respondents are sexually harassed	
	%
Student	94.4
Alumni	8.3
Faculty or instructor	19.4
Administrator or office staff	2.8
Another person	13.9
Relationship between perpetrators and victims of SH and its distribution	
	%
Teacher or Advisor	19.4
Friends	45.9
Departmental Senior/Junior	32.4
Stranger	62.2
Percentage of surveyed victims who were (SH) harassed by the same person more than once since enrolling in the University	
	%
Yes	54
No	40
Don't Know	6

94.4 percent of surveyed female students were harassed by (male) university students, and 19.4 percent of the victims reported that they were

harassed by faculties or instructors (Table 03). They (female students) were harassed sexually by the chairman of the department, senior professors, lecturer, and thesis supervisors; most of the incidents occurred in the teacher's room, exam hall, and tours. As a result, they (female students) avoided working with particular faculty members because of the risk of being sexually harassed. As a respondent stated,

> *"After getting admitted into the university, I needed a dorm seat. My aunt's friend was a lecturer in the IER department. My aunt told me to meet him and ask for his suggestions. I went to meet him, and he was in his room alone. He told me to sit. He started to talk about different things and tried to make me laugh. Soon he came closer to me and started smoothing my thighs. He also offered to visit him often. I got so scared, stood up, and left the room. I never even told my aunt about it and never met him again."*

(Respondent Code- UNG-2, An IDI participant)

Another student (victim of SH) stated that,

> *"A faculty member used to stare at my breasts while talking to me. He did this more than once."*

(Respondent Code: UNG-6, An IDI participant)

The study found that they (female students) also experienced verbal and non-verbal sexual harassment by Dhaka University's faculty members,

> *"While I was writing in the exam hall, my breasts were touched by one of my department faculties. He did it technically while he was signing my exam paper."*
> (Respondent Code: UNG-1, An IDI participant)

Students consider their departments' teachers as their guardians; they trust them and share their problems with them. While the teacher becoming a sexual assaulter threatens their (female students) higher education, even the teacher is not safer for the university's female students. As a respondent stated,

> *"On Pahela-Baisakh 2014, a boy stretched the collar of my Kurti in a crowded place at TSC. I could not even mark who he was. Most significantly, I had an excellent relationship with one of the faculty whom I thought was my guardian. He*

> *was aged like my father, so I never felt insecure. But on the last day I met him, he forced me to have an intimate relationship with him. I came out of his room, luckily."*
> (Respondent Code: UNG-9, An IDI participant)

In the study, female students reported that they were sexually harassed by their friends or acquaintances (45.9 percent), departmental seniors or juniors (32.4 percent), and strangers, i.e., students of Dhaka University (62.2 percent) (Table 03). Furthermore, 54 percent of victims reported that they were sexually harassed by the same person more than once since enrolling in the university (Table 03).

Sexual harassment in higher education led to physical and psychological consequences for students. Most of the victims of SH reported that it (SH) increased mental trauma and psychological suffering throughout their life. As a respondent stated,

> *"At 9 pm, I was returning with some of my female friends from my part-time job. On the way, three boys wanted to stop and interrogate us. We did not stop; they followed us then, and I noticed many more boys joining them from the nearby Hall. One of them started yelling loudly, making noises to scare us, and making offensive comments about us. Though we somehow managed to leave the situation without physical harm, it affected me psychologically. I couldn't attend classes for a few days because I was afraid to go to my department's building crossing the road."*
> (Respondent Code: UNG-5, An IDI participant)

The study found that only 11 percent of SH victims reported to the university or legal authority. Other, 89 percent of victims of SH did not report to any legal authority; they suppressed their voices against sexual harassment (Table 03).

Why do not victims of SH report?

The study found that 89 percent of victims of SH did not report sexual harassment. They mentioned why they did not report, as 13.5 percent stated that authority or people would not believe them; 24.3 percent did not want to face any troubles or fear getting viral. Furthermore, 35.1 percent felt

embarrassed and ashamed; 48.6 percent thought they would not do anything against the offender due to corrupted and politicized legal systems; 29.7 percent feared academic troubles, and 45.9 percent did not report in fear of social stigmatization (Table 04). Moreover, 35.1 percent of victims of SH argued that they remained silent against SH because of felt embarrassed and ashamed (Table 04). As a victim of SH stated,

> *"I was not brave enough to report against it. So, I decided to forget it because I felt embarrassed."*

(Respondent Code: OTH-2, An IDI participant)

Table 04: Sexual Harassment report to the university or legal authorities and reasons

Percentage of victims of SH report to the university or legal authorities	
	%
Yes	11
No	89
Reasons for victims (SH) not complaining to legal authorities against SH	
	%
Felt embarrassed, ashamed	35.1
I did not think anyone would believe me	13.5
I did not think any action would be taken against it	48.6
I feared it would harm my academics	29.7
Negative social consequences	45.9
it would be too emotionally difficult	18.9
I fear it would not be confidential	24.3
Other	13.5

The study found that 29.7 percent of victims of SH did not report because they feared academic troubles or a negative impact on their future careers

(Table 04). Most victims remained silent against university professors or faculty members for fear of academic trouble. Victims of SH state that,

> *"Because he was the department chairman, and he might use his authoritative position."*

(Respondent Code: UNG-7, An IDI participant)

Another respondent mentioned that,

> *"I have not reported due to embarrassment, and it might have affected my results negatively."*

(Respondent Code: G-2, An IDI participant)

Distrust toward legal authorities was also a cause of ignoring or remaining silent after SH. The ineffectiveness of administrative systems, lack of transparency, and unresponsiveness were the main reasons for not reporting against SH mentioned by victims. 48.6 percent of the victims mentioned that legal authorities could not do anything (Table 04). A female respondent stated,

> *"I could not expect the authorities to take responsibility, and I cannot trust the system. This kind of belief prevented me from reporting against SH."*

(Respondent Code: UNG-6, An IDI participant)

Fear of social stigma remained one of the main reasons behind victims' silence against SH. The study also found that 45.9 percent of sample victims of SH did not report fear of social stigma or negative social judgment (Table 04). A respondent (victim) stated that,

> *"I was young, so I was feeling scared like most other girls."*

(Respondent Code: UNG-2, An IDI participant)

They (victims) were scared and afraid of social stigmatization for SH, which compelled them to tolerate SH against the offenders.

Discussion

This study found that sexual harassment incidences are very high in the study area. The rates of sexual harassment found in this study are higher than in previous studies of different countries. It found that 51.4 percent

reported female students had experienced non-verbal sexual harassment (i.e., pinching and touching the body by force since enrolling in the university. In addition, 60 percent of female students surveyed were victims of verbal SH like as whistling, winking, and teasing. Moreover, they also received jokes, pictures, or videos through emails, texts, phone calls, and instant messages containing offensive sexual remarks.

Similarly, Cantor et al. (2016) reported that 47.7 percent of students at American University schools have experienced SH since enrollment. Like our study result, Rospenda et al. (2000) found that 59.1 percent of students experienced SH, whereas our study found 72 percent of respondents experienced sexual harassment. Following the results, the percentage of verbal SH in higher education is higher in Bangladesh (i.e., study area) than in most other countries (Cantor et al., 2016; Clodfelter et al., 2008; Krebs et al., 2016; Rospenda et al., 2000). A survey showed that 21 percent of participants received sexually inappropriate photographs or videos (Rospenda et al., 2000). Similarly, this study found that the majority of verbal SH occurred via internet media (e.g., Facebook and Messenger via texts, sending erected photos, and porn videos). It also showed that undergraduates were more likely to experience sexual harassment than graduates or others.

According to a study by Kelley & Parsons (2000), the majority of female undergraduate students were sexually abused by male undergraduate or graduate students; similarly, this study found that 94.4 percent reported female students were harassed by (male) students of the university. Kelley & Parsons (2000) stated that, in most cases, faculty members sexually harassed female graduate students. However, this study found that faculties harassed both undergraduate and graduate students, and in most cases, undergraduate female students were victims of sexual harassment by faculty members. In a study, Wood et al. (2018) showed that faculty members harassed 19 percent of university students. Similarly, 19.4 percent of the victims were harassed by faculties or instructors in the study area.

Like other studies (Bondestam & Lundqvist, 2020; Foster & Fullagar, 2018; Tyson, 2019; UN Women, 2019), this study found that 89 percent of victims of SH did not report to any legal authority; they suppressed their voices or remained silent against sexual harassment. Fear of facing doubts, scrutiny, and societal stigmatization has been identified in previous studies as a

reason for the suppression of voices, feelings, and delayed reporting of SH (Foster & Fullagar, 2018; Kalra & Bhugra, 2013; Tyson, 2019). This study found similar reasons: fear of facing troubles, shame, and social stigmatization. A higher number of surveyed victims (45.9 percent) remained silent against SH because of the fear of social stigmatization. Additionally, other reasons for suppressing voices against SH, e.g., fear of academic troubles, administrative systems' ineffectiveness, lack of transparency, and unresponsiveness. Similar to (Huerta et al., 2006), this study also found that victims of SH experienced psychological distress in their academic journeys, which led to lower academic performance. Victims of SH also mentioned that it (SH) increased mental trauma throughout their life.

Conclusion

Sexual harassment has been established as an epidemic in higher education throughout European and American universities, where the rates of SH are relatively higher, but victims rarely report against offenders (Bondestam & Lundqvist, 2020; Klein & Martin, 2019). Similarly, in Bangladesh, sexual harassment has received much attention as a social problem over the last two decades. However, no scholarly studies have been conducted on SH in higher education. The study attempts to know the percentages of sexual harassment in higher education and explore why female students do not report SH in Bangladesh. This study reported that the rate of sexual harassment in higher education was significantly high, with the rate of verbal SH (60 percent) exceeding the rate of non-verbal SH (51.4 percent). Verbal SH and non-verbal SH have become prevalent institutional practices for many students. University students or faculty members sexually harassed, verbally and non-verbally, most surveyed respondents. A shocking finding is that university faculty members sexually harassed 19.4 percent of surveyed female students—however, victims ignored reporting against teachers or faculty members in fear of academic troubles.

In addition, this study found that 89 percent of SH victims did not report the perpetrators to any legal authority. Fear of scholastic difficulties, boomerang allegations, mistrust of legal systems, and, most significantly, fear of social stigmatization were mentioned as reasons for avoiding reports to legal authorities (negative social consequences). In Bangladesh, the

occurrence of sexual harassment in higher education (university level) would increase as a result of a culture of silence (non-reporting) on sexual harassment. This study's findings suggest that Bangladeshi universities should adopt a robust policy to reduce the prevalence of sexual harassment on campus. Policymakers (i.e., the University Grants Commission (UGC) and University authorities) must establish an independent and neutral institutional unit, such as a "complaint booth," to combat sexual harassment and guarantee safe environments for female students in Bangladesh's universities.

Acknowledgments

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