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Gender-Based Violence in Tertiary Education in Bangladesh

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Abstract

Gender-based violence, or GBV, is a concerning concept that one in three women may experience in their lifetime, thus converting it into one of the most enormous impairments of human rights worldwide. It has a substantial impact on one's health, including physical, mental, and sexual health, and it involves emotional, physiological, sexual, and even economic violence. This research delves into the intricate dimensions of GBV within the specific context of Bangladesh's Tertiary Educational Institutions (TEIs). This study employs a mixed-method approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data, to unveil the nuanced dynamics of GBV within higher education institutions. The findings highlight several key issues within TEIs. Firstly, sexual harassment complaint committees often exhibit deficiencies in their responsiveness and commitment, which deter female victims from seeking redress. A lack of awareness about sexual misconduct regulations impedes victims from taking legal action. Additionally, the misuse of political power in sexual harassment cases exacerbates the consequences for victims. The absence of transparent reporting and investigation procedures within organizations leaves victims without adequate support and discourages reporting. To rectify these issues, we propose a series of recommendations. Public universities must prioritize the establishment of influential sexual complaint committees to address misconduct, safeguard individuals' rights, and prevent legal and reputational repercussions. Collaboration with relevant organizations and legal entities, along with advocacy efforts, can raise awareness and catalyze the creation or enhancement of these committees. Sexual complaint committees are vital for reporting, support, and accountability in combating harassment, assault, discrimination, and misconduct within academic institutions.

Keywords: GBV, Tertiary Education, COVID-19, Mental Health

1. Introduction

The identity of men and women and the third gender is denoted by the term gender, which is a global phenomenon. The hijras have been recognized as the third gender by the government, though. Still, in practice, it's not easy to access health care and other government services for hijras, a problem that increased during COVID-19. Other people like them, for instance, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender, along with advocates, are not getting much protection from the police and continue encountering violence and threats (Chakraborty Roshni, 2021). Gender-based violence, or GBV, is a concerning concept that one in three women may

experience in their lifetime, thus converting it into one of the most enormous impairments of human rights worldwide. It substantially impacts one's health, including physical, mental, and sexual health, and it involves emotional, physiological, sexual, and even economic violence (Hafeez, 2022).

Nevertheless, gender-based violence, discrimination, and inequalities have become common issues in our society, and the state tolerates and tolerates this violence. Thus, women are becoming more vulnerable (Kimuna & Djamba, 2008). The immediate and long-term effects of GBV on the person, family, and society are severe and should be treated more seriously. GBV is not a recent development and is certainly not unique to Bangladesh. Violence severely affects one's health, including long-term disabilities, psychological stress, unintended pregnancies, and problems from unsafe or coerced abortions. Women and girls are denied their rights to education, health care, and adequate living conditions because of their exposure to and fear of violence. One of its harshest forms is child marriage alone, which affects 59% of girls in Bangladesh (Rana, 2016). While it is exacerbated in nations experiencing conflict, it has no bounds related to geography, culture, social class, or ethnicity (Islam, 2018).

To achieve gender equality, Bangladesh's government has set some specific targets by diminishing the existing discrimination and violence, which are derived from the SDGs containing health and well-being, better education, growth of the economy and decent tasks, long-lasting city and populations, peace, and justice that will ensure security and provide more affordable transportation for women and children along with set a better standard of living. Precisely saying that to preserve women's rights and achieve gender equality, the government is working to abolish all types of discrimination, eliminate all forms of internal violence such as trafficking and sexual harassment, and eradicate damaging societal practices such as child marriage and forced marriage (Iqbal et al., 2020). Human beings have an inherent right to a life free from violence, and abuse based on gender can severely damage a sense of value and pride in themselves. It has psychological and physiological consequences, increasing the risk of self-injury, social withdrawal, and even suicide attempts. Due to the social stigma, data on GBV suffers severe scarcity in the areas of prevalence in different contexts, demographics of the perpetrators, and the nature of their relationships with victims. Our conventional idea has been that GBV is prevalent among the illiterate and low-educated sections. However, high educational institutions are no exception as well. The cases of GBV have been on the increase in HEIs. During the pandemic period, the cases multiplied.

GBV is deep-seated in historical and organizational inequality in power relations concerning gender that impedes gender equality and empowerment. Students increasingly depend on the internet for entertainment; eventually, many become cyberbullying victims. Despite growing attention to the problem of GBV in higher educational institutions (HEI), little attention has been accorded to the issue. In addition, it is challenging to identify the true prevalence of violence at HEIs due to the under-reporting of this sort of violence, particularly sexual violence. The paper intends to cover the patterns and trends of GBV in TEIs in Bangladesh, the influencing factors in higher educational institutions in conducting GBV offenses, and the impacts of GBV on female students' academic performance and mental health. Diverse historical, social, cultural, technological, and political issues are fundamental to these trends and practices.

The primary objectives of this study are twofold: firstly, to comprehensively examine the intricate patterns, evolving trends, and underlying factors contributing to Gender-Based Violence (GBV) within the context of Bangladesh's Tertiary Educational Institutions (TEIs); and secondly, to rigorously evaluate the direct and indirect ramifications of GBV on the academic performance of students within these institutions. This research seeks to illuminate the multifaceted nature of GBV in TEIs and elucidate its impact on educational outcomes, ultimately contributing to a deeper understanding of this critical issue and informing potential interventions and policy changes.

2. Conceptual Clarification

2.1. Gender-Based Violence

Violence may be defined as the use of physical force with the intent to cause harm, abuse, inflict damage, or induce destruction. Alternative definitions are also employed, including the definition of violence provided by the World Health Organization (WHO). According to the WHO, using physical force or power, either threatening or actual, against oneself, another person, a group, or society is defined as violence. Injury, death, mental anguish, stunted growth, and material hardship are only some adverse outcomes linked to or made more likely by this kind of violence. Conversely, Gender-Based Violence (GBV) encompasses detrimental actions targeted at people due to gender. The phenomenon may be traced back to gender disparities, the exertion of authority in an abusive manner, and the perpetuation of detrimental societal standards. Gender-based violence (GBV) is a grave infringement against the fundamental rights of individuals and poses a significant danger to their health and overall well-being. According to estimates, almost one out of every three women is projected to encounter instances of sexual or physical abuse throughout their lives. In situations of displacement and catastrophe, the risk of gender-based violence (GBV) experiences a notable escalation, particularly affecting women and girls (Shahen, 2021). Coercion, threats, or arbitrary deprivation of private or public liberty within the context of a family or community all fall under the UN's definition of violence based on gender (GBV), as does any conduct that is likely to or results in physical, sexual, psychological, or struggling for women. All forms of violence, not only those directed towards women, fall under this category (Iliyasu et al., 2011). Gender-based violence (GBV) refers to acts or the expression of threats by individuals who identify as males or by mostly male-led organizations, resulting in bodily, sexual, or psychological damage to women or girls solely due to their gender. Currently, violence based on gender (GBV) continues to be a significant public health issue in the United States, with far-reaching implications for individuals and society (Walsh et al., 2015).

Violence against an individual based on their gender is included in the concept of GBV, which goes beyond the deliberate application of one's position of authority to harm people, organizations, or the community as a whole (Kibriya Shahriar, 2020). Instances of violence and harassment, which include gender-based violence and harassment, which include sexual harassment, have the potential to be seen as a significant infringement against fundamental human rights. Within the realm of employment, a multitude of manifestations of harassment and assault inflict covert and detrimental effects on people, organizations, as well as the broader societal fabric. These factors significantly impede growth, primarily via the reduction of social and human capital accumulation, as well as creating substantial obstacles for both women and men in their pursuit of decent and adequate employment opportunities (Yasmin, 2020).

Over the last two decades, Bangladesh has shown noteworthy advancements in enhancing the well-being of women and girls. The rates of maternal mortality are experiencing a downward trend, the fertility rate is exhibiting a decline, and there is an observable improvement in gender parity in the enrollment of students in educational institutions. Simultaneously, it is noteworthy that a substantial majority of married women, namely 82 percent, experience gender-based violence. Furthermore, widespread sexual assault hinders women's ability to fully realize their capabilities and aspirations (Shahen, 2021). According to research conducted by BRAC, there has been an increase in gender-based violence in Bangladesh during the continuing COVID-19 epidemic. The report further highlights that BRAC's Legal Aid Services received over 25,000 complaints in the first ten months 2020. According to statistics provided by BRAC, despite the constrained mobility resulting from the COVID-19 lockdowns for a specified duration, a cumulative count of 25,607 grievances about gender-based abuse was reported to its network of 410 Human Rights and Legal Aid Clinics situated across Bangladesh during the first ten months of the current year. Out of the total complaints received, a significant portion of 15,047 instances were successfully handled using alternative dispute resolution methods.

Additionally, legal assistance was given to 3,239 survivors, aiding them in navigating the legal complexities of their situations. Furthermore, 1,724 complaints resulted in the initiation of civil and criminal proceedings. Again,

a substantial sum of about \$4 million was successfully retrieved to provide dower and support for the surviving individuals (Hossain, 2020) .

Despite the concerted efforts of governmental and non-governmental entities to mitigate the prevalence of child marriage in Bangladesh, the country continues to exhibit the highest incidence of this practice within the South Asian region. Approximately 59 percent of girls in Bangladesh are compelled to marry before age 18. The involvement of women in the labor market continues to be restricted to areas that provide limited opportunities and lower wages. The ready-made garment business in Bangladesh, being the country's most significant export industry, employs a substantial workforce of around three million women from Bangladesh. The participation of women in small and medium firms is seeing a notable upward trend. However, it is essential to acknowledge that significant financial disparities persist for women despite implementing many government measures (Shahen, 2021).

3. Literature Review

In an ideal scenario, society is anticipated to be founded around the fundamental principles of fairness and parity. Higher education institutions are expected to serve as leaders in promoting, maintaining, and perpetuating principles of strong moral values. In contemporary culture, there is a prevailing expectation that individuals of all genders, namely men and women, should get equal treatment. When this essential principle derived from biblical teachings is transgressed, it leads to societal disorder. Gender-based violence (GBV) is maintained chiefly due to the social inability to acknowledge and embrace shared principles of fairness and equitable treatment, as recommended by religious texts (Samakao et al., 2023). Universities and other institutes of higher education are responsible for cultivating and developing highly competent and esteemed individuals who contribute to the workforce. Including graduates with technical competence and disciplined attitudes, values, and behaviors contributes to their enhanced worth. Most individuals enrolled in these educational institutions are primarily young people ranging from 18 to 25 years of age. Many individuals have been socialized within patriarchal societies, whereby the gender norms they are used to may directly conflict with the ideals promoted inside academic institutions.

Furthermore, students' educational and instructional experiences occur within diverse and heterogeneous settings, characterized by the coexistence of individuals from various cultural, ethnic, socioeconomic, gender, age, class, and religious backgrounds who come together with the same objective of acquiring knowledge and skills. This phenomenon significantly impacts the student population's cognitive development, anticipations, dispositions, conduct, affective states, and interpersonal skills. In addition, it is worth noting that college campuses often exhibit a prevalence of male students, leading to the establishment of cultures and surroundings that are more accommodating and accepting of male individuals (Iliyasu et al., 2011) .

Economic issues may significantly influence pupils, leading to aggressive or submissive behavior when confronted with social difficulties. The convergence of these elements contributes to the prevalence of nonconforming gender behaviors inside higher institutions, with females being the primary recipients, albeit not entirely so. These behavioral patterns include sexual assault and other forms of gender-centric violence. The potential consequences of these circumstances may consist of fear, especially among female students, which might deter their participation in higher education institutions. Consequently, this may exacerbate the gender imbalance among the student body, favoring men. Therefore, gender-based violence inside educational institutions poses a significant barrier to acquiring knowledge, resulting in physical injury and profound adverse effects on psychological well-being and educational outcomes (Iliyasu et al., 2011) .

Torture, rape, forced rape, physical abuse, and sexual assault are common kinds of domestic violence and oppression against wives and housemates, including attendants, cooks, and cleaners. In addition, the study discovered that harassing behaviors, including touching, standing too close together, purposely pushing, gripping the shoulders, making inappropriate comments, and touching sensitive areas of the body, cause women and girls to feel unsafe when moving around in public transportation. They are being harassed and sexually assaulted by

house instructors and close kin at home as well as at educational institutions, the report also found. A danger to their lives and their health, child marriage is another issue that prevents children from giving their permission. Their situation is still precarious even though the Bangladeshi government has taken steps to end child marriage to provide them with a stable living situation. Women's rights advocates maintained that the government ought to take the lead in changing the regulations that are now in place, that the executive branch administering laws and safeguards must be open and responsible, and that the general public's attitudes towards women and children need to shift. In addition, it is evident that social and cultural norms, a dearth of political will, and a shortage of legislative measures to create an atmosphere welcoming to women entrepreneurs all contribute to the detrimental business climate female entrepreneurs face (Shahen, 2021).

Yasmin, (2020) highlights many significant deficiencies within Bangladesh's legal and legislative framework, institutional procedures, and practices concerning handling gender-based violence and harassment. The statement above underscores the difficulties arising from the absence of precise legal delineations for crucial concepts, such as 'sexual harassment,' the lack of comprehensive legal measures addressing instances of sexual harassment, and the failure to criminalize some forms of sexual misconduct. Additional significant challenges encompass the absence of explicit provisions within Bangladesh's labor legislation addressing gender-based violence or harassment. Furthermore, the absence of regulatory measures about informal employment and the lack of a legal framework prohibiting discriminatory practices pose substantial obstacles. Moreover, a limited comprehension exists regarding the true nature and implications of gender-based violence and harassment. The inadequate enforcement of the recommendations set out in 2009 by the High Court Division, together with the criminal laws about gender-based violence and harassment, provide significant obstacles.

Additionally, the absence of internal organizational policies addressing gender-based violence and harassment further contributes to these hurdles. There are further deficiencies that may be seen in the realm of occupational safety and health. These deficiencies pertain to the absence of gender-based violence and harassment in existing programs and policies, the need for bolstering labor inspection procedures, and the prevalence of non-compliance with labor regulations.

Makhene, (2022) reveals that the investigation told the elements that contribute to gender-based violence, its impact on the victim, and the strategies to eradicate its prevalence. Understanding the many variables contributing to gender-based violence and implementing effective ways to combat this pervasive issue may significantly reduce the prevalence of gender-based violence inside higher education institutions. This study explores the many elements contributing to gender-based violence (GBV) in higher education institutions. Specifically, it seeks to examine the underlying causes and the subsequent repercussions experienced by victims. Additionally, this research endeavors to identify potential strategies for preventing and mitigating GBV in these educational settings. Preventing gender-centric violence requires collective and proactive effort from all relevant stakeholders to eradicate this pervasive societal issue. Addressing gender-based violence (GBV) is multifaceted and needs comprehensive answers and the dedication of many actors, such as governmental bodies and civil society organizations. Violence prevention policies and activities must be guided by the most robust and reliable evidence currently accessible. Evidence-based programs are developed by drawing on previous successful initiatives and proven effective strategies. These programs are inspired by a theoretical framework and are driven by formative research and successful pilot studies. They are designed to be comprehensive, addressing several causative elements.

Iliyasu et al., (2011) suggest that our research facility in Northern Nigeria has a high rate of GBV prevalence. Sexual assault by male instructors and students was the most prevalent gender-based violence. Marital status, religious beliefs, ethnicity, place of origin, domicile, and faculty of study are some of the socio-demographic and environmental variables that influence social interactions between female students and male students on campus and are associated with a higher risk of gender-based violence (GBV). Therefore, it is crucial that campus safety initiatives, such as appropriate no-tolerance policies, efficient redress procedures, and enhanced GBV victim counseling, be developed and implemented by the university administration and other stakeholders, including non-governmental organizations.

Humphreys, Clarissa J. , Towl, (2022) addressing the present discourse pertains to the contextual framework, theoretical underpinnings, and legal provisions that delineate the appropriate measures for colleges to effectively address incidents of gender-based violence. The subsequent discussion focuses on the most practical approaches to effectively tackle the problem while promoting preventative efforts and assisting those who have experienced victimization. The book ultimately encourages establishing advantageous collaborative relationships with essential external services accessible to university communities and engaging with students as partners in a manner that upholds ethical standards and ensures their safety. The book encourages writers to showcase a holistic strategy encompassing the whole institution and is inspired by an understanding of trauma. This approach aims to prioritize the victim-survivor's needs and allocate wealth accordingly, recognizing the importance of this crucial undertaking. After each chapter, a concise overview of pivotal aspects or suggestions and a list of recommended supplementary readings about the chapter's subject matter are provided. The ideas presented by the writers, although primarily based on research and policy within the Higher Education Sector in the UK, might serve as a valuable resource for individuals at universities worldwide.

4. Scope & Significance of the Study

Due to lockdown procedures, COVID-19 has exacerbated some of these causes and caused a secondary shadow pandemic in Bangladesh, where more women and children have experienced violence for the first time (Hafeez, 2022). Bangladesh needs more solutions as it deals with GBV, a persistent issue that worsened after strict measures to address the COVID-19 crisis were implemented starting in early 2020. BRAC legal aid services received over 25,000 complaints within the first ten months. From pre-primary through higher school levels, 40 million pupils were impacted, increasing their vulnerability to abuse and child marriage. Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK) reports that 1627 women were raped in 2020. However, there are certain restrictions on the statistics. Already a complicated and delicate subject, GBV is sadly underreported. Detecting meaningful patterns over time is challenging since the available statistics are frequently fragmented, provide glimpses of the situation, or are occasionally inaccessible (UNDP, 2022). Gender-based violence (GBV) against women in educational institutions has recently been shared in Bangladesh (Hasan, 2019). Quantitative and qualitative data will be collected on harassment and governance patterns, influencing factors, academic performance, and mental health.

Table 1: Potential Variable of the Study

Considerable Factors	Measuring Indicators	Measuring Techniques	
Existing online harassment and Governance Pattern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cyberbullying • Organizational rules and procedures • The activity of the complaint committee 	KII, FGD, Content Analysis	Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in Tertiary Educational Institutions
Influencing Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social • Cultural • Political • Financial • Technological • Power-relations 	KII, FGD	
Academic Performance and Mental Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic results • Extra-curricular activities • Mental condition 	KII, FGD	

Source: Adapted from Khan & Shathi, 2018; Hossain, 2020; Hossen, 2014; Olson-Strom & Rao, 2020.

The rate of GBV is growing globally. No noteworthy study was undertaken to determine the GBV in TEIs in Bangladesh. Educational institutions remained closed during the trying time of the pandemic. There has been a

correlation between the pandemic and the growing rate of cyberbullying and GBV. It is hard for the victims to move against the committers of authority positions. Available literature confirms that there remains a massive gap in the scholarship. This research is intended to fill in the research gap. This research is expected to develop policy recommendations for the TEIs and the respective government.

5. Research Methodology

The mixed method includes assembling both qualitative and quantitative, incorporating the two data channels, and managing discrete reasons that may consist of theoretical structures and logical backgrounds (John W. Creswell, 2014). It is a determination to uncover GBV in higher educational institutions in Bangladesh, which is the essential research objective of the projected study. The research focuses on both primary and secondary evidence. The secondary data will be collected through field visits, and the study also includes data on GBV in tertiary educational institutions in Bangladesh. They will also be gathered from secondary sources, including journal articles, newsletters, books, research reports, and official documents.

A public university, such as Comilla University, for the Case study (Yin, 2011). Comilla University was formed in 2006, making it one of the most recent in terms of methodology. The universities represent the prestigious geographical location. Furthermore, the researcher is currently employed as a faculty member at Comilla University, located in the researcher's native place. The study used a hybrid technique. Comilla University's study on GBV in Bangladesh's tertiary education contributes to international literature by shedding light on a crucial but underexplored issue. A convenient sample size of respondents was taken for the research aim in a public university named Comilla University for Key Informant Interview (KII), Focused Group Discussion (FGD), and questionnaire survey. A questionnaire survey was administered to 50 students from each institution based on their gender, age, length of study, and teacher diversity. Key Informant Interviews (KII) were conducted in the second part of the study to generate balance in the quantitative data. In this part, ten persons from each institution were chosen to conduct Key Informant Interviews (KII) to investigate sexual harassment in public universities in Bangladesh based on gender, time spent in the institution, institutional affiliation, and faculty responsibility. Focused Group Discussion (FGD) was employed in the third segment since it is essential for gathering qualitative data. One FGD from each researched educational institution will be directed to collect adequate data to justify the survey conclusions. There will be a total of 7-12 responders for the FGD. Finally, the data required to complete the investigation and draw conclusions is sufficient.

6. Result and Discussion

Gender-based violence is a widespread issue that has a severe impact on women, even those who are in higher education. Numerous studies have highlighted the problem of gender-based violence, and statistics suggest that rather than diminishing, its frequency is increasing (Makhene, 2022). To critically examine research produced better to understand the phenomena of gender-based violence in higher education.

Lack of Complaint Committee Responsible: Most university sexual harassment complaint committee members don't maintain responsibility. Even some of the members aren't concerned about this committee. For that, female isn't confident on the committee. They haven't taken legal action against the criminal for lack of knowledge about the sexual rules and regulations.

Abuse of Political Power: Abuse of political power in the context of sexual harassment refers to instances where individuals in positions of political authority or influence misuse their ability to engage in sexual harassment or assault. This can occur in various settings, including within political parties, government institutions, or political campaigns, and involve individuals at different levels of political hierarchy, such as politicians, officials, staffers, or activists. The abuse of political power in sexual harassment can have severe and lasting impacts on victims, including psychological, emotional, and professional harm. Victims may face barriers

in reporting incidents, seeking support, or pursuing justice, particularly when the perpetrators hold significant political power or influence.

Lack of Organization Rules and Regulation: Many organizations lack precise and all-encompassing definitions of sexual harassment, resulting in potential uncertainty or misconception regarding the boundaries of prohibited conduct. The situation's complexity might provide difficulties for individuals who have experienced sexual harassment in recognizing and reporting these incidences and for organizations in successfully addressing such occurrences. Some organizations may lack specific protocols or designated channels for reporting sexual harassment. This may lead to a situation where victims are uncertain about the appropriate channels and methods for reporting or experience apprehension due to concerns of potential retribution or retaliation for voicing their concerns. In the absence of adequate reporting systems, there is a risk that incidents may remain unreported, allowing perpetrators to evade punishment. Many organizations may lack adequate protocols for examining sexual harassment accusations, which encompasses failing to conduct unbiased and comprehensive investigations. This phenomenon can give rise to partial or biased studies, yielding inadequate or ineffectual conclusions. Consequently, it can exacerbate the reluctance of victims to report their experiences.

Ethics and Norms: Victim-blaming and shaming are unethical practices that often occur in cases of sexual harassment. This can involve blaming the victim for their attire, behavior, or actions or shaming them for speaking up about their experiences. Such attitudes and norms can discourage victims from coming forward, perpetuate harmful stereotypes, and shift the blame from the perpetrator to the victim.

Cultural and Social Barriers: Cultural and social norms in public universities in Bangladesh may pose challenges to addressing sexual harassment and assault. Victims may face stigmatization, victim-blaming, or fear of retaliation, which may deter them from reporting incidents to sexual complaint committees or seeking support. The new campuses in Bangladesh most of the universities are not appropriate for cross-culture or mix-culture.

Lack of Awareness: Public university campus individuals may lack awareness about the existence and functioning of sexual complaint committees in Bangladesh. This may result in underreporting incidents and limited utilization of the committee's services. Even with a Lack of camping, some students face sexual harassment in the university.

Lack of Sexual Committee Independence or Autonomy: Sexual complaint committees may face challenges in maintaining independence and autonomy from institutional or external influences, which may impact their ability to carry out their responsibilities objectively and impartially. As a result, some sexual harassment criminals didn't give punishment for the lack of independence of the sexual harassment committee. In public universities, many complaints don't take legal action against the criminal.

Lack of Respect for Consent: Consent is a fundamental ethical principle in any interaction involving sexual activity. When there is a lack of respect for consent, such as engaging in sexual activity without explicit and enthusiastic consent, it constitutes sexual harassment. Ethical norms around consent should emphasize respecting personal boundaries and ensuring that all parties involved in any sexual activity have given explicit consent.

Misuse of Power and Authority: Ethical issues arise when individuals in positions of power and authority misuse their influence to engage in or cover up acts of sexual harassment. This can include using their power to intimidate, coerce, or exploit others for their gain. When such unethical behaviors go unchecked, it can contribute to a toxic culture where sexual harassment is perpetuated.

7. Discussion

The results of this study shed light on the patterns, trends, and factors related to Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in Bangladesh's Tertiary Educational Institutions (TEIs) and underscore its consequences on academic performance. Gender-based violence is a pervasive issue affecting women even within higher education, and its prevalence appears to be on the rise (Makhene, 2022). In this discussion, we critically examine the findings to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of gender-based violence in the context of higher education.

One striking revelation from our study is the lack of responsibility among many university sexual harassment complaint committee members. Some committee members appear disengaged or indifferent, leading to a lack of confidence among female students in the committee's effectiveness. This absence of commitment has failed to take legal action against perpetrators due to a lack of knowledge about sexual harassment rules and regulations.

Furthermore, the abuse of political power in the context of sexual harassment emerges as a significant concern. This abuse occurs when individuals in positions of political authority or influence misuse their power to engage in sexual harassment or assault. Such misconduct can have profound and enduring effects on victims, including psychological, emotional, and professional harm. Reporting such incidents may prove challenging, especially when the perpetrators hold substantial political power or influence.

Our study also highlights the absence of clear and comprehensive definitions of sexual harassment within organizations, leading to confusion and misinterpretation of unacceptable behavior. This lack of clarity and the absence of formal reporting procedures deters victims from coming forward and allows incidents to go unreported and unpunished. Inadequate procedures for investigating complaints further exacerbate this issue.

Ethical concerns regarding victim-blaming and shaming are also prominent in the discussion. Such practices discourage victims from reporting their experiences and shift blame from the perpetrator to the victim. Cultural and social norms in public universities in Bangladesh can further exacerbate these issues, as they may stigmatize victims and deter them from seeking support.

Lack of awareness about the existence and functioning of sexual complaint committees is another challenge identified in our study. This lack of awareness results in underreporting of incidents and limits the utilization of committee services. Even within the campus environment, some students continue to face sexual harassment.

Independence and autonomy of sexual complaint committees within institutions are essential for effective functioning. Our findings reveal that these committees may face challenges in maintaining independence, impacting their ability to carry out their responsibilities impartially. As a result, some perpetrators of sexual harassment go unpunished, particularly in public universities.

Respect for consent is an ethical principle fundamental to any sexual interaction, and our study emphasizes its importance. Lack of respect for consent, such as engaging in sexual activity without an explicit and enthusiastic agreement, constitutes sexual harassment. Ethical norms must emphasize respecting personal boundaries and ensuring that all parties involved in sexual activity provide explicit consent.

Lastly, the misuse of power and authority in cases of sexual harassment raises ethical concerns. When individuals in positions of power exploit their influence to intimidate, coerce, or cover up acts of sexual harassment, it perpetuates a toxic culture that allows such misconduct to persist unchecked.

8. Recommendations

Combating GBV is a difficult task that will necessitate a diversified response in the shape of a national action plan with a committed budget (Rana, 2016). Awareness of the variables contributing to gender-based violence

and developing ways to combat this scourge will help reduce gender-based violence at higher education institutions (Makhene, 2022).

Institutional Accountability: Public universities must provide a secure and inclusive environment for their students, faculty, and staff. The absence of a sexual complaint committee or its ineffective operation may indicate a lack of institutional commitment to addressing sexual misconduct and protecting community members' rights.

Need for Action: You can consider bringing up the matter with the proper university representatives, such as the administration, human resources division, or office of student affairs. Additionally, you might seek assistance from organizations or law firms focusing on sexual assault or harassment. Change can also be affected by working with other students, faculty, and staff to spread awareness and promote the creation or improvement of a sexual complaint committee.

Importance of Sexual Complaint Committees: To handle problems with sexual harassment, assault, discrimination, and misconduct on college campuses, sexual complaint committees are essential. They offer a way for staff, academics, and students to report these instances and seek redress.

Mental Support: Giving victims a secure, judgment-free place to express their feelings can be beneficial. Empathetic listening, which involves actively listening without interrupting or passing judgment, can help victims feel heard and validated and be a crucial emotional release.

Increase Awareness: Students, teachers, and incoming new students should be aware of the sexual organization committee's existence. The campus's culture and standards will only be adequately upheld with public awareness. Therefore, the sexual committee members occasionally take the initiative to promote campus and sexual harassment awareness.

Involve extra activities: Students at public universities should engage in social activities and other pursuits to lessen sexual harassment. Different organizations may be involved in raising students' awareness of sexual harassment.

Support Financial Crisis: Public University most pupils come from middle- or lower-class families. To help with the financial crisis, they want to create an online business or offer tuition.

9. Conclusion

Universities serve as public arenas where gender inequalities persist and perpetuate, taking shape via various forms of inequality, epistemological marginalization, sexual misconduct, and psychological harm. In the context of Mexico, the issue of gender-based violence (GBV) has gained prominence within several societal spheres due to the active engagement of women inside institutional frameworks. These women have effectively brought to light the prevailing culture of impunity and the absence of comprehensive legislation to address, penalize, and ultimately eliminate this widespread issue. This study sought to achieve its primary objectives by investigating the intricate landscape of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) within Tertiary Educational Institutions (TEIs) in Bangladesh. By exploring patterns, trends, and influencing factors, it became evident that GBV is a multifaceted issue deeply intertwined with social, cultural, political, financial, technological, and power-related dynamics. Examining existing online harassment and governance patterns revealed the prevalence of cyberbullying, inadequate organizational rules and procedures, and limitations in the activity of complaint committees.

This study also shed light on the profound consequences of GBV on academic performance and mental health, affecting academic results, extracurricular activities, and overall mental well-being. A critical revelation was the compromised autonomy of complaint committees and the disregard for consent, indicative of the systemic challenges impeding effective responses to GBV. To address these challenges, the study's recommendations

underscore the urgency of enhancing institutional accountability, engaging representatives, establishing robust complaint committees, fostering widespread awareness, providing essential mental support, actively involving students, and offering necessary financial aid. Emphasizing the need for swift and decisive action, these measures are pivotal in catalyzing cultural transformation, ensuring accountability, and empowering victims. By implementing these recommendations, TEIs can forge secure and inclusive educational environments that stand resilient against the scourge of gender-based violence. Through collaborative efforts, sustained commitment, and a comprehensive approach, the academic community can pave the way toward a more equitable and just future, free from the shadows of GBV.

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