

Analyzing The Level Of Harassment Within The University

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Abstract

Over a three decades have passed since Hall and Sandler coined the term “chilly climate” citing sexual victimization as one of many factors that contribute to an inhospitable situation for women in academia¹. The current study illustrates that sexual harassment remain pervasive in the University environment, profoundly and negatively affecting women students' lives.

تلخیص مقالہ

تین عشرے قبل حال اور سینڈلر نے “بریلی آب و ہوا” کی اصطلاح کو تعلیمی اداروں میں خواتین کو درپیش نامساعد حالات اور جنسی طور پر ہراساں کرنے کے عمل کے لئے استعمال کیا۔ زیر نظر مطالعہ سے ظاہر ہوتا ہے کہ جنسی طور پر ہراساں کرنے کا عمل یونیورسٹی کے ماحول میں سرایت کیا ہوا ہے جو کہ بدرجہ غایت اور صنفی طور پر طالبات کی زندگیوں کو متاثر کرتا ہے۔

Introduction

Sexual harassment is any irritating behavior that feels offensive. Also includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and unwelcome verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature that occur in public place or at workplace or on campus.

Harassment is a worldwide issue though it is faced by both men and women but mostly it is referred to female. It is basically a new term first used in sixties and before that no one knew how to name the offensive behavior they faced in the lives.

Academic scholars studying sexual harassment are often working at cross purposes with legal scholars; the traditions, methodologies, assumptions and conclusions of academic

scholars are different from those used by legal scholars. Feminist scholars in particular argue that the legal system, being male dominated, does not understand or honor the perspectives of women who have been harassed.

It is now recognized by state as an offensive act and punishment is set to be given to the harasser. According to an ILO survey, among the industrialized countries only Australia, Canada, France, New Zealand, Spain, Sweden and the United States have specific laws regarding sexual harassment². Other industrialized countries cover sexual harassment under laws on criminal law. Australia, Canada, Denmark, Ireland, New Zealand, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States have equal employment opportunity laws as well. France is the only country that has passed a criminal law related to sexual harassment, although some criminal laws in other countries may apply to extreme cases of sexual harassment such as assault or indecent behavior³.

Researchers have found that women and men interpret sexualized behavior in the workplace differently. Women are much more likely than men to label a given situation as harassing. Men report that they would be flattered by sexual attention at work, while women report that they are annoyed by similar behavior. Scholars point out that the power dynamic between male bosses and female employees may account for such differential interpretations. Some scholars have theorized that since women are more likely to be subject to sexual violence, they are more sensitive to sexual behavior in the workplace.

One study presented women and men with a series of hypothetical scenarios and asked them whether or not they would label the behaviors as sexual harassment. In one scenario, a male supervisor invited a new female employee to lunch to discuss her work. He focused the conversation on her personal life. On another occasion, over drinks, he attempted to fondle her. Most of the women said that the sexual harassment began with the lunch, while most of the men thought it began later when he attempted to fondle her⁴.

Researchers are beginning to turn from studying sexual harassment as a problem between individuals to a problem of organizational climate. Harassment is more likely in an environment in which employees perceive that management does not take victims seriously or takes punitive measures against women who speak out, or where administrators inadequately enforce anti-sexual harassment policies against offenders. Factors like the status of women in the organization, the perception of women as an out group, and the general acceptance of nonprofessional behavior may contribute to pro-sexual harassment norms.

Pakistan too has particular laws to deal with sexual harassment and a mile stone has achieved when the State of Pakistan has passed a historic bill against sexual harassment

“Protection Against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act 2010”⁵.

The sexual harassment in educational institutions is also very common. Researches revealed that in some cases students have left institutions with the fear of being harassed⁶. And it is a big issue to be dealt specially against sexual harassment in schools. In most cases the male students trying to show their supremacy over girls use different mechanism and acquire such behavior that is infuriating and annoying.

Some students, men and women, just don't want to hear classroom references to sex. But to suggest that comments about sex necessarily are more offensive to women than to men is stereotyping, in itself gender discrimination. It suggests that women ought to be treated as children--sheltered from the troubling talk of the grownup world. We once thought women ought to be sheltered from university life altogether, certainly from professional schools, because they were, as a class, better suited to home and family than to the rough and tumble of careers. Are we now saying that women, once admitted to the university, may not hear all that will be said there? While we work to free our students from sexual harassment, we must also guard against a return to the crippling gender-based protectionism of a time gone by, when someone else made all women's choices for them⁷.

Almost 35% of female college students experience sexual harassment on campus, according to a recent study by the Minnesota Public Research Interest Group. The group surveyed 873 students from private and public schools throughout Minnesota. They found behaviors such as pinching, cornering, verbal abuse and assault occurring on campus. Less than 20% of harassed women filed formal complaints with their schools⁸.

A study of sexual harassment and assault and their effects on 1,037 female undergraduate and graduate students at a large Midwestern university found that about 40% of undergraduate and graduate women experienced harassment in their first year at the university, as did 60% of undergraduate students and more than 70% of graduate students beyond the fourth year. Only about 20-25% of women students recognized and labeled sexually harassing behaviors when they experienced them. Of the 50% of women who faced harassment, about two thirds reported more than one or two incidents. Lesbians and bisexuals were more likely to report sexual harassment, with nearly two thirds reporting gender harassment. More than 10% of female undergrads reported being sexually assaulted while on campus⁹.

Theories of Harassment

1. Patriarchy

This perspective holds that the cultural structure of patriarchy ("Rule by the Fathers") is the root cause of sexual harassment. Within this social structure men have social, political,

and economic power over women, who are defined by the system as sexual in nature¹⁰. In some traditional patriarchal cultures women are confined to the home as wives and mothers and female children are not formally educated. In other cultures such as our own, women are not confined to the home but stereotypes about appropriate male and female behavior assign women a subordinate sexualized identity even in the workplace.

2. Sociobiology

This perspective holds that men are biologically programmed to be sexual aggressors and that sexual behavior in the workplace is one aspect of that biological inheritance. At the center of this analysis is the assumption that sexual harassment is about sex. Proponents of this position may admit that some of the sexual behavior in the workplace is inappropriate, but they argue that it is unavoidable¹¹.

3. Culture

This perspective holds that women and men are socialized into different cultures—different beliefs, values, and ways of communicating. Traditionally the workplace has been a male culture where men joke, compete with and tease one another, and talk about women in less than respectful ways. Women who want to enter this workplace cannot expect men to change their culture quickly; however, men must learn to get along with women in the workplace. Women have to learn to be tougher and men have to learn to behave more respectfully when women are around¹².

4. Discourse

A discursive perspective holds that communication creates and shapes social reality. Language and our communicative practices embody assumptions about the nature of the world and the nature of truth that influence our opinions and behaviors. Everyday taken-for-granted communication activities reproduce and sustain oppressive conditions such as sexual harassment. Not only actions but also feelings and emotions are defined and taught, so that people who harass and people who are harassed come to feel those behaviors are "normal"¹³.

Literature Review

A research report revealed that 91.7% of the women hosteller respondents reported having faced harassment on the campus in Delhi University. 45% of women stated that sexual harassment on Delhi campus roads has affected their personal or academic development in one way or another. Women said that even when they have gone ahead to complain to the police nothing has been done about it. According to the report 20.2% women hostellers said that they have faced sexual harassment from policemen, this includes staring, winking and lewd comments¹⁴.

During the 1999 fall semester, Pennsylvania State University 5-25 students complained of computer-based harassment and misuse per day. Students and faculty report being "stalked" over e-mail, receiving death threats, or even having their personal computers "hijacked" with disturbing and gruesome images automatically popping up on their screens.

The Association of American University Women (AAUW) found that about 1 in 5 girls reported sexual violence, rape, pressure to have sex, or harassment as a major issue or struggle. Previous studies have shown that about 80 percent of girls and 60 percent of boys have experienced unwanted sexual attention¹⁵.

Another survey conducted by the American Association of University Women (AAUW) to analyze the Sexual Harassment Statistics in Education on 1632 students aged 8-11 revealed:

- 85% of girls have been sexually harassed
- 76% of boys have been sexually harassed
- 31% of girls experienced harassment "often"
- 18% of boys experienced harassment "often"
- 13% of girls reported being "forced to do something sexual at school other than kissing"
- 9% of boys reported being "forced to do something sexual at school other than kissing"
- Girls were five times more likely to find the incidents disturbing and three times more likely to feel the harassment had affected their grades.
- 25% of girls were harassed by school employees
- 10% of boys were harassed by school employees¹⁶

A survey conducted by the American Psychological Association on female graduate students revealed:

- 12.7% have experienced sexual harassment
- 21% have avoided classes for fear of being sexually harassed
- 11% have tried to report an incident of sexual harassment
- 3% have dropped a course because of sexual harassment

A survey conducted on Minnesota high school students (reported by Susan Strauss, Sexual Harassment and Teens) revealed:

- 80% were aware of sexual harassment occurring in their school
- 75% were aware of sexual harassment between students
- 50% were aware of sexual harassment of students by faculty¹⁷

Objectives

- Analyzing the level of harassment faced by university students
- To analyze how harassment is depicted by students
- To see the impact of harassment on the educational environment
- Analyzing the kinds of harassments students mostly face
- Evaluating the harassment faced by students at public place
- To analyze the level of harassment in educational institution

Methodology

Qualitative research was conducted through questionnaire method. The total sample size was 80 students that comprised of 40 male and 40 female students. Departments from both science and arts were taken, 5 departments from arts and 5 from science faculty were selected and 8 students were taken from each department. 1 male and 1 female student was taken from 1st year, 2nd year, 3rd year and final year from each dept. the data collection team comprised of 10 members and 8 questionnaires were distributed among each member. Harassment is not a subject that is used in normal routine and some people hesitate to share such incidences. Some of the students refused to talk of harassment and others didn't give proper information.

Knowledge of Harassment

Among the total 80 students, 87.5% knew what harassment is while the remaining 12.5% said they don't know about it, though when they were asked if they had ever commented on someone's dressing or physique, they said yes but they said that is not something offensive because that is for enjoyment.

Table No 1
Understanding of Harassment

Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Unwanted comments	17	21.25%
Unwanted touching	7	8.75%
Fun/ Enjoyment	3	3.7%
Threatening behavior	17	21%
Pressurize/ Dominate	6	7.5%
Unpleasant behavior	6	7.5%
Sexual Desire	3	3.7%
Mental/Physical torture	7	8.75%
Not sure	4	5%
No comments	10	12.5%
Total	80	100%

While asking about the understanding of harassment 21% said unwanted comments as it was what they had experienced the most. A similar number of students referred to a threatening behavior. Some of them nearly 8.7% associated harassment with mental/physical torture and unwanted touching. A few of them took it only for fun and enjoyment which is 3.7%. Some said it is to pressurize people by showing their dominance specially by men to show their supremacy. An equal number of students said harassment is an unpleasant behavior. A few of them also referred to harassment as sexual desire as it is mostly towards the opposite sex. 5% said that they understand what harassment is but cannot explain it. 12.5% of the students refused to give any comments on.

While asking about the level of harassment a prominent number of students which is 21% said that they were never harassed the reason might be because they didn't understand what harassment stands for and have might taken harassment for severe cases only. 35% said they are rarely harassed and 11.25% said that they are harassed very often. The occurrence of harassment can be clearly seen here.

Way of being Harassed

Most of the respondents' complaint of verbal harassment which is 47.5% usually comprised of comments. 21.5% said that Phone is also used as a medium for harassment, where as 20% also complaint of being harassed by unwanted touching mostly at bus stops and in public buses by the conductor and sometimes by the driver also and 3.7% complaints of chasing and whistling.

Place of Harassment

The table very clearly shows the level of harassment at different places. Mostly 37.5% of the students faced harassment at the university, 16.2% said that they were harassed at marketplace, and 17.5% of the students complained of being harassed at bus stops. It was told by some of the students that they faced unpleasant behavior at roads while going home or elsewhere.

Response to the Harasser

Table clearly shows that 21.2% of the harassed took no action and just ignored where as 8.7% smiled and taking it for fun. But most of them were angry though they took no verbal response. Some of them when asked told that taking action only encourages the harasser so one should keep silence. Only 10% of the students gave verbal response in order to 'revenge' as told.

Reaction of Harasser to the Response

In one case where verbal response was given by the harassed, the accused was annoyed. But mostly the harasser enjoyed particularly when the victim showed their anger. Most of them replied that giving response to the harasser only encouraged him/her.

Number of Harassed who Reported the Incident

Only 12.5% students reported the incidence of harassment, that too, to the family or friend but never reported in a police station. The majority of 77.5% students didn't feel it was a big issue to be reported. Some of them said because it's a part of everyday life and no one has enough time to go after such 'minor' problems.

Table No 2
Result of Reporting Harassment

(a) With the complaint	Frequency	Percentage
No action would be taken	57	71.2%
It would take long time	12	15%
It would be dealt quickly	11	13.7%
Total	80	100%

(b) With the harassment	Frequency	Percentage
It would stop	9	11.2%
It would decrease	26	32.5%
It would not change	22	27.5%
It would increase	23	28.7%
Total	80	100%

(c) With the harasser	Frequency	Percentage
He/she would change positively	8	10%
He/she would receive justified punishment	10	12.5%
He/she would receive little punishment	18	22.5%
He/she would receive no punishment at all	44	55%
Total	80	100%

On asking what would have been the consequences if the harassment was reported, the majority of the 71.2% students said that no action would have been taken against the harasser and 32.5% replied that harassment would not change but rather would increase by the so called security providers. Most of them assumed that even on reporting no

punishment would be given to the accused or in some cases would receive only little punishment.

Table No 3
Whether the Harasser should be Responded or not

Response be given	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	42	52.5%
No	31	38.7%
No response	7	8.75%
Total	80	100%

(a) Why response should be given

Categories	Frequency	Percentage
To discourage harasser	28	66.6%
Control oneself	3	7.1%
Because of the attitude of harasser	3	7.1%
To feel comfortable	2	4.7%
Avoid physical threat	2	4.7%
Don't know	4	9.5%
Total	42	100%

(b) Why response should not be given

Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Should avoid them	14	45.1%
Response wont make any difference	7	22.5%
No response	10	32.2%
Total	31	100%

Majority of students think that the harasser should be responded they think if response is given that will discourage the harasser from doing further harassment. And those who said no response should be given said the best cure is that such people should always be avoided and some think that even if the harasser is responded in any way it won't make any difference.

Table No 4
Whether the Incidence of Harassment had been Discussed or not

Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	52	65%
No	21	26.2%
No response	7	8.75%
Total	80	100%

(a) With whom it was discussed:

Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Mother	21	40.3%
Friends	23	44.2%
Other	5	9.6%
No response	3	5.7%
Total	52	100%

(b) Why it was not discussed

Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Just ignore	8	38%
No one reliable	6	28.5%
Taken as fun	7	33.3%
Total	21	100%

Most of the harassed students had discussed the incidence with their friends. Some girls have discussed it with their mothers and those who had not discussed had just ignored it, most of them had taken it as a fun and some found no one reliable enough to share such incidence.

Who is to Believe the Victims Words?

Most people said only their parents will believe them. Some believed their friends will take their words and some said no one would believe them. Some of the girls felt they better share it with their mother or siblings who can better understand them.

Table No 5
Reason of Harassment

Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Frustration	31	38.7%
Impact of media	7	8.7%
Lack of proper guidance/education	6	7.5%
Sexual Instinct	9	11.2%
Lack of religious education	4	5%
Male supremacy	4	5%
Confidence building	3	3.7%
Don't know	7	8.7%
Others	9	11.2%
Total	80	100%

On being asked what could possibly be the reason of harassment, the majority referred to personal grudge and frustration. They said it isn't any reason from the outside world but from his inner world; there might exist aggression and frustration as a result of his/her disapproval or disappointments in his/her life. Thus they gave a psychological reason for harassment. Some said it might be sexual instincts in a person as the victim is usually one from the opposite sex and in order to express ones sexual nature one harasses a person from the opposite sex. Some thought it is because of the media which presents such incidents frequently and the viewer adopts and acquires such behavior. Some girls mentioned that boys harass girls to show their superiority over them and some said it is because of lack of education/proper guidance and because of ignorance among common people. A few number of students also mentioned that the lack of religious education leads a person to do such act and one guy feels that harassment is important for confidence building specially while talking to girls.

Number of Subjects who have Harassed

51% students declared that they have harassed other people, most of them said they have harassed by verbal means ,12% had harassed through phone calls. The majority of those who had not harassed anyone gave the reason that they don't like doing such acts and some were scared of their families and that they might be reported. 2 boys told that they had never got a chance and are still looking for a chance to harass others.

Table No 6
Reason for Harassing

Categories	Frequency	Percentage
To have fun	26	32.5%
Jealousy	8	10%
Frustration	11	13.7%
No particular reason	13	16.2%
No response	22	27.5%
Total	80	100%

The majority did harass to enjoy and have fun and some to overcome their inner frustration. Some found no particular reason of harassment and a few number of students harassed because of jealousy and complex.

Whether been Punished or not

21.2% of the harassers were punished and 76.2% were not.

Table No 7
Way of Punishment

Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Verbally	2	11.7%
Physically	4	23.5%
Charged/ fine	1	5.8%
Others	3	17.6%
No response	7	41.1%
Total	17	100%

The majority of the harassers didn't disclose how they were punished whereas some were given physical punishment and some have verbal notifications. One of the harasser reported of been beaten with a leather belt.

(a) Why not Punished?

Majority of those who were not punished think that it is not an issue of being punished, for they only took it for fun. Some said it depends on the person who was harassed that the harasser is punished or not. Some remained unnoticed and 12 person didn't know why they were not punished.

It was told by most of the harassers that their victims showed anger but gave no verbal reply. Again the second largest among them are those who just ignored and kept silence. Some were embarrassed and some were shocked as well.

If any Friend been Harassed

A large majority confessed that they had seen incidence of harassment with their friends. Again most of the cases were by verbal means and some also told the incidents of touching.

Table No 8
University Environment

Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Peaceful	10	12.5%
Irritating	11	13.7%
Enjoyable	43	53.7%
Others	7	8.7%
No response	11	13.7%
Total	80	100%

For most students the environment at the university is enjoyable but for some it is irritating. The environment of the university is very important to be mentioned as it is the working zone for students. Irritating or annoying environment depicts that the working environment is uncomfortable for some of the students and it directly affect their studies.

Table No 9
If ever Abusive Language had been Used by the Depts. Staff

Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	44	55%
No	23	28.7%
No response	13	16.2%
Total	80	100%

Majority of the students told that abusive language is used in depts., usually by the grade one staff.

Table No 10
If ever Heard Comments about Makeup, Dressing or Physique

Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	61	76.2%
No	15	18.7%
No response	4	5%
Total	80	100%

Table No 11
What the Comments were about

Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Dressing	21	26.2%
Makeup	11	13.7%
Physique	25	31.2%
Other	7	8.7%
No response	16	20%
Total	80	100%

About 76.2% students hear comments about their dressing, makeup etc. Most comments are given on physique (31.2%) and dressing (26.2%). Some girls complained of hearing comments on their makeup. One said that she hears guys giving comments like '*miss. Universe*'. One master's boy said he once heard a girl commenting his hair '*balon mein bomb phatah!*'

Different Attitudes at University

25% students complained of hearing sexual talks and noticed sexual advances within the university premises. 22% heard dirty jokes that were offensive and 18% saw touching incidences.

Table No 12
Knowledge about the Law of Harassment

Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	18	22.5%
No	61	76.25%
No response	1	1.25%
Total	80	100%

(a) What they know about the law

Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Unaware of article	13	72.2%
Gives punishment	2	11.1%
Others	2	11.15%
No response	1	5.5%
Total	18	100%

(a) why they are unaware of the law:

Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Law is not common	6	9.8%
Lack of interest	17	27.8%
Never bothered to know	16	26.2%
Insufficient media information	13	21.3%
Don't know	3	4.9%
No response	6	9.8%
Total	61	100%

No one among the subjects knew exactly about the law of harassment (72.2%). Most of them said that they had heard there is a law regarding harassment (22.5%) but they didn't know what the law says. Though some said it is about giving punishment to the harasser (11.1%). Majority of them showed lack of interest in knowing what the law was about (27.8%). 26.2% again never bothered to know. A large number of students said it is because of lack of proper media information that they do not know about it (21.3%).

Whether Such Incidents will be Reported in Future or not

After being aware of the law most of the students agreed to report an incidence of harassment in future (57.5%) but some still refused to report it (36.2%). The reason might be because as they had mentioned before they thought there is law but is rarely implemented or might be because they feel it isn't a big issue to be reported.

Suggestions

Most of the students said people are unaware of the law surely because it had never been implemented and the victims too refrain to report it that's why, therefore the law should be implemented at the first place (51%). Second largest group said there should be awareness provoking workshops and seminars so that people be aware of it (22.5%). Some people said that the victim should feel strong enough to take stand against the harasser so that the incidence can be reported (2.5%).

Discussion

Likewise in other educational institutions sexual harassment level is thought provoking in Karachi University. Though some of the students harass others to have fun but it might cause some serious problem to the harasser. Harassment leads to low self esteem, thus it is not just a physical or verbal threat but emotional and psychological as well. Male students harass to show their supremacy, on the other hand girls face touching in buses. Those men try to show their dominant sexual nature as the theory of patriarchy describes them.

Conclusions

Harassment level at the university is higher comparatively to other places. Most of the students unveiled that they were harassed in university (37%).

72% complained of seeing a harassment incident at the university campus. Students also reported of sexual talks and abusive language used by the dept. staff. They are unaware of the law regarding sexual harassment.

Recommendations

- The university should appoint a committee of three teachers specially women teachers to inquire into serious charges of harassment.
- If this committee records someone findings of guilt, the person responsible should be suspended in anticipation of disciplinary proceedings.
- Workshops should be held for awareness rising about laws of harassment.

End Notes

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