

A study of Women Harassment in public transports in Bangladesh

Tahmina Akter dipu & Nasratul Ferdous

Abstract

Bangladesh is densely a populated country. About 16 crore peoples are lived here. In our country besides men women are also worked here. Many women are working outside the homes to support their families and using the local transport to reach destinations. But it is a matter of great regret that women's are in our country is not safe. They can't move anywhere freely. They face several problems & uncomfortable situation which can we called harassment. This harassment can also be sexual. Sexual harassment against women on public transport is one form of gender-based violence .It is estimated 35% of women globally have experience sexual violence, with many more reporting sexual harassment. In the rise of urban living, how does this affect gender equality in today's world? The study, which covered 2,500 women between the ages of 15-35 from every district, found that 90 percent of women and girls have suffered some form of sexual harassment while on public buses and trains. Of those, only four percent sought help from the police.



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Introduction

A recent study called "Freedom to Move: Women's experience of urban public transport in Bangladesh" conducted by ActionAid Bangladesh revealed that 84% of all women commuters surveyed said they were subjected to verbal and physical sexual harassment. It proves that about 3.5% women are harassed in everyday. As a result, women-especially younger women and girls- often experience harassment in the form of verbal physical innuendos, groping, leering or even direct physical assaults inside public transport and connected spaces. Why all these things happened??? Women are always stayed in fear whenever they go out. They can't go safely. They feel uncomfortable & lack of safety. It not only makes their daily business insecure and uncomfortable but also jeopardizes and often limits their mobility. It reduces their ability to participate in educational and professional activities and in public life. These acts of harassment if ignored, can cause long and lasting effects for both victim (physical and psychological effects on the well being of women and girls) and heightened in sensitivity to violence against women. It defines aggressive acts against women as "violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately, it includes acts that inflict physical, mental or sexual harm or suffering, threats of such acts, whether occurring in public or in private life". But moving safely is one kind of basic rights of women.

2.Objectives of the Problem

The objective of this study is to the rapid assessment of harassment in public transports. To behind this study the main purpose is to know about what kind of injustices are happening in our public transports with women. Women who work out is they are safe to join their work? This matter is undertaken to provide an in depth understanding of the need to address sexual harassment issues of public transport services that are designed within the context of building safer cities and ensuring inclusive growth.

Specifically, it has the following objectives

- ◆ Quantify the prevalence of harassment experienced by school working and older women.
- ◆ Identify the types of harassment, the reactions and effect.
- ◆ Look at the perceived factors that motivate or prevent it's occurrence.
- ◆ Examine public attitudes and perceptions towards sexual harassment.
- ◆ Specify the recommended actions to prevent and address sexual harassment in public transport and public spaces.

3.Methodology

This research is utilized Qualitative method including structured case study to collect data. In this chapter methodology and design of the study including determination of study the victims, measurement of the variables, data collection, data analysis have been explain to gain an insight about the whole methodological procedure of this research work. Because this topic is very sensual. So, it Cannot be studied openly. It have to collect by communicating with the victims and then it will be analysed which data were collected. To investigate this matter it has been chosen the case study method. For conducting case study structure questionnaire consisting of 12 questions was developed. The study area represents at Maijdee in Noakhali. To investigate this matter it have been found seven women from Maijdee. Respondents were interviewed at their residence, at their education and their workplace. The data gathering instrument is a structured questionnaire consisting of open ended questions in-line with the objectives of the study. Prior to the designing of questionnaire has been conducted and

designed for this purpose, were looked at. The questions was then designed to collect the following information.

3.4 Questions Info

- General characteristics of commuters.
- Travel characteristics like purpose of trip, frequency of trip, travel time.
- Types of harassment, its intensity, the reactions and perceived factors that motivate its occurrence.
- Respondents opinion about addressing public transport service needs and measures to prevent harassment in public transport and connected spaces.

4. Analysis

The sample consists of 7 respondents. Occupation -wise the respondents were two housewives, one college going student and rests are working women. Some of them are stay here with their family and some are separate from their family. They are stay in mess or hostels.

4.1 Demographic Profile of the Respondents

4.1.1 Personal Info

TABLE 1:

No	Name	Age	Religion	Marital Status	Occupation
2.	Jibon Ara Begum	46	Islam	Married	Housewife
3.	Nasratul Ferdous	20	Islam	Unmarried	Student
4.	Farida Yasmin	40	Islam	Married	Teacher
5.	Roksana Akter	24	Islam	Unmarried	Banker
6.	Sima Karmakar	27	Hindu	Unmarried	Teacher
7.	Jannatul Ferdous	30	Islam	Unmarried	Lecturer

4.1.2 Family Income

The sample respondents appear to be from middle class with 62 percent in the income range of Rs.30,000 to Rs.1,00,000 per month. However, only about the homemakers and working women are in the income group. Rest the student's families 84 percent are earning more than Rs.30,000 per month. Two income brackets Rs.10000 to 20000 and Rs. 40000 to 50000 dominate between the women, the patterns indicates that the homemakers are in the middle class bracket. About Half the working women are in the income bracket of Rs.20000 to 30000 per month it can be classified as a lower middle class.

5. Harassment in public transport

5.1 Experiences of Harassment

Chart 1 shows frequency of incidence in buses, minibuses, CNG and auto rickshaws.

Chart 1

Respondents	Experiences of Harassment
Housewives	Most of the time when go out for shopping or market they have been faced.
Student	During travel in rickshaws or auto rickshaws
Working women	The highest incidence is reported by working women. Because of their working out, harassment are faced in buses, minibuses and other transport.

5.2 Types of Harassment

Some types of harassment reported by all three categories of female commuters. Two major types of harassment accounting for respondents, each are 1. staring/leering and 2. deliberate contact/groping.

Rests of the harassment are below :

3.sexual comments/remarks

4.Obscene gestures

5.Being followed /stalking

6.Making animal or kissing noises/whistling

7.Blocking the Respondents opinions in types of harassment which they have faced

Box 1

★The college going student said men and boys on motorbikes follow rickshaws, if we are sitting on a seat facing backwards, they pass 'obscene or crude 'remarks as they pass-by; some even touch us.

★One of the working women said men and boys in cars and on motorbikes stop at bus stop sand invite us to come with them.

★Another working women Sima said one boy threw a chit at me which had his phone number

★Farida who is teacher said one man come and sat beside me in the women's compartment. when I asked him to get up he replied that I was an educated woman and can sit with men," so why not with me". He got up when other women rebuked asked him to go behind, but he kept smiling at me.

5.2 Reaction when felt harassed

The findings show that females react incidences of harassment occurring buses/mini-buses or CNG. The proportion of those who react sometimes is about students and working women and slightly lower in case of housewives. Comparatively, students react less on such incidences like staring.

Box 2

Respondent's observations stating types of retaliation

Res-1: I complained to the driver about harassment by a male passenger and the ordered him out of the bus.

Res-2: One girl got on to the bus and told me that a car was following her. I asked the driver to stop for a while and got off and rebuked the car driver.

Res-3: A man tried to touch me; I began to shouting and the other passengers beat him up.

Res-4: Once a conductor tried to touch me and the passengers beat him up.

Res-5: A man tried to touch me and I punched him with my hairpin.

Res-6: A man tried to touch me and I punched him with my pen.

Res-7: A man tried to touch my breast and I slapped him.

6.Factors That Motivate Harassment

Women's attitude towards perceived factors that motivate harassment in public transport is also explored. The responses are categorized in terms of self-blame, male nature, physical factors and policy factors. It is interesting to find that respondents largely attribute male nature and privileging as a major reason for harassment within this, lack of education and sexual frustration are significant components. Some respondents also blamed women

themselves respondents also blamed themselves in provoking such incidences by inappropriate dressing.

Box 3

Respondent's observations indicating acts that promote harassment

- ★TV plays show harassment scenes and plant ideas in vulnerable and cunning minds.
- ★Some buses display 'obscene' posters, jokes, cartoons, pictures, or advertisements and play 'unethical loud music /songs', which encourages bad behavior.
- ★It is not only uneducated men who harass us; educated men are too as bad.
- ★Men who are unemployed spend time at bus stops and harass women for fun.
- ★If women dress improperly, they invite harassment
- ★women's dress is not the cause, even burqa clad women have to face harassment.

7. Measures suggested by Respondents to Prevent Harassment in Public Transport

Respondents were asked to suggest measures they feel can help in preventing harassment and in providing women friendly facilities in public transport were allowed more than one suggestion.

The measures are in below :

1. Separation ladies bus
2. Increase size of females section in bus and strict separation of the two sections
3. Police provide help to female victims
4. Spread awareness regarding female harassment
5. Implement law properly
6. Increase number of buses
7. Seat by seat commute only
8. Buses should have adequate light at night
9. Driver should stop bus at bus-stop while women are getting -off
10. Operate only big buses
11. School curriculum should include material on respecting women.
12. Media should raise awareness about respecting women and avoid obnoxious behavior.

8. Analysis of Data

According to this investigations, it is clear that most of the women have already been faced this kind of situation. Women who working in many sectors they have to stay outside most of the time. Sometimes they back their home late at night. But they are not safe, they feel uncomfortable most of the time. Because they faced some kinds of harassment in roads and also in transports. While the local transport system facilitates the people, especially women, it has many drawbacks that need serious attention. Travelling becomes a painful experience for them because of stares from both the drivers and the passengers. Women feel unsafe while travelling by public transport. Drivers display uncivilized behavior towards women passengers which is extremely annoying. Loud vulgar music is also played throughout the journey, which is very disturbing for women passengers. Women use front seats next to the driver, as these are assigned to them. It is our duty to respect the women passengers, as they are also like our mothers, sisters, and daughters. We must raise our voice to stop this uncivilised activity. As such situations amount to women pressing charges of sexual harassment against such drivers, women must register complaints whenever they come across such problem.

The anti-harassment act is meant to provide support to working women, and their problems can be solved on registering a complaint. Experts commented that safe public transportation system is a necessary prerequisite for women to be able to exercise their right to freedom of movement and their right to enjoying and using services without the threat of sexual violence or harassment. When a girl is harassed she is being morally policed by patriarchal values that aim to restrict and control her human rights based on her gender and then when she tries to report such harassment, society blames the victim with a bias that stems from internalised patriarchal values. Everything from her attire to her character is blamed to explain the violence that is being inflicted upon her. Men need to stop seeing women as sexual objects and start seeing them as human beings. The victims of this investigation it is clear when this kind of incidents happen they faced a hesitating situation. Like, sometimes they have nature of grievances or sometimes revealing helplessness and tolerance.

Chart 2

Nature of Grievances	Revealing helplessness & tolerance
1.They don't complain, as men in our society don't tolerate women who take a stand and become abusive, if they do so.	1. Because of overloading touching happens 'involuntarily'; they just have to tolerate.
2.The women don't complain for fear that the harasser will follow their home & cause more harm.	2.In CNG space between seats is less, which causes knees to touch if the men are sitting on besides, then they have no choice but to tolerate.
3.Some are dropped out their education because boys were stalking them.	3.Sometimes girls complained to the driver about harassing, but the driver behave opposite and tease it.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The literature and findings from this research suggest that threat to girls' and women's safety while travelling restrains their mobility. This often results in decision results in decisions of not sending girl child to school or not letting women to seek employment. An important prerequisite is to adopt a rights-based approach to gendered development. This approach demands a commitment to improvement in the well-being of communities and individuals within communities, on the basis of women's active, unfettered and meaningful participation in development as well as in the fair distribution. The analysis identified the following set of recommendations for government action to help prevent occurrences of harassment. A major factor that leads to harassment in buses/minibuses is overcrowding. Finding from survey indicate that women's first priority is to introduce separate buses for them. Their second priority is to introduce bigger buses with larger women's section and strict partitioning between women's and men's section. Sensitizing police officials about handling gender related cases has also been suggested. Generally, women hesitate in going to police stations due to women unfriendly attitude of police officials and its overall environment. The process of registering a case is also very cumbersome and the police don't take such cases seriously. Women police stations need to be expanded and strengthened by bringing in motivated and result oriented lady police officers and training of the existing staff. These women police stations need to be in the mainstream, rather than a side-lined activity. Also, mobile vans of women police should remain on rounds on regular basis. Another important recommendation is to create awareness among the general public about respecting women and refraining from obnoxious behavior. None of the drivers, conductors or passengers are aware of the code of

conduct in public transport and basic human rights of passengers. In this connection, media can contribute in raising awareness against harassment acts as well as providing information about laws on such harassment and punishment to perpetrators. Although a long-term process, inclusion of material in school curriculum on respecting women will pave the way in this regard. The above suggestions appear to be plausible by themselves. However, the problem seems to be much larger and much more deep-rooted. The fewer written complaints explain the hesitancy of the women to complain since action was taken in only a few cases and it could also be because the women felt it would create a bad working atmosphere. They have never used public transport and are oblivious of the problems faced by the have-nots. Our study gives an insight into the depth of the workplace harassment among women, which is on the rise because of the increase in number of working women. Our sincere acknowledgements are due to all the participants of the study. Harassment is a serious problem that must be addressed by the government in order to ensure a safe working environment for women. In the absence of systematic change and change in the interests of the policy making class, the measures being suggested to address harassment of women in public, transport remain mere palliative. Harassment may take the form of words, gestures or actions which tend to annoy, alarm, abuse, demean, intimidate, belittle, humiliate or embarrass another or which create an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment.

(1) Women face discrimination from childhood, especially in communities where there is a preference for the male child.

(2) Harassment in the work place is becoming increasingly important in all sectors of the economy, largely due to growing numbers of negative consequences. This has led to the formulation of anti-harassment policies by several non-government organizations.

(3) This study was carried out to find out harassment among women at workplace, types and reasons for harassment generally faced by working women.

(4)The study participants comprised women working in educational institutions, banks, hospitals, and shops as these are the establishments where considerable number of women work.

(5)The questionnaire assessed the respondents' socio-demographic profile, their perception of harassment, their personal experience and their awareness regarding anti-harassment policies.

Limitations of the Study

Harassment is any improper and unwelcome conduct that might reasonably be expected or be perceived to cause offence or humiliation to another person. To analysis this topic the main purpose is to know what are happening around us. To collect and analysis this topic it was not an easy path. We have to face many problems and there are some other limitations to this investigation. Like-Time, Money, Person(all are not agree to say anything).Time is another factor of this research's limitations. To collect many respondent's experience it took many time. Because our time was short we can't research this topic is survey way. And we think that it is a touchy issue the case study method is better option. Person to person vary limitations. All are not agree to confess anything.

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