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Sexual Harassment in Higher Educational Institutions in Bangladesh: Contemporary Trends and Challenges

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Abstract

Sexual harassment is deep-seated in historical and organizational inequality concerning males and females in power relations. In the education sector, sexual harassment is a fiery matter in Bangladesh and extraterritorial areas. Diverse historical, social, cultural and political issues are fundamental to these trends and practices. The study's main objectives are to understand the patterns and contemporary trends of sexual harassment in higher educational institutions in Bangladesh. To identify the influencing factors in higher educational institutions in conducting sexual harassment offenses. The findings reveal that individuals experience online social harassment, including unsolicited calls discussing sexual harassment and messages implying romantic involvement. Personal space violations by acquaintances and public incidents of inappropriate behavior also occur. In educational settings, inappropriate touching and discussions about physical appearances are prevalent. Committees addressing sexual harassment often prove ineffective. Power dynamics allow manipulation of crime reports, while gender-based violence's financial impact varies. The multifaceted origins of sexual harassment involve social factors and differing adherence to ethics. Mental pressure impacts academic performance, and gender-based violence relates to limited female representation in specific university organizations. Extracurricular activities contribute to the issue. The recommendations center around establishing institutional accountability, taking proactive actions to address sexual harassment, recognizing the importance of sexual complaint committees, providing mental support for survivors, increasing awareness through educational initiatives, involving extracurricular activities to combat harassment, and offering financial support to students facing economic challenges. These recommendations collectively aim to create a safer and more inclusive environment within public universities, ensuring that incidents of sexual harassment are addressed effectively while fostering a supportive community for all members.

Keywords: Sexual Harassment, Awareness, Violence, Complaint Committee

1. Introduction

Sexual harassment is deep-seated in historical and organizational inequality concerning males and females in power relations. In the education sector, sexual harassment is a fiery matter in Bangladesh and extraterritorial areas (Hossain, 2020). Yet, because of the deficiency of consistent statistics, this matter has had to be governed

in obscurity in Bangladesh. Sexual harassment prevents gender equality and empowerment. SDG Goal Five is highly focused on Gender equality and women's empowerment. Bangladesh's Government is highly focused on gender equality now a days. It might be driven by sexual request; however, more frequently, it is exploited to obtain surrender and obedience and proclaim control and influence. It creates an embarrassing situation and might cause health and security difficulties at offices or educational institutes; it is inequitable while the females have rational bases to trust that her concern would inconvenience her in linking with her schooling or service in diverse methods or when it produces an unfriendly atmosphere at offices or educational institutes. An in-house complaint committee should be founded to obtain grievances of sexual pestering and sexual ferocity, direct inquiry, and make endorsements in keeping with the High Court Division Instruction.

Higher educational institutes are no longer in a good situation as in the past. The institutions become a generating field for inequitable discernment on sexual reasons. Gender labeling is one of the fundamental causes for the many sexual harassment instances stated in the education segment in Bangladesh and other fields. Therefore, the study covered the patterns and contemporary trends of sexual harassment in Higher Educational Institutions in Bangladesh, the influencing factors in higher educational institutions in committing sexual harassment offenses, and the impacts of sexual harassment on female students' academic performance and mental health. Diverse historical, social, cultural, and political issues are fundamental to these trends and practices. Bangladesh has various influencing factors as an arena of the enlarging universal village. The education segment needs to build awareness to eliminate all kinds of sexual persecution in educational institutions.

2. Objectives of the Study

1. To understand the patterns and contemporary trends of sexual harassment in Higher Educational Institutions in Bangladesh.
2. To identify the influencing factors in higher educational institutions in conducting sexual harassment offenses.
3. To assess the impacts of sexual harassment on female students' academic performance and mental health.

3. Scope of the Study

Sexual ferocity against females at educational institutes is a usual fact in contemporary years around Bangladesh (Hasan, 2019). Both quantitative data and qualitative insights have been amassed on the sources of independence, existing harassment and governance patterns, influencing factors, as well as their impact on academic performance and mental health. The investigation is attempting to explore "Sexual Harassment in Higher Educational Institutions in Bangladesh." No noteworthy study was undertaken in Bangladesh to discover sexual harassment in public universities in Bangladesh.

4. Research Methodology

The study is based on a mixed method. For the research, a convenient sample size of respondents have been taken in the public university; Comilla University & Dhaka University was chosen for Key Informant Interview (KII), Focused Group Discussion (FGD), and questionnaire survey. Based on gender, age, study duration, and faculty diversity, 50 students from each institution were taken to undertake a questionnaire survey. In the second segment of the study, Key Informant Interviews (KII) were received to generate balance in the quantitative data. In this segment, five individuals in the each institution were selected to conduct a Key Informant Interview (KII) to find the sexual harassment in the public university of Bangladesh based on gender, duration spent in the institution, and institutional affiliation and responsibility of faculty. In the third segment, Focused Group Discussion (FGD) was taken as it serves as a significant tool for accumulating qualitative data. From each studied educational institution, one FGD has been directed to assemble sufficient evidence to rationalize the survey findings. A total of 7-12 respondents has been taken for FGD. Finally, collected data is tabulated and analysed to accomplish the study and draw conclusions.

Table 1: Criteria and Number of Respondents

Method of Data Collection	Criteria	Study Area	Number of Respondents
Questionnaire Survey	Covering gender, age, duration of study, and diversity of faculty	Comilla University & Dhaka University	100
Key Informant Interview (KII)	Members of Complaint Committee, Head of the Departments and Teachers		10
Grand Total			110

The findings developed from both quantitative and qualitative research are encouraging to assume the determination of the study and disclose the present scenario existing in the “Sexual Harassment in Higher Educational Institutions in Bangladesh.”

5. Analysis and Discussion

Table 2: Harassment types encountered by the students

Criteria	Number of Respondent	Percentage %
Unwelcome physical contact, touching, leaning or deliberate pinching.	33	33%
Repeated attempts to make a date which is unwanted.	4	4%
Pressure for sex	2	2%
Sending emails, messages from online social networks, phone calls.	45	45%
Teasing, jokes or remarks about sex.	9	9%
Unwelcome sexually suggestive looks and gestures	3	3%
Unwelcome display of visual materials of a sexual nature	4	4%
Total	100	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2021.

Table 2 shows the level of harassment of encountered types in the students. In this regard, most respondents (forty-five) mention the face of sending emails, messages from online social networks, and phone calls. They said that they face social harassment online. Sometimes, unknown people call them and talk about different sexual harassment. Even some of my friends give messages online to involved relationships. One respondent expressed that,

"Most of the time, my seniors send me messages and engage in conversations on various topics. They express a desire to establish a relationship with me. I am not interested in such relationships, but I find it difficult to take action against them because I fear potential consequences, such as ragging and public shaming."

Then, thirty-three percent of students face unwelcome physical contact, touching, leaning, or deliberate pinching. They thought that some of the time they met feelings of their relative. They face sexual harassment on the road by the public. In the classroom, some of their friends touch their bodies and hands. One student said, *"I feel afraid and uncomfortable when my friends touch my body or hands without my consent. There was one distressing incident where I experienced sexual harassment through unwanted touching on a bus. During my journey back to campus from town, a boy stood near me and, at times, inappropriately touched my body as the bus moved."*

Then, 9% of students face sexual harassment in teasing, jokes, or remarks about sex. They said that they face harassment by joking and teasing in their village life. Besides, students thought that some people discuss their physical structure. People discuss body structure and physical size when walking on the road and in the market. Some respondents said, *"Some people want to touch and discuss the body structure when female students went to*

market or tuition. In these situations, we often refrain from showing negative reactions, out of fear for our safety and to avoid potential harassment or harm."

The students and teachers thought that Bangladesh's country should implement rules and regulations properly. One teacher said, "Our students are facing sexual harassment frequently. but they often remain silent to avoid public shaming. However, they do wish to speak out and seek justice against those responsible for such misconduct." Besides, exhaustive students face gender-based violence through online chat.

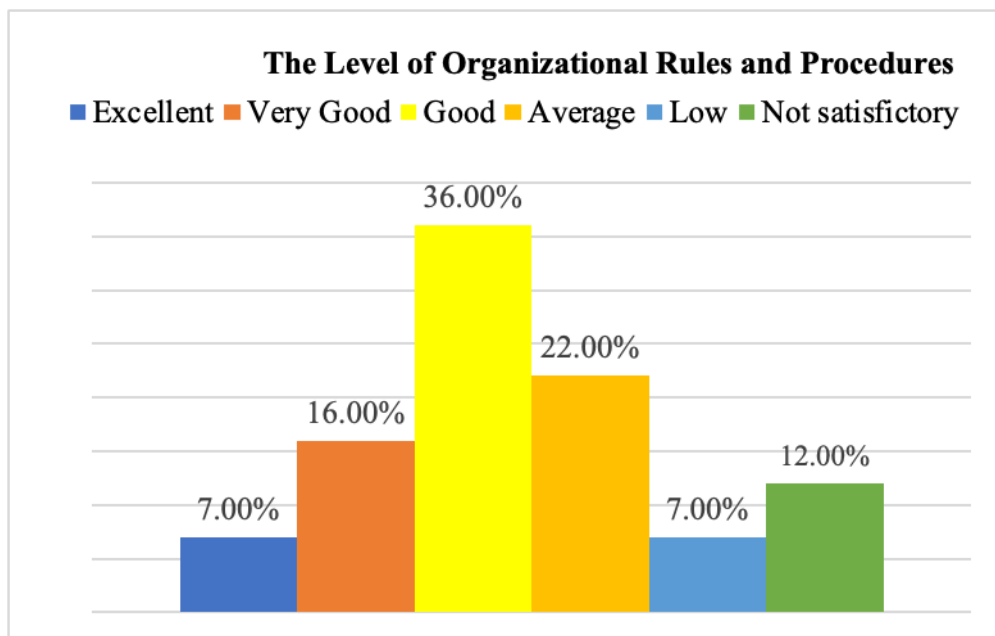


Figure 1: The Organizational Rules and Procedures in Gender-Based Violence

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Figure 1 shows the level of organizational rules and procedures against gender-based violence. In this regard, most of the student's (thirty-six percent) mentioned 'Good' level organization rules and policies against gender-based violence. They said Comilla University and Dhaka University are conscious of students' sexual harassment. Even one Dhaka University student expressed that,

"Sometimes, different organizations organize programs aimed at addressing and preventing sexual harassment for female students. These programs offer valuable guidance and awareness campaigns on how to respond and cope with challenging situations."

Then, twenty-two percent of students mentioned the 'Average' of their institution's maintenance of rules and procedures. Some Comilla and Dhaka University students said that the authority doesn't maintain proper rules and regulations. We saw that some criminals took punishment when this happened and knew everyone. But, every criminal is not adequately punished for lacking authority, irresponsibility, and impersonality. One of the students said,

"I experienced sexual harassment from my classmates, but our university's sexual harassment cell did not take effective action against the perpetrator. This was due to some teachers providing shelter or protection, making it difficult to achieve impartiality in addressing the issue."

To maintain University authority, it must be responsible and effective for women, besides protection from gender-based-violence is not equal for all students. At least seven percent of students mentioned 'Excellent' and 'Low' level of regulations. On the other hand, twelve percent of students select the unsatisfactory level of law and justice against gender-based violence. Comilla and Dhaka University should have specific laws, and every event will take proper action. In case of Comilla University, one teacher said,

"We are conscious always to give punishment those who commit crimes. However, some students are fearful that their cases will be made public, causing shame and embarrassment. We arrange sexual harassment campaigns for female students providing guidance against sexual harassment."

Table 3: The Level of Activity of the Complaint Committee

Criteria	Number of Respondent	Percentage %
Excellent	6	6%
Very Good	13	13%
Good	36	36%
Average	22	22%
Low	8	8%
Not Satisfactory	15	15%
Total	100	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 3 shows the level of activity of the complaint committee. In this regard, thirty-six percent of students thought that the ‘Good’ exercise of the complaint committee. Both university students said that, at present, the complaint committee works well. Because of this, some victims take action against harassment. Again, they said that the complaint committee makes an effort when they find legal documents. The Dhaka University student said,

"The complaint committee takes effective action when we encounter instances of online or offline sexual harassment, whether it is from known or unknown individuals. Furthermore, the committee has organized campaigns and awareness programs among the female students to address and prevent such issues."

Then, twenty-two percent of students mentioned the ‘Average’ activity of the complaint committee about gender-based violence. The committee doesn’t work correctly when we face sexual harassment by touching or sexual images online. We are facing much sexual harassment on campus, but the sexual harassment committee doesn’t take action against this criminals properly.

Even most students don’t know the sexual harassment cell on our campus. In Comilla University, one respondent expressed her opinion, *"It's unfortunate that our sexual harassment committee has not been proactive in taking action against the offenders. If we see that last year a few students facing sexual harassment, but no action taken on it by committee or cell. We don't know about the functions of the cell, and even this committee hasn't arrange any awareness building program for the female students."* Then, fifteen percent of students were not satisfied with the complaint committee for gender discrimination. Because the committee usually involved in partiality or grouping. They said, *"Our committee didn't take action last two or three harassment cases. So why do we put a complaint? Although our campus has complaint boxes, they are not regularly checked. When someone does file a complaint against another person, the authorities are often very slow in taking action."* To solve this problem, every institution must have an effective complaint box to ensure proper rules and regulations.

On the other hand, 13% of Comilla University and Dhaka University students are happy about the gender-based violence complaint box. They thought that our teacher took proper action against gender-based violence. But every entity has limitation in their activities. The Comilla University Sexual harassment cell member said, *"We are highly committed to addressing gender-based violence and have provided complaint boxes for both female and male students. However, when we open these boxes after 15 or 20 days, we often find that the complaints*

lack valid or specific reasons, making it challenging to take appropriate action. I believe that in the future, our efforts will continue to grow and improve day by day."

Table 4: The level of Social Factors in Gender Based Violence
(Response of General Students)

Criteria	Number of Respondent	Percentage %
Excellent	17	17%
Very Good	28	28%
Good	30	30%
Average	23	23%
Low	2	2%
Not Satisfactory	0	0%
Total	100	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 4 shows the level of social factors in gender-based violence. In this regard, thirty percent of students mentioned 'Good' according to the level of social factors in gender-based violence. They said that social factor was the reason for sexual harassment. Every religion has some rules and regulations, but we don't maintain our ethics and values. Some of society follows family education, norms, and religion. This society has experienced sexual harassment in other organizations. One Muslim student expressed her opinion. *"As a Muslim, we adhere to a set of rules and regulations that include wearing modest clothing like long dresses, burkas, and curtains. This is done to reduce the chances of facing sexual harassment. This clothing choice can deter individuals who may otherwise inappropriately focus on one's body or physical appearance."* Then, twenty-eight percent of students mentioned 'Very Good' in the level of social factors in gender-based violence. They thought society and family education were interrelated.

Not only society but also family following the rules and respect, then this society hasn't any harass. One of the Comilla University teacher said, *"Social factor is a major reason for the gender-based violence in our society. I think not only religion but also ethics and positive thinking are important in controlling sexual harassment. Everyone should think positively. If we think every female is like our sister, then harassment will reduce."* To solve this problem, we learn religious norms and moral education. Then, seventeen percent of students mentioned 'Excellent' social factors of gender-based violence. The respondents thought that social factors were one of the reasons for sexual harassment. They saw that every day, females were facing sexual harassment in the newspaper. Finally, we see that most of the respondents focus on social factors and the problem of gender-based violence.

On the other hand, twenty-three percent of students select the 'Average' about gender-based violence. They said that social factors and social norms and values are related. If you wear a short dress, if anyone looks at your body and physical structure, then they will think of sexual imagination. Dhaka University students said, *"This is our choice of dress. We must uphold a standard for our society, defining what is considered acceptable and what is not. But in the town area, most females dress up in Western culture, which isn't good for us."*

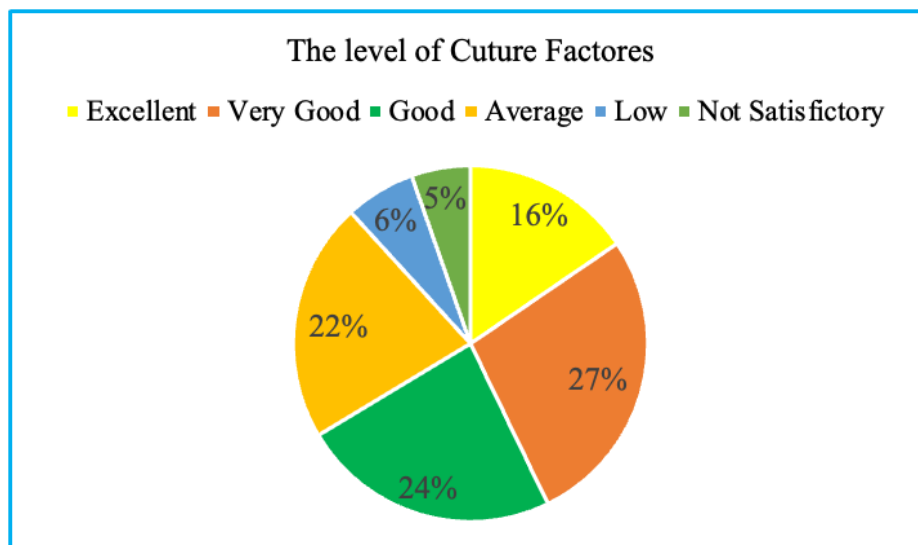


Figure 2: The cultural factors responsible for gender-based violence

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Figure 2 shows the level of cultural factors responsible for gender-based violence. In this regard, twenty-seven percent of respondents mentioned 'Very Good' as the cultural factor for increasing gender-based violence. Some of society follows family education, norms, and religion. In the university campuses in Bangladesh, the students usually ignore their own tradition and culture. Even their campus students don't follow the 'Bangali' culture. In the future, 'Bangali' culture will be destroyed if we follow Western culture. In Dhaka University, one student said, *"At present, our campus culture is concerning, with instances of both males and females engaging in unwanted physical contact. This behavior constitutes a form of sexual harassment that we may not fully recognize. It seems that we are drifting away from our own cultural values and easily embracing elements of Western culture."* Then, twenty-four percent of respondents thought the cultural factor was related to sexual harassment. For this, they select the "Good," and sixteen percent of students select the 'Excellent' gender-based violence. They thought that both Comilla and Dhaka University students wanted to create a good culture for the overall students. They said that our students follow a few cultures society doesn't accept, such as smoking, drinking, and physical relations.

Comilla University teacher said, "Our campus has been established recently, and as a result, our campus culture is not yet as well-defined as in older universities. It's evident that we are slowly losing touch with our own cultural values. In the future, our university culture may evolve. However, it's important to note that not only cultural changes are responsible for sexual harassment; factors such as the mental addiction to sexual content also contribute to the increasing prevalence of gender-based violence." To solve this problem, we should follow religious norms and values properly. Furthermore, it's crucial that we work to eliminate negative and harmful stereotypes and misconceptions surrounding women's sexuality from our collective thinking. Then, twenty-two percent of students were selected as 'Average' about gender-based violence. They expressed that cultural and social values, norms, and ethics are related to sexual harassment. Both campus and society cultures should change to reduce sexual harassment. Then we should remove Western dress up and culture. Then, five percent of students mentioned 'Not satisfaction,' and six percent of respondents selected 'Low' about gender-based violence in cultural factors.

Table 5: Political Power in Gender-Based Violence
(Respondents of General Students)

Criteria	Number of Respondent	Percentage %
Excellent	15	15%
Very Good	26	26%
Good	24	24%
Average	22	22%
Low	5	5%
Not Satisfactory	8	8%
Total	100	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 5 shows the level of political power in gender-based violence. In this regard, most students agreed on gender-based violence on university campuses by political power. We offer that 15% of respondents were mentioned as 'Excellent,' and 26% of students selected 'Very Good' against using political power in sexual violence. They said that both two university campuses have political power and illegal power. You will manage all crime reports if you have political power or link up. Even politically powerful people want to relate and force the relation of the female with them. But general students are afraid of using illegal power and ragging. The political power leader intends to use control everywhere. Dhaka University, one respondent said, *"We come from villages, and since there's no opportunity to stay in the campus halls, we often find ourselves coerced by political leaders and senior students to engage in relationships or accept proposals. We do this out of a desire for shelter and security. Unfortunately, some of these political leaders have been implicated in various crimes related to females."* So, To solve this problem, any political figure who misuses their power for such purposes must be held accountable and face appropriate consequences for their actions.

The role of law must be ensured for every person, and illegal political power must be reduced in educational institutions. Then, twenty-four percent of respondents expressed that 'Good'. They thought political power was the reason for sexual harassment. Not only do students use political power, but also teachers use this power. We can see that teachers' harassment in classrooms, exam halls, or viva broad among the women and ask questions about their personal lives. Comilla University, one respondent said, *"It's not just students who engage in politics on our campus; even some teachers are involved. There was a case where a female student reported an incident involving a teacher, but the university authority did not take action. This lack of action raises doubts about the effectiveness of filing complaints if they are not addressed and resolved."* Twenty-two percent of respondents expressed 'Average' about the level of political power against gender-based violence. They said the political leader often misuse their power for personal gain and to satisfy their sexual desires. Leaders used to provide services and assistance to students in the past. However, in the present, we no longer witness this positive scenario. Only five percent of students don't agree about the political power to use gender violence. One teacher said, *"Some leaders abuse their political power by sending messages and indecent images through female students' messengers. Furthermore, there are reports of certain teachers making offers to students in exchange for favorable marks."*

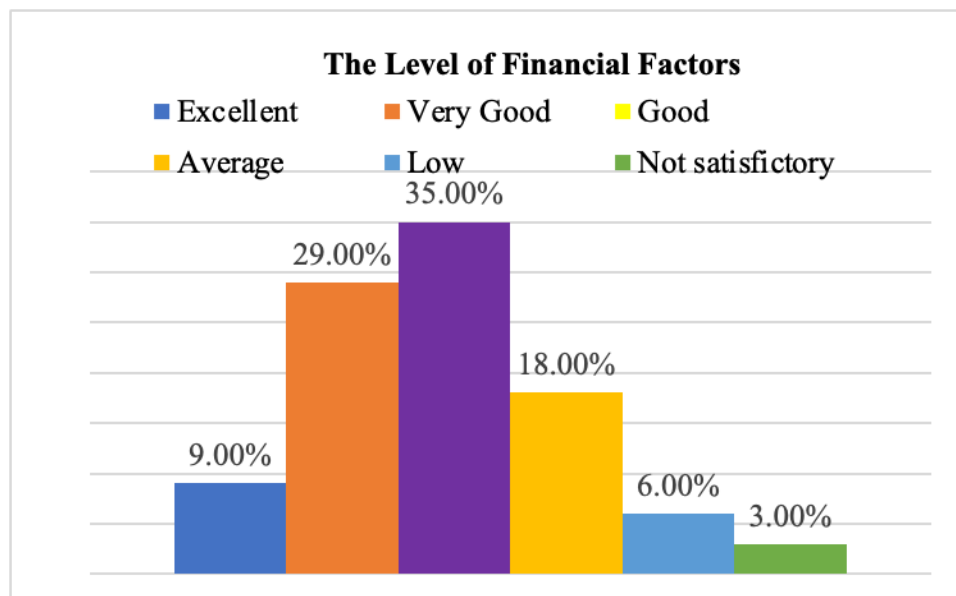


Figure 3: The financial factors effect on gender-violence harassment

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Figure 3 shows the level of financial factors affecting gender-based violence. In this regard, thirty-five percent of respondents mentioned 'Good' regarding using financial support on gender-based violence. Some students have reported experiencing sexual harassment due to their limited financial ability. Sometimes, political leaders make inappropriate advances towards female students, offering them favors in exchange for sexual favors. If we observe some newspaper reports of the political leader's viral sex-related videos. Dhaka University, one respondent said that,

"We are currently grappling with a financial crisis within campus life, and unfortunately, we also encounter instances of sexual harassment, including unwelcome online sexual messages. Some senior individuals have been sending me messages against my will."

Even twenty-nine percent of respondents mentioned it as 'Very Good.' They thought that they were facing a financial crisis in students' lives. Even some of the female students don't take money from their families. One female respondent said, "We haven't any tuition or income source for surviving our life. Even sometimes we don't eat properly for lack of money". Even nine percent of respondents selected 'Excellent.' To solve different cases, their influential financial support is above good against gender-based violence. For this, every person must adequately maintain the rules and regulations. Another eighteen percent expressed 'Average' in response. They said that student's life must have a financial crisis. But they aren't connected to illegal work or function. Only six percent of respondents don't support the economic effect of gender-based violence. Maximum respondents think the primary issue is to use financial support in every sector easily. To achieve this, it's essential to recognize that upholding the law and ensuring justice does not equate to mismanagement.

Table 6: The Level of Power-Relation Factors
(Respondents of General Students)

Criteria	Number of Respondent	Percentage %
Excellent	4	4%
Very Good	19	19%
Good	31	31%
Average	25	25%
Low	17	17%

Not Satisfactory	4	4%
Total	100	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 6 shows the level of the power-relation factors on gender-based violence. In this regard, thirty-one percent of respondents mentioned 'Good.' According to them, gender-based violence influences the power relation factors. They said some victims faced sexual harassment by influential leaders or powerful students. In Public University life, most females face sexual harassment online or offline by classmates or friends. Comilla University, one respondent expressed her speech,

"We are facing with instances of sexual harassment, both online and offline, yet it appears that powerful leaders or teachers often evade punishment. In some cases, no action is taken against the perpetrators. As a result, many victims lose their interest to report or speak out against these injustices."

Besides, the university authority must become vital to punish misused power. Then, twenty-five percent of respondents mentioned the 'Average' misuse of the power relation for gender-based violence. Political leaders and political teachers were convicted, free from punishment for political power. At Dhaka University, one student said, "Some leaders misuse their authority when it comes to addressing sexual harassment. In Dhaka University, a significant number of female students encounter sexual harassment within the Teacher-Student Center (TSC)." One of the Comilla University teacher expressed her speech, "Power-relation is one kind of problem for sexual harassment. Some of the convicted misuse their power, even the sexual harassment didn't have any proof or document." Only seventeen percent of respondents selected the 'Low' About gender-based violence. Most respondents thought the power relation wasn't a significant problem for gender-based violence. They felt that power relations were a problem and had many problems with sexual harassment. You don't do anything without the support of a leader or illegal power.

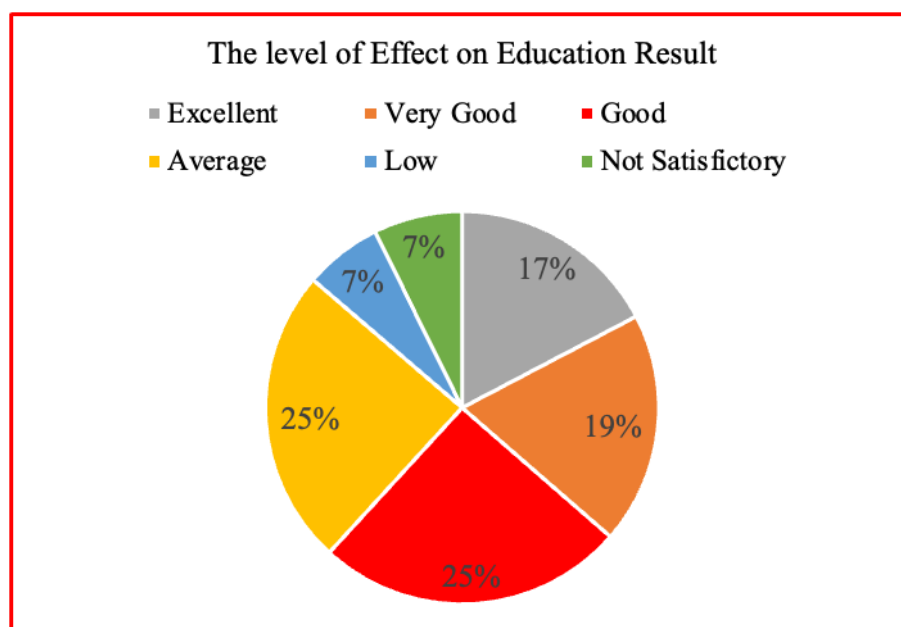


Figure 4: Effect on Education Result of Students

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Figure 4 shows the level of effect on education results for gender-based violence. In this regard, most students thought that gender violence affected their results. For this, twenty-five percent of respondents mentioned the 'Good' impact of sexual harassment and gender-based violence. They said that our result was the default when we were facing harassment which sexual or mental harassment. The mental pressure destroys everything, and

you don't work correctly. You can't move freely here and there if you face online or offline sexual harassment. One student said, *"During the last semester, my academic performance suffered due to the mental stress I experienced. When we are subjected to online sexual harassment from classmates or senior students, it creates a very uncomfortable environment for us. Furthermore, some of our friends have even faced sexual harassment from our class teachers, which is an incredibly distressing situation for female students."* The other twenty-five percent of students selected the 'Average'; they thought sexual harassment affected their academic results. They thought you would not study and give proper examinations if you faced mental pressure online or offline. Even class activities stress doesn't take properly, let alone sexual harassment. Comilla University teacher expressed her speech, *"If anyone is facing sexual or mental harassment, it undoubtedly has a negative impact on their academic performance and overall participation in activities. Some females may also hesitate to continue study because of fear, and this fear can prevent them from engaging in social and cultural activities."*

To solve this problem according to their recommendation, increase women's empowerment and ensure justice besides the anti-violence organization activities developed on the university campus. Then, nineteen percent respondents mentioned 'Very Good,' and seventeen percent selected the 'Excellent' effect on education results of gender-based violence. They said that gender-based violence affects academic activities. Comilla University, one student said, *"We are facing sexual harassment by known and unknown persons on the campus. Sometimes, sensitive information and conversations are made public through social media, leading to significant mental stress for female students."* Only seven percent of respondents selected 'Low,' and seven percent thought they were unsatisfied. Finally, we see that most of the students thought that gender violence affects academic results.

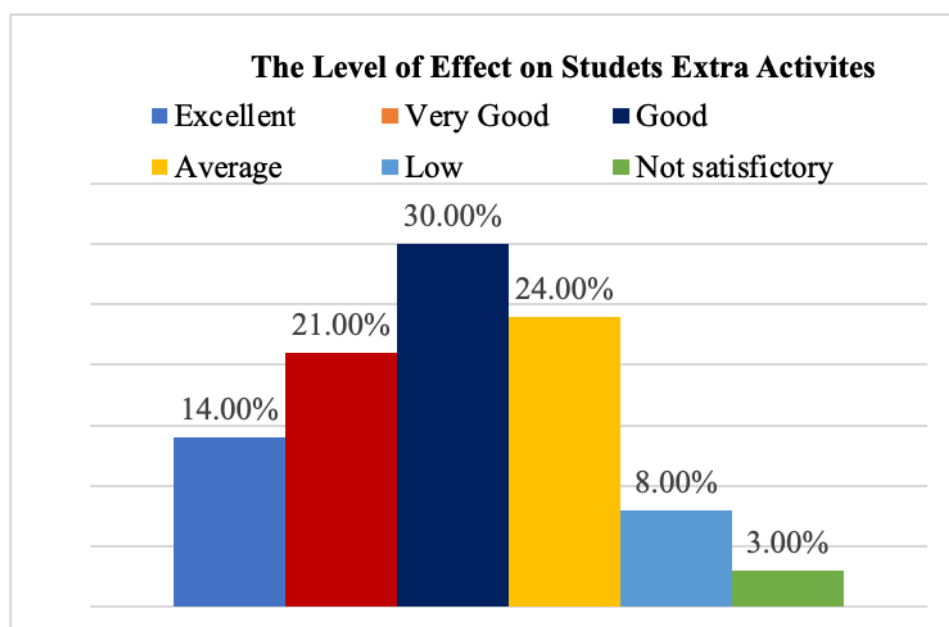


Figure 5: Effect on students' extra activities for gender-based violence.

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Figure 5 shows the level of effect on other activities for gender-based violence. In this regard, most students thought gender violence affected the extra activities in students' lives. For this, thirty percent of respondents mentioned 'Good' because they believed that the student's life faces problems of gender violence. They felt that students would not be involved in extra activities if they were facing sexual harassment or mental harassment. Because when they face sexual harassment online or offline, they don't connect with social activities for hesitation and shame. Dhaka University, one respondent said, *"Female students usually avoid social and volunteer activities when they are confronted with sexual harassment. Such incidents become a significant obstacle for them, causing them to withdraw from social circles, affecting their class participation and attentiveness."*

For this, the problem wants to be solved by ensuring the justice and rule of the law for everyone. The law must control influential people. Other respondents mentioned ‘Very Good.’ Twenty-one percent and fourteen percent of students selected ‘Excellent.’ They said most students want to connect with social organizations and volunteer activities. However, there are female members of the organization who do not feel secure and choose not to engage with it. We can see that some of the organizations at the university level have female students. Again, the students thought about the problem of general extra activities for gender-based violence. Then, twenty-four percent of respondents selected the ‘Average,’ and only eight percent of students mentioned the ‘Low’ problem. They thought that not only sexual harassment reason but also culture and politics were related to them. Comilla University teacher expressed his speech, *"Our university doesn't have a high prevalence of sexual harassment, which is positive. However, there are still instances where female students experience harassment from classmates or unknown individuals. I believe that the university authorities should take proper action in response to any reports of online or offline harassment."*

Table 7: The Level of Effect on Mental Pressure

Criteria	Number of Respondent	Percentage %
Excellent	21	21%
Very Good	22	22%
Good	28	28%
Average	19	19%
Low	5	5%
Not Satisfactory	5	5%
Total	100	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2021

Table 7 shows the level of effect on mental pressures of both Comilla and Dhaka University students. In this regard, twenty-eight percent of students from both universities select the ‘Good’ result of mental pressure for sexual harassment. They said that sexual harassment pressures the mind. We see that some students commit suicide because of mental stress. Every year, public university students commit suicide for different reasons, but sexual and mental harassment is one of them. Female students are always afraid of gender-based violence. Even twenty-two percent of students mentioned ‘Very Good’; they thought that sexual harassment was a significant problem and that it was suicide. They didn’t take mental pressure or ragging system on public university campuses. One respondent said,

"I was facing ragging by our senior brother and sister. At that time, I was thought to commit suicide because of mental pressure. However, with time, I've grown accustomed to this ragging system. I believe that ragging can be considered a form of sexual harassment, given the mental strain it imposes."

Then, twenty-one percent of students selected the ‘Excellent’; they thought every female or male was facing mental pressure by sexual harassment. Comilla University, one faculty member expressed his speech,

"Every victim of harassment undoubtedly experiences mental distress. When someone faces sexual harassment or any other harassment, it places significant mental pressure on them. If we look at recent news reports, we can see that a considerable number of university students committed suicide due to the immense mental pressure they endured."

6. Recommendations

1. *Institutional Accountability:* Public universities are responsible for providing a safe and inclusive environment for their students, faculty, and staff. The absence or inadequate functioning of a sexual complaint committee can indicate a lack of institutional commitment to addressing sexual misconduct and safeguarding the rights of community members. It may also need to reflect the university's reputation better, resulting in legal, financial, and public relations repercussions.
2. *Need for Action:* You may consider raising the issue with relevant university officials, such as the administration, human resources department, or student affairs office etc. You can also seek support from advocacy groups or legal entities specializing in sexual harassment or assault. Additionally, engaging with fellow students, faculty, and staff to raise awareness and advocate for the establishment or improvement of a sexual complaint committee can be effective in bringing about change.
3. *Importance of Sexual Complaint Committees:* Sexual complaint committees play a crucial role in addressing issues related to sexual harassment, assault, discrimination, and misconduct on university campuses. They provide a mechanism for students, faculty, and staff to report such incidents and seek recourse. These committees are responsible for investigating complaints, supporting survivors, and ensuring appropriate actions are taken to prevent further occurrences and hold perpetrators accountable.
4. *Mental Support:* Providing a safe and non-judgmental space for victims to share their experiences and emotions can be immensely helpful. Practicing empathetic listening, where you actively listen without interrupting or judging, can help victims feel heard and validated and provide an essential outlet for their emotions.
5. *Increase Awareness:* The sexual organization committee and people should be aware of the students, teachers, and upcoming new students. With awareness among the people, the campus will correctly maintain its culture and rules. So, sometimes, the sexual committee members take the initiative to campaign for camping and awareness about sexual harassment.
6. *Involve extra curricular activities:* Public university students should connect with social and other activities to reduce sexual harassment. They can take the initiative to reduce sexual activities through social activities. They can involve different types of organizations which increase sexual harassment awareness among students.
7. *Support Financial Crisis:* At Public Universities, most students are from mid-class or lower-class family backgrounds. They want to start online businesses or tuition to support financial crises. Every family should take care when they are continuing students' lives.

7. Conclusion

This study delved into the complex issue of sexual harassment within Higher Educational Institutions in Bangladesh, shedding light on its patterns, influencing factors, and consequential impacts. Three primary objectives drove the research: understanding the contemporary trends of sexual harassment, identifying the factors contributing to its prevalence within Higher Educational Institutions, and assessing the repercussions of harassment on female students' academic performance and mental well-being.

The findings underscored the pervasiveness of sexual harassment in online and offline spaces, revealing instances where unsolicited calls and messages discussing sexual misconduct were prevalent. Personal space violations by acquaintances and public incidents of inappropriate behavior were also prominent, highlighting the urgency of addressing this multifaceted issue. Moreover, inappropriate touching and discussions centered around physical appearances remained concerning within educational environments. The study highlighted the role of organizational rules, governance patterns, and the activity of the complaint committee in shaping the climate

surrounding sexual harassment. Influencing factors spanned social, cultural, political, and financial dimensions, illustrating the intricate web of interconnected issues contributing to such misconduct's perpetuation.

Additionally, power dynamics played a significant role in allowing the manipulation of crime reports, and the financial implications of gender-based violence varied across contexts. The impact on academic performance and mental health was profound, as instances of sexual harassment had detrimental effects on both areas for female students. Theoretical results were compromised, and mental well-being was negatively impacted, necessitating holistic support mechanisms to mitigate these consequences. In light of the findings, it is evident that addressing sexual harassment in Higher Educational Institutions demands a multi-pronged approach. Establishing strong institutional accountability, enhancing the effectiveness of sexual complaint committees, increasing awareness through education, and involving students in extracurricular activities are among the recommended strategies. Furthermore, the study underscores the need to address the complex interplay of social, cultural, and power-related factors contributing to the prevalence of sexual harassment. Ultimately, this study contributes valuable insights into the pressing issue of sexual harassment in Higher Educational Institutions in Bangladesh, emphasizing the necessity of comprehensive measures to create safer and more inclusive academic environments for all students.

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