

**Share-Net
Bangladesh**

The Knowledge Platform on
Sexual and Reproductive Health & Rights



DESK REVIEW

SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN PUBLIC SPACES IN BANGLADESH

PREPARED BY:

Share-Net Team BD

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PREFACE

This desk review titled ‘Sexual Harassment in Public Spaces in Bangladesh’ is issued by Share-Net Bangladesh secretariat and is funded by Share-Net International in the Netherlands. This was written by Gazi Sakir Mohammad Pritom, Anushka Zafar and Farhana Alam at the Center for Gender, Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (CGSRHR) at BRAC James P Grant School of Public Health (BRAC JPGSPH), BRAC University. Share-Net Bangladesh is a platform for the Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) practitioners in Bangladesh and assist to share and exchange information, tools and knowledge within the Community of Practice (CoP) in SRHR. Share-Net started its journey in Bangladesh from 2015. It is a unique partnership between Red Orange Media and Communications, a media and communication expert, and the CGSRHR, at BRAC JPGSPH. This partnership has enabled Share-Net Bangladesh to foster an environment where practitioners are updated with latest developments in SRHR in Bangladesh. BRAC JPGSPH and Red Orange jointly led the platform from October 2014 to December 2017. Since 2018, Red Orange has been hosting Share-Net Bangladesh and BRAC JPGSPH is providing technical expertise on SRHR to the platform. Share-Net Bangladesh has been playing a pioneering role in starting decisive discussions on various critical issues with the members.

This review aims to give a comprehensive idea on the status of sexual harassment in public spaces of Bangladesh and to provide an overall picture of the situation and some recommendations for the policymakers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors acknowledge the contribution of the reviewers, Prof. Sabina Faiz Rashid, and Rushdia Ahmed who have worked closely with the authors on this report. Special thanks goes to also Anika Binte Habib, Mr. Kishore Kumar Basak and Ms. Ella De Voogd as well as the participants of the roundtable on sexual harassment in public places held on 28th November, 2018 at the Embassy of Kingdom of the Netherlands for their feedback.

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

APA	American Psychological Association
EEOC	Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
PRISMA	Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses
RAINN	Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SMS	Short Message Service
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
US	United States
VAW	Violence against Women
WHO	World Health Organization

OVERVIEW OF THE REPORT

This report begins with an introduction to sexual harassment, followed by an explanation of the methodology used for this desk review. The next section discusses various definitions of sexual harassment from literature across the globe; this paves the way for the subsequent section which demonstrates the global and national scenario of sexual harassment in public spaces. Section five and six provide further details on the causes and effects of sexual harassment. The report goes on to discuss laws and movements taking place around the world addressing sexual harassment in public spaces, from which ways forward are finally proposed in the conclusion.

1. INTRODUCTION

The term ‘sexual harassment’ refers to unwanted conduct of a sexual nature that violates the dignity of a person. Sexual harassment in public spaces is a social evil that creates gender-based discrimination for women as well as men, especially for those who do not conform to set gender norms (Mara Cepeda, 2019). Such discrimination is deeply ingrained in our culture and a violation of human rights that needs to be addressed urgently. Many cases of sexual harassment in public space remain unreported due to the associated stigma and that is why this issue is still not recognized or understood in a way it should be. Therefore many perpetrators of sexual harassment in public space do not face the consequences; they are encouraged to move on to sexual assault and even rape (Khair, 2018). More recently, media coverage on sexual harassment cases have been on the rise across the globe as men and women begin to speak out against perpetrators. In Bangladesh, sexual harassment continues to persist because of many structural factors such as patriarchy, sociocultural norms and gender expectations to name a few (Nahar, Van Reeuwijk, & Reis, 2013). In order to address sexual harassment in public spaces in Bangladesh effectively, there is a critical need to understand what sexual harassment entails and the underlying causes and consequences.

For the purpose of this desk review, “public spaces”[1] is defined as sexual harassment taking places in any space that is outside the home, including but not limited to schools, workplace, roads and transports as well as online or digital spaces (ie, telecommunication or Internet platforms) (Definition of Public by Merriam-Webster,” 2018). This definition is in conjunction with Bangladesh High Court Directive on Sexual Harassment of 2009 (BNWLA v. Govt, 2009) which lists the domains where sexual harassment can occur. Harassment in public places entails mainly but not limited to four kinds of actions which are non-verbal, verbal, physical and cyber harassment. (BNWLA v. Govt, 2009). As more and more girls and women in Bangladesh begin to increase their presence in the public sphere along with greater workforce participation, they are also prone to become victims of sexual harassment or even sexual assault and rape (Siddiqi, 2003). Even though Bangladesh has been a signatory of UN-adopted international treaty ‘The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women’ (CEDAW)[2] since 1984, the basic rights of women in Bangladesh to be free from discrimination like sexual harassment is still not ensured. It is important to eliminate sexual harassment in the public space to ensure that commitments such as CEDAW are upheld.

The objective of this desk review is to discuss the concepts and scenario of sexual harassment in public spaces in global, regional and national context as well as to explore the causes and consequences that emerge in the literature. This review is targeted towards the Community of Practice (CoP) in SRHR, who comprise of researchers, practitioners, policy makers and media personnel in SRHR. This review will serve as a background document for advocacy and program design as well as for policy making on sexual harassment.

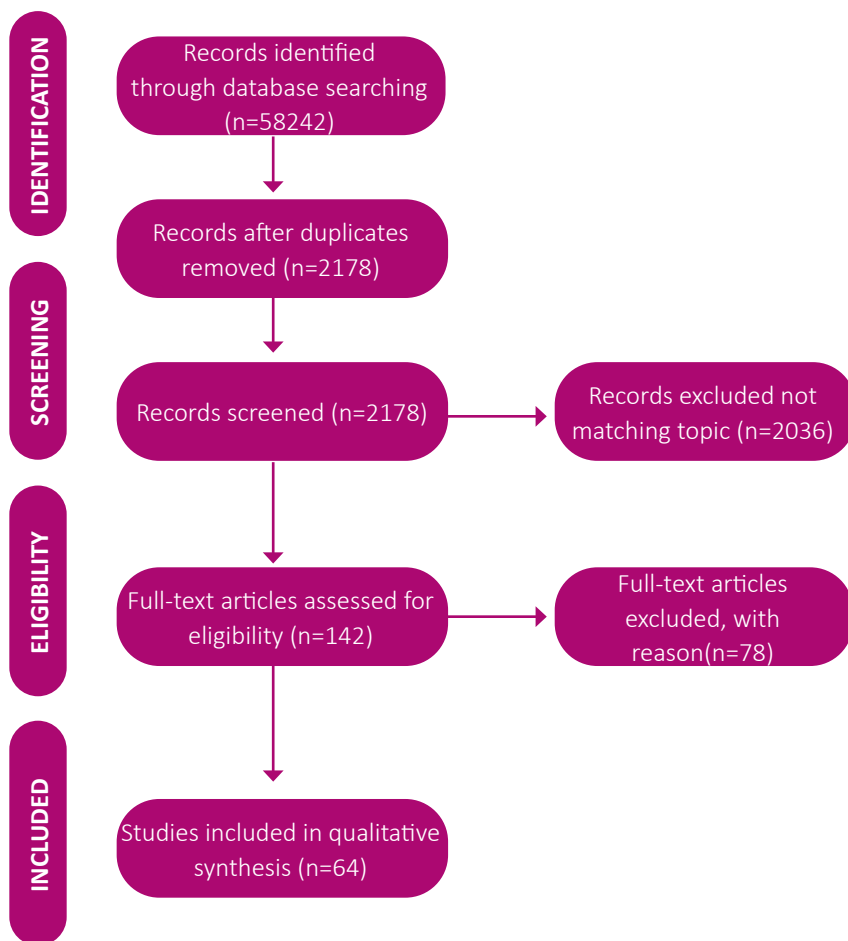
2. METHODOLOGY

The methodology for this literature search was informed by the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines (Moher et al., 2009). We searched PubMed and Google Scholar from January 1, 2008 to December 31, 2018. Literature relevant to sexual harassment in Bangladesh as well as around the Globe were searched systematically using a list of keywords relevant to the topic (“Sexual Harassment”, “Eve-teasing”, “Harass”, “Sexual Coercion”, “Cat calling”) during August–October 2018 by two researchers independently. Studies of any design were eligible to be included in this review given they explored the causes and consequences of sexual harassment in public places; investigated the prevalence of such incidents in different countries in South Asia, Africa, other developing countries, developed parts in the world; described the legal and policy frameworks; presented critical appraisal of expert perspectives on the loopholes of policies and related systems; described negative impacts or outcomes of sexual harassment in public space on individual’s life course; were published in a peer-reviewed journal or identified via the reference lists of included articles; and were written in English. Studies that focused on any other forms of violence such as domestic violence, intimate partner violence, violence not related to public spaces were excluded from this review.

A total of 58242 records were identified using both databases (PubMed and Google Scholar). After removing duplicates and grey literature, 2178 records were obtained. In the next step, 2036 literature were excluded after screening through title and abstracts of the studies depending on inclusion and exclusion criteria set for the review. Remaining 142 articles were downloaded full-text for further screening to examine eligibility with regards to study setting, consequently removing another 78 articles in the process. Finally, only 64 relevant full-text articles were included for the data synthesis in this desk review (see Annex-3).

To incorporate other contemporary incidents and current affairs as evidence of sexual harassment in public spaces, the researchers reviewed newspaper articles from Bangladesh. Two leading English and Two Bengali daily newspapers were screened for relevant articles from Jan 1, 2018 to December 31, 2018. These four newspapers were selected on the basis of containing maximum number of subscribers and possessing online editions. Any newspaper reporting on sexual harassment in public space around the Globe in the 2 English newspapers were also screened in order to find the reported number of sexual harassment cases, places of such occurrences and identifying the perpetrators.

PRISMA 2009 Flow Diagram



Source: Moher D, Liberati A, Tetzlaff J, Altman DG, The PRISMA Group (2009). Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses: The PRISMA Statement. *PLoS Med* 6(7): e1000097. doi:10.1371/journal.pmed1000097

3. DEFINITIONS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT

3.1 Definition of sexual harassment around the Globe

Due to the range of definitions of sexual harassment, there is scarcity of universal understanding on this topic. However, central to all definitions is the issue of consent which is delineated by “unwanted” or “unwelcome” sexual behaviors. For instance, the World Health Organization defines sexual harassment as, “any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise directed, against a person’s sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work” (World Health Organization, 2011). Another definition used globally is the one by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) of United States (Bainbridge, Perry, & Kulik, 2018; Eriksen, 2016) stating that sexual harassment is, “unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours, and other verbal or physical conduct of sexual nature” (United Nations OSAGI, 2014).

The Canadian Public Health Association defines it as “any unwanted and unwelcome behaviour about sex or gender that interferes with a person’s life and makes him/her feel

uncomfortable even if the harasser says s/he was only joking” (Gleberzon, Statz, & Pym, 2015). The Equality Act of UK defines it as “unwanted conduct of a sexual nature which has the purpose or effect of violating someone’s dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them” (Members of Parliament, 2010). These definitions from the global North describe the characteristics of the act (i.e. sexual harassment) and revolve around four main components: gender harassment, consent, unwanted sexual attention and sexual coercion.

Sexual harassment across the global South has only been acknowledged as a problem in the last two decades (Pradhan-Malla, 2005). Although the fundamental concepts in the definition of sexual harassment are the same, definitions from the South explicitly state the acts of sexual harassment in their policies and laws so that there is no confusion, given that there is a lack of awareness on how to recognize these behaviors when they are perpetrated. In Sierra Leone, for example, sexual harassment is defined as instances where “a person repeatedly makes unwanted sexual advances, repeatedly follows, pursues or accosts another person or makes persistent unwelcome communication with another person including – (a) watching, loitering outside or near a building where the harassed person resides, works, carries on business, studies or happens to be; (b) repeatedly making telephone calls or inducing a third person to make telephone calls to the harassed person whether or not conversation ensues; (c) repeatedly sending, delivering or causing the delivery of letters, telegrams, packages, facsimiles, electronic mail or other objects or messages to the harassed person’s residence, school or workplace; or (d) engaging in any other menacing behavior, commits the offence of harassment” (Government of Sierra Leone, 2012).

A similar definition of sexual harassment is found in Nigeria (Nigeria State of Lagos, n.d.) where the actions are also detailed with examples to avoid confusion. Therefore, the definitions used in Nigerian and Sierra Leonean courts remove ambiguity around what sexual harassment entails.

Government of India in 2013 passed a law addressing sexual harassment, which defined ‘sexual harassment’ as, “Physical contact and advances involving unwelcome and explicit sexual overtures, a demand or request for sexual favours, showing pornography against the will of a woman, and making sexually coloured remarks” (Associates, 2015).

3.2 Definition of sexual harassment in Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, the most comprehensive definition has been given by the Supreme Court directive on 2009 as: “Unwelcome sexually determined behavior (whether directly or by implication) as physical contact and advances; attempts or efforts to establish physical relation having sexual implication by abuse of administrative, authoritative or professional powers; sexually coloured verbal representation; demand or request for sexual favours; showing pornography; sexually coloured remark or gesture; indecent gesture, teasing through abusive language, stalking, joking having sexual implication; insult through letter, telephone calls, cell phone calls, SMS (Short Messaging Service), pottering, notice, cartoon, writing on bench, chair table, notice boards, walls of office, factory, classroom, washroom having sexual implication; taking still or video photographs for the purpose of blackmailing and character assassination; preventing participation in sports, cultural, organizational and academic activities on the ground of sex and/ or for the purpose of sexual harassment; making love proposal and exerting pressure or posing threats in case

of refusal to love proposal; attempt to establish sexual relation by intimidation, deception or false assurance” (BNWLA v. Govt, 2009).

Other researchers looking at sexual harassment in Bangladesh, like Nahar, Reeuwijk and Reis (2013) established the definition as “Sexual behaviour that is absent of consent, thus lacking respect for the other person and can be hurtful”. Similarly, authors Ahmed et al. (2014) explored definitions of sexual harassment from the participants of their study and found that there is a common understanding regarding lack of consent and feeling of insecurity within their definitions.

4. SCENARIO OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT: GLOBAL, REGIONAL AND BANGLADESH

4.1 Global scenario

Sexual harassment was perceived as the most important issue faced by women as identified by online surveys conducted by an international research organisation IPSOS in the year 2017 in 16 different countries across Africa, Americas, Asia, Europe and Australia. This was followed by sexual violence, with around one in five survey participants selecting physical violence, domestic abuse and equal pay as issues highly affecting women globally. (IPSOS, 2018; Kende-Robb, 2018).

In a separate survey carried out by the American Bar Association, it was found that men do not think of “Sexual harassment” as such a ‘big problem’ (Frankel & Francis Ward, 2018). Similar findings emerged from another online survey-based study in USA (Dillon, Adair, & Brase, 2015) and a cross-sectional survey conducted among Japanese physicians, where an under-recognition of sexual harassment was found in the male physicians (Soshi & Tokuda, 2018). In addition to that, many countries normalised this crime by hiding it under a benign name, for instance, ‘eve-teasing’

in South Asia (Nahar, van Reeuwijk, & Reis, 2013) and ‘cat-calling’ in the West (Nagel, 2018). Using these kinds of terms trivialize the magnitude of sexual harassment. This can refer to Euphemisms, historically, serving the specific purpose of replacing phrases, words, or concepts with ones that sound more acceptable or polite. However, many countries already have taken initiative to criminalise these acts. For example, in Philippines, the house of representative already passed a bill which criminalises the act that refers to ‘cat calling’.

Prevalence

There is dearth of available global statistics on the prevalence of sexual harassment in public spaces. According to advocates for Human Rights, a US-based human rights organisation, literature from the global South only offer snapshots that look at small segments and fail to portray the true magnitude of the problem across the population (The Advocates for Human Rights, 2010). According to a survey by the Washington Post and ABC news, more than half of all women in the US receive unwelcome sexual attention from men (Bernstein, 2017). According to the EEOC, between 25-85% of all women in the United States, face sexual harassment at the workplace (EEOC, 2016). In Canada, the prevalence of sexual harassment is 75% among the general population (Graham, Bernards, Abbey, Dumas, & Wells, 2017).

In a position paper by the House of Commons in UK, it was stated that, almost a third (29%) of 16-18 year old girls in UK said they have experienced unwanted sexual touching at school. It also says that approximately 59% of girls and young women aged 13-21 mentioned that they had faced some form of sexual harassment at school or college in the past year (Long & Hubble, 2018).

In Finland, 40% boys and 55% girls from comprehensive and secondary school mentioned facing some form of sexual

harassment (Kaltiala-Heino et al., 2016). In Australia, a study looked at accounts of sexual harassment in personal experience and having observed/ heard about sexual harassment of others. In case of personal experiences, the prevalence was 24% and for having observed/ heard about the perpetration, the percentage was 34% (Eriksen, 2016).

In Egypt, 99% of women experience sexual harassment in their life, and 75% of South African women face some form of abuse or sexual violence (Dranzoa, 2018). In Kenya, one study in Nairobi showed 20% women are victim to sexual harassment at workplace or school (UN Women, 2014). According to UN Women, across Japan, Malaysia, Philippines and South Korea 30%-40% women are victim of sexual harassment (UN Women, 2014). In Pakistan, sexual harassment and other kinds of violence has been occurring for a long time (Collymore, 2000) and in the year 2009, the number of reported cases were 31,648, which is a staggering 52 times increase compared to reported cases from 2002 (Jamal, 2011). According to ActionAid survey, 44% of women in India reported being groped in public (Senthilingam Meera, 2017).

However, sexual harassment is not only a problem faced by women. In the US, for example, an online survey with 2009 adults aged 18 and older, found that 81 percent women and 43 percent men had been victims of sexual harassment (Kearl, 2018). Vickie Schultz explains in her paper that those viewed as “lesser men” (men who do not conform to their relative sense of “manhood,” or society’s expectations of masculinity) are harassed alongside women. According to WHO, globally as much as 5-10 percent of adult men have reported to have been victim of sexual violence during childhood (Krug et al., 2002). In 2011, 16.1% of all sexual harassment cases filed with the EEOC in the USA were by men, which increased to 17.6% in 2013 (Holland, Rabelo, Gustafson, Seabrook, & Cortina, 2016). According to a study conducted by longitudinal data

from Youth Development Study, it found 37% Swedish men faced sexual harassment at the workplace (McLaughlin, Uggen, & Blackstone, 2012). There have been very few research conducted on sexual harassment on men in the Asia and Pacific. Reporting on sexual harassment from men is also low – which is why there is scarcity of data on this issue.

4.2 Bangladesh scenario

Like many other South Asian countries, in Bangladesh, the gravity of sexual harassment in public space has been diluted and almost “normalised” through calling it ‘eve-teasing’ (Nahar, Van Reeuwijk, & Reis, 2013). ‘Eve teasing’ is just another term for sexual harassment in public space or street harassment in Bangladesh and other South Asian countries (Aziz & Daize, 2014). The word ‘Eve teasing’ does not capture the seriousness of the range of behaviours it denotes and suggest that women are both a tease and deserve to be teased. By using a benign word such as ‘teasing’ to express a behaviour that is grossly inappropriate, it reduces the extent of the action. Furthermore, use of the word ‘eve’ intends to elicit a subconscious reaction in us by means of the biblical story of Eve because of whom Adam was encouraged to wrongdoing and thereby shifts the blame of the crime on the victims (Talboys et al., 2017). Although late, policymakers in Bangladesh are also finally realising that eve-teasing constitutes sexual harassment (BRAC, 2011; Sharmeen, 2017).

Prevalence

There is no estimate on national prevalence of sexual harassment in public spaces in Bangladesh. However, Action Aid found, that 84% of women they surveyed (of 800 women and girls) in 2015 reported experiencing sexual harassment in the public (Senthilingam & Meera, 2017). BRAC University conducted a study where they found that 94% women face

sexual harassment while using public transport, such as buses and three wheelers (Staff Correspondent, 2018). According to Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK), a legal aid organisation, 108 women were sexually harassed in Bangladesh between January and October 2018, of which eight women attempted suicide, and seven men were murdered when they protested these harassments (Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK), 2018a). As stated by Dhaka Tribune on September 21, 2017, a local English daily, there have been 17,000 cases filed within the first two years of opening of ICT Divisions' cyber help desk in 2016, of which 70% were women who mostly received harassment on Facebook (Rabbi, 2017).

There is very little evidence on the sexual harassment of men in Bangladesh. There are incidences where men who are effeminate are often harassed in Bangladesh (Amin, 2016). However, the reporting rate is very low. The transgender (Hijra) community in Bangladesh also faces sexual harassment, but it is not well reported on mainstream media. A qualitative research by FHI 360, an international research organisation, revealed that harassment in public spaces was a constant for transgender people. They were exposed to even more severe physical violence by police and gangsters (FHI 360, 2013).

5. CAUSES OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT: GLOBAL, REGIONAL AND BANGLADESH

The literature examined revealed a range of themes around the cause of sexual harassment. Central to these themes is patriarchy, however, that doesn't mean that all men are "hardwired" into perpetrating harassment; instead, as explained by Richard G. Bribiescas, professor of Biological Anthropology at Yale University (Bribiescas, 2017), sexual harassment stems from gender norms dictating that men and women should have completely opposite characteristics (ie, men should be domineering and women should be docile). We have briefly discussed the different causations according to these themes below:

5.1 Masculinity and Power Dynamics

Patriarchy is the system of hierarchy which puts men above women, and in some cases other men who do not conform to a socially prescribed form of masculinity. Many authors in their studies have explored the influence of patriarchy and gender norms behind the perpetration of gender-based violence (Sangari, 2002; Walby, 1996). The authors agree that patriarchy defines gender roles, which sees women in the confines of the

households (Sangari, 2002; Walby, 1996). When this norm is challenged (i.e. when women step out of the confines of the four walls), men who harbor patriarchy from within, retaliate with different forms of sexual violence (Sangari, 2002; Walby, 1996; Mareah, 2008). The work of Schultz and other authors theorized sexual harassment as arising from unequal power relation between men and women (Heise, 1994).

Graham and his colleagues in the US showed the pathway of harassment and inferred that men who make unwanted advances towards women are deemed as bold and receive positive reinforcement from peers as well as society (Graham et al., 2014). Research conducted in many countries explain how masculine norms instigate harmful practices such as harassment or even violence (Dickson-Gomez, Quinn, Broadus, & Pacella, 2017). Connell elaborated on hegemonic masculinity through his work (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005), as one which reinforces certain traits in men to uphold the hierarchy. The work of Anwar (2015) in Bangladesh sheds light on the hegemonic masculinity that propagates violence by men as a form of validation of their male identity.

Prominent Indian activist Kamla Bhasin links sexual harassment with dominant masculinity. She explains that myths and misinformation around masculinity is perpetuated by patriarchy; this creates the problem by slowly molding boys to adopt traits defined by dominant masculinity that is built on aggression (Das, 2017).

The article on sexual harassment in Bangladesh by Nahar, Reeuwijk and Reis also mention that structures of patriarchy encourages myths around masculinity to adolescent and young boys, giving them a sense of entitlement, which encourages sexual harassment (Nahar et al., 2013). Research carried out by Sabiha Chowdhury similarly point at patriarchy and gender norms as instigating factors of sexual harassment in Bangladesh (2007).

5.2 Sexism

Myths around masculinity that are perpetuated through patriarchal social norms are closely related to sexism. Other than discrimination based on one's gender, sexism also enforces gender stereotypes that perpetuate sexual harassment. For instance, Courtney Fraser, through her work on sexual harassment in the workplace (Fraser, 2015), equated the gender stereotype of 'chivalry' as sexism saying that the very understanding of women being passive agents, is the root where all harassment, whether sexual or not, arise from. Since the 'benevolent-sexist' (a term introduced by the author to include men who are thought to show chivalry) assumes woman to be a passive agent, the issue of consent is also overlooked in cases, which ultimately creates the ground for committing sexual harassment.

Authors Leila Whitley and Tiffany Page examined the link between power dynamics and sexism in academic institutions between teachers and students which leads to, as described by the authors 'institutionally enabled manipulation' towards the students. Students who are intellectually dependent on their teachers/supervisors are prone to be victim of this kind of manipulation. They also show that the administrative mechanisms are inherently sexist and do not regard women as being verifiable sources of information when it comes to harassment cases; this also allows for concealment of the harassment act (especially when committed by male academic staff), which allows a harasser to simply move to a different institution with a clean slate. An example of institutionalised sexism in Bangladesh can be found in the case of sexual harassment by Sanwar Hossain, of the Drama and Dramatics Department, where the alleged was acquitted of charges because of a lack of proof beyond reasonable doubt. The incident was denounced by legal rights organisation (Ain o

Salish Kendra (ASK), 2008). A similar example can be found more recently in November 2018 report of sexual harassment at Hajee Mohammed Danesh Science and Technology University's (HSTU) Dinajpur, where a number of students were harassed by two employees of the institution and authorities did not take notice of the complaints by the victims (Hossain, 2018). In the wake of MeToo, a woman recounted her experience of sexual harassment by a prominent teacher after 31 years. Because of his institutional and social position, she was unable to speak out and even after all these years, her story is met with speculation by the society (The Daily Star, 2018).

In the cross-sectional study looking at sexual harassment in bars in the US, authors theorized that men who perpetrate sexual harassment feel that men are the lead at initiation of courtship/sexual advances in such a situation (Graham et al., 2017). With this myth around courtship behaviour that delineates that men do the “choosing” and that women are to “be chosen”, there is a clear notion of power dynamics at play.

5.3 Media representation

Objectification of women in the media across the globe is another reason for sexual harassment as it enforces sexist and stereotypical representations of both men and women. Barbara Frederickson and Tomi-Ann Roberts describes objectification of women as “whenever a woman’s body, body parts, or sexual functions are separated out from her person, reduced to the status of mere instruments, or regarded as if they were capable of representing her” (Frederickson & Roberts, 1997). Examining Hollywood superhero movies for example, Pennell and Bhem-Morawitz (2015) found that “[these stories take a familiar gender narrative and transform it into a super gendered narrative, with hyper masculine

male heroes and hypersexualized female victims, glorifying traditional gender roles.” In other words, sexualized images of women are used to fit within stereotypical ideal around femininity (ie, women are weak but sexy) and in turn support normative messages around masculinity (ie, men are strong and capable). Additionally, the authors point out that female superheroes are often made to wear skin-tight, revealing costumes which may also send the message that these characters use their sexuality almost like another superpower; this continues to perpetuate images of women as dictated by traditional gender norms through majority of the focus on their body and sexuality, instead of their strengths or capabilities (like male characters).

Apart from the objectification, there is also subtle nuances of stereotypical gender roles in western media. Author Eugene Nulman in his paper (2014) tried to identify such gender roles between films from 1980s and those between 1990 to 2009. Nulman observed that the difference between pre-90s films is that more women had been shown as being rescued instead of joining the rescue in earlier films. However, even then, there was difference between how the rescue was done by different genders. When the man is doing the rescue, it is more through power, knowledge and strength and when the woman is doing the rescue, it is more through love, sexuality, empathy, and maternal instinct (Nulman, 2014). Therefore, these stereotypes continue to enforce the notion that women can only function through their sensitivity and must wait to be rescued by men through their knowledge and power.

Media representation and formation of masculine identity is well documented in Bangladesh as well (Mishra, 2015). The effect of media in propagation of violence is hence found to be pervasive in the current social context. Bangladesh media scenario is largely dominated and influenced by Bollywood, where women’s bodies have been portrayed as objects of

pleasure and women reduced to objects being owned or lost (Banaji, 2005). She describes how in different scenarios, women have been shown responsible to retain their chastity while men were seen to look for opportunities to engage in premarital sexual intercourse. When men are taught to objectify women, they disregard the woman's ability to give consent, which encourages sexual harassment in public space.

Movies in Bangladesh and the region also show several behaviours, as part of the man's behaviour in pursuing courtship with a woman, which are considered to be sexual harassment otherwise, thereby sending a message to viewers that those sort of behaviours are acceptable (Jaikaran, 2015). Similarly, in Bangladeshi films, women are portrayed as vulnerable characters who must be rescued by a hero. Mishra (2015) says this kind of representation feeds into the causation of sexual harassment in public space.

5.4 Access to Digital Technology

Access to technology like smartphones and the Internet has increased occurrences of online or "cyber" harassment where perpetrators can hide their identity behind digital spaces (Zafar, 2018). Australia-based researchers Powell et al. described cyber or digital harassment as, "harassment and abuse [including] a range of harmful, interpersonal behaviours experienced via the internet, as well as via mobile phone and other electronic communication devices" (Powell, Scott, & Henry, 2018). A US-based study by Winkelman et al. (Burke Winkelman et al., 2015), researchers found that over 10% of respondents had been threatened online or via text or instant messages by someone they did not know. Not all the perpetrators were unknown to the victims due to the ability to hide their identity on digital platforms. However, more than a

quarter of the respondents reported being threatened online by someone they did know. Finally, 16.1% reported being harassed offline as a result of being harassed online, thus creating a spillover effect of sexual harassment.

Shedding light on the issue of cyber harassment in the South Asian context, Saha and Srivastava create a conceptual model of cyber victimization of Indian women; they cite that there greater risks involved when it comes to cyber victimization of women in the eastern regions such as India, because these women have less options of legal protection than their western counterparts (Saha & Srivastava, 2014). Subsequently, in Bangladesh, review of the literature has revealed two alarming statistics on the prevalence of cyber harassment. A recent report by the Bangladesh Legal Aid Services and Trust (BLAST) and BRAC James P Grant School of Public Health, BRAC University (BRAC-JPGSPH) revealed 73% of women internet users surveyed have experienced cyber harassment (Zaman, Gansheimer, Rolim, & Mridha, 2017). Additionally, as of December 2017, the Bangladesh government's ICT Division's Cyber Help Desk reported receiving more than 17,000 cyber harassment complaints, of which 70% were from women (Aker, 2017). Thus, while access to digital technology allows for greater interaction and socialization, there are even greater risks involved related to sexual harassment that accompany this increased "connectivity."

Other than the causes like patriarchy, power dynamics and sexism, perpetration of online harassment can also be conducted with a motive of monetary gain. Either through blackmailing or as online content uploaded to pornographic websites, personal photos and videos of women and girls have been used by perpetrators to be of benefit financially (Arni, 2018).

5.5 Other factors leading to sexual harassment in public spaces

Besides the above-mentioned causes, there are also certain risk factors that can be listed as the causes of harassment. For instance, studies have associated some factors such as unemployment of one or both parents and low paternal education (Kaltiala-Heino et al., 2016), not having identifying information of the perpetrator (Madan & Nalla, 2015; McLaughlin et al., 2012), participation in fraternities or sororities, intramural sports, and school clubs (McGinley, Rospenda, Liu, & Richman, 2016) and exposure to violence (Foshee et al., 2016). For men, engaging in feminist activism and working in an organisational context that tolerates sexual harassment were significant risk factors of being sexually harassed (Holland et al., 2016).

One of the literature that shed light on perpetrator's characteristics, by Virgil Zeigler-Hill, Avi Besser, Judith Morag, and W. Keith Campbell where the authors correlate presence of 'dark triad' traits, which are three traits of a hostile personality, with the proclivity to conduct harassment (Zeigler-Hill, Besser, Morag, & Keith Campbell, 2016). The authors found that narcissism (the unbound admiration of oneself), psychopathy (antisocial behaviour and apathy) and Machiavellianism (the intent to manipulate or exploit others for own personal gain) as independently associated with proclivity of sexual harassment (ibid).

Some authors have also theorized sexual harassment as one stemming from an inherent negativity towards all women. In their paper titled "Misogyny, feminism and sexual harassment" authors Kalpana Srivastava, Suprakash Chaudhury, P S Bhat, and Samiksha Sahu, have described sexual harassment as a result of misogyny (Srivastava, et al., 2017).

6. NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT: GLOBAL, REGIONAL AND BANGLADESH

There is documented evidence of link between sexual harassment in public places and negative outcomes in both personal, professional & educational attainment as well as physical & mental health.

6.1 Education-related effects

School participation and education can be adversely affected by sexual harassment in public space. A study conducted among high school students in the USA, it was found that sexual harassment can withdraw students from school and affect their academic advancement. These impact of sexual harassment were more intense than other forms of harassment like bullying (Gruber & Fineran, 2016).

In Bangladesh, sexual harassment is related to increasing insecurity in the lives of young girls. Harassment can also create impediment to education. Girls may drop out of school if they face sexual harassment at school or on their way to school (Akramul Islam & Amin, 2016; Talboys et al., 2017).

Subsequently, in their 2013 research, Plan International and icddr cited sexual harassment as a cause of child marriage, which is also an immediate cause of discontinuation of education (Plan International Bangladesh and icddr, 2013). The recent statistics from Newspaper monitoring by Ain o Shalish Kendra (ASK) found that six girls dropped out of school as a result of sexual harassment (Ain o Shalish Kendra(ASK), 2018)

6.2 Career-related effects

A recent study in USA found that sexual harassment in the workplace increases financial stress due to job change and impedes women's career attainment (McLaughlin, Uggen, & Blackstone, 2017). Similarly, Jagsi et al (2016) in the USA found in their research, that women experiencing sexual harassment had negative affect on their career advancement and confidence as professionals. Another study conducted by Merkin and Shah (2014) in Pakistan and USA showed that despite cultural differences, impact of sexual harassment in the workplace had the same results; higher turnover intention, absenteeism and low job satisfaction (Merkin & York, 2014). A study in Nigeria by Haruna et al (2016) found that sexual harassment affects work performance, particularly employee productivity. It also created higher rates of absenteeism, low morale, psychological trauma in the sample of 60 female employees.

Although no recent literature on the impact of workplace harassment was found from Bangladesh, we refer instead to a study conducted by Centre on Policy Dialogue from 2003; the study which was done on female ready-made garments workers, revealed that those surveyed felt a direct or indirect impact on their productivity as a result of being sexually harassed at work. A few newspaper reports have surfaced

case stories on sexual harassment. One case story mentioned the account of a female employee who had been confronted by the supervisor for sexual favors in return of a permanent position. When she refused, she was fired over allegations of misconduct in office (Farhin, 2018). Another case story of sexual harassment can be found in the newspaper where a female officer was sent grossly inappropriate messages by a District Commissioner. Upon filing a written complaint, the woman was transferred to another district. However, in this case, the perpetrator was removed from his position after a month by the authorities (Mridha, 2018). Therefore, regardless of the geographical location, it is clear that workplace harassment creates an incredibly hostile environment for women, impeding their path towards career advancement and even income generation.

6.3 Health and Wellbeing

Mitchell, Ybarra & Korchmaros (2014) describes, once a woman has been victim of sexual harassment, her perspective on life may alter, she may feel more vulnerable and lack confidence in future endeavors. T. K. Kim in his 2016 study on mental health among female military personnel of the Republic of Korea Armed Forces, found direct evidence of negative impact of sexual harassment on mental health (Kim, Lee, Lee, Han, & Park, 2017). Kim also showed that sexual harassment was associated with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), anxiety, depression and substance use disorder.

In a US based study by McGinley et al (2016) of college going women, directly linked sexual harassment to future psychological distress (anxiety, depression) and heavy alcohol use (McGinley, Rospenda, Liu, & Richman, 2016). In another paper on the same research by McGinley et al (2016), the authors found that the victims of sexual harassment were

more susceptible to depression, anxiety and substance abuse (Mcginley, Wolff, Rospenda, Liu, & Judith, 2016). In a separate study in the US with sexual minority youth, levels of risky behaviour including substance abuse, gang involvement, risky driving, risky sexual behaviour and vandalism were found to increase among victims of sexual harassment (Martin-Storey & Crosnoe, 2014). Dahlqvist et al., in their research among Swedish school students found a vicious cycle of sexual harassment with depressive symptoms where sexually harassed students develop depressive symptoms that increases their vulnerability of being harassed again. (Dahlqvist, Landstedt, Young, & Gådin, 2016).

In Bangladesh, Ain o Shalish Kendra (ASK) found through a survey of newspaper reports that between January to December 2018, out of 173 reported cases of sexual harassment against women and girls, one attempted suicide and eight committed suicide.

7. COMBATING SEXUAL HARASSMENT: LAWS AND MOVEMENTS

7.1 Policies and Laws: Global and Bangladesh

Lack of effective policy or law contributes to persistence of sexual harassment. Among 100 countries inspected by the World Bank in 2013, only eight had specific legislation for sexual harassment in public space (The World Bank, 2013). Lack of organisational policy has been also associated with perpetration of sexual harassment in workplace. In various studies, it has been shown that organisations which do not have a policy against sexual harassment or do not have proper enforcement of such policies, can encourage perpetrators for sexual harassment (Fitzgerald & Cortina, 2017; Haruna, Joseph, Samson, & Aye, 2016; Rinehart & Espelage, 2016).

In Bangladesh there is no specific law against sexual harassment. The Nari O Shishu Nirjaton Domon Ain (Law on Prevention of Oppression Against Women and Children) (2000) states in their section 10, “Any man who, in order to satisfy his lust in an improper manner touches with any part of his body or any device, the body parts or genitals of a

woman or a child, or outrages the modesty of a woman, will have engaged in sexual harassment, and will be sentenced to rigorous imprisonment of not more than ten years and not less than three years including monetary fines as well” (translation of the Bangla law) (Nari o Shishu Nirjaton Domon Ain 2000, Law VIII of 2000, 2000). There are also some local metropolitan statues which criminalises sexual harassment e.g. the DMP Ordinance of 1976. Under this, if proven guilty, a man can be imprisoned for up to one year or fined TK 2000 or both (Hussain, 2016). The 2009 high court directive on sexual harassment has been a landmark for punishing sexual harassment in Bangladesh (BNWLA vs. State). It can be used as precedence to victims seeking justice under in sexual harassment cases. The harassment cases are also not easy to establish as sometimes it is the victims’ word against the perpetrators’. Legal system is traditionally seen as harsh towards victims of violence as well. The legal system had a test in place for rape victims called the two-finger test, which later got banned. In this test, women who reported being raped had to undergo this traumatic procedure, in which if two fingers could pass through a woman’s genitals it was regarded that the woman is habituated to sex, and therefore, assumed that rape or unconsented sex was unlikely (BLAST, 2018). When cognizable offences like sexual assault (ie, rape, attempted rape) are hard to prove, justice for sexual harassment is understandably even more difficult to achieve. These obstacles have since discouraged many women to pursue legal redress. As evident from a review of newspaper articles from Bangladesh (see Annex #), the perpetrators have almost always found a way to escape through legal loopholes in the system. In many of the cases, the victim’s family or the victim herself had filed a complaint, which did not see justice being served. However at times, when the perpetrator is not someone influential, they are arrested (Annex-4).

The laws that govern cyber space in Bangladesh have specific sections for online sexual harassment. In the ICT Act of 2013, Section 57 provides penalty for “publish of false, obscene or defamatory content in the electronic form” and the Pornography Control Act 2012 states that if any person makes or involves in “making of pornographic items in the form of publication, video, still picture, electronic other form or any other form”, the act is cognizable offence and non-bailable under this Act. However, there is problem of lack of awareness and proper implementation of these laws. Due to lack of awareness on digital security laws and lack of guideline for law enforcing agencies, perpetrators are also getting off scot free after committing cyber-harassment (Farhana Akter, 2018; Zaman et al., 2017).

7.2 #MeToo Movement

In 2006, Tarana Burke, creator of an NGO named Just Be Inc., started using the phrase “MeToo” to help the victims of sexual harassment and assault. However, at that time, it did not pick up that much attention from the media and general public. In 2017, Hollywood Actor Alyssa Milano shared her story of sexual harassment by producer Harvey Weinstein and used the hashtag ‘MeToo’ to encourage women to speak up against similar accounts in a bid to raise awareness on this issue (Leah, 2017; Shugerman, 2017). Women from different backgrounds instantly started to share their stories of harassment and the movement quickly gained momentum in social media throughout the United States. Given the epidemic nature of sexual harassment, it was not long before the movement crossed national boundaries and became a global phenomenon on social media. There were 12 million posts within the first day on Facebook (Smartt, 2017). Apart from the original #MeToo movement, there have been many regional variants. #YoTambien in Spain, #BalanceTonPorc in France,

#quellavoltache in Italy (Burke, 2018) and #RiceBunny in China (News Desk, 2018) are local adaptations of the hashtag which have seen similar impact across these countries. As the review is being conducted, India is witnessing a surge of #MeToo stories over the recent allegations of sexual harassment by a statesman. The #MeToo movement depicts the magnitude of the problem on a global scale and the need for concern around this issue.

This soon trickled over to other countries and Bangladesh also saw a number of posts with women recounting the incidents of sexual harassment on social media. The #MeToo movement gained so much momentum because it created an environment for an ordinary woman to speak up against the harassment faced and it allowed the society as a whole to contextualise the extent of the problem.

7.3 Interventions addressing sexual harassment

While social media movements may create awareness, there is need for tested interventions which have been successful to cull the prevalence of sexual harassment. In Canada, Youth Led program which incorporates youth leadership model to prevent aggression, showed promise in reducing sexual harassment and ensured sustainability of the program (Connolly et al., 2015). Positive role of bystanders or colleagues has been seen to reduce sexual harassment as in the study conducted among the national guards (Walsh et al., 2014) and a corporate environment in the US (Fitzgerald & Cortina, 2017). Another study conducted in Africa among schoolboys showed positive change in their role as bystanders when they completed six two hours long sessions designed to transform

attitudes that lead adolescent boys and young men to think that it is okay to assault their female colleagues (Digitale, 2015).

There have been also interventions which were not so successful. The researchers in Netherlands incorporated the Benzie & Batchelor's framework (G. de Lijster, Janssens, & de Ridder, 2013) and used theatre and peer education (G. P. A. de Lijster et al., 2016) but were unsuccessful in producing change in harassment behaviour. Research on sexual harassment interventions in the developing countries of South Asia was found to be absent.

8. CONCLUSION AND WAYS FORWARD

The review aimed to understand the current state of sexual harassment in Bangladesh, analyze the related causes and examine the consequences and negative impacts. With the increase in women's participation in the Bangladesh's workforce, reports of sexual harassment in public is increasing (Alam, Blanch, & Smith, 2011). According to national estimates of ratio of female to male labour force participation rate, Bangladesh has improved significantly, from 10.989 in 1986 to 45.053 in 2017 (The World Bank, 2019). Thus, implementation of policies and laws is particularly important when it comes to workplace harassment, because companies and organizations in Bangladesh must now be made accountable for the safety and wellness of their female employees without such discrimination.

To allow social change regarding sexual harassment to take place in Bangladesh, it is imperative that we as a society listen more to the survivors, rather than blaming them. With strict patriarchal, social and religious norms already in place, Bangladesh is also at higher risk of failing to properly address the issue of sexual harassment in public spaces. For instance, the word 'eve teasing' continues to be used across public and private sphere and we find that the Government and NGOs alike have yet to address the use of this word in legal and policy documents. Starting from school-level interventions, public and private stakeholders must immediately begin to reframe the messaging around socialization of boys and girls

and stop the propagation of stereotypical mind-set from parents, teachers and community to their children.

In conclusion, to safeguard women against harassment in public institutions and workplace, systematic changes through strong policies and implementation of laws against harassment need to be institutionalized. Better educational efforts are needed in shaping young people's perceptions of gender and sexuality. But more importantly, we need strong political will of the government for better implementation of laws to ensure safety of the women in public places from sexual harassment and other forms of discrimination. However, further research is needed to understand the severity of sexual harassment in public spaces, which can better inform policies and greater implementation of the laws.

Challenges and limitations

There is a lack of peer reviewed journal articles on sexual harassment in public spaces in Bangladesh. In total only 14 articles were found. The researchers also reviewed news of sexual harassment in local newspapers published in the last one year. The findings are provided in a separate subsection with interpretations. However, data gathered from the newspapers lack in-depth analysis and research which may compromise the findings of this review. Sexual harassment is less likely to be reported or recognized. Therefore, not all accounts of sexual harassment may have been reported or found. Perpetrator factors can also be applicable for women, although a much smaller scale, and there is limited information available on this issue.

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