



Harassment of Women in University and Public Transport

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Abstract

The present study was conducted to find out the existing problems of university and public transport from the perspective of females in Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, KP, Pakistan. The study examines the issue of harassment in university and public transport the female faces every day. The study uses the quantitative method and random sampling, which belongs to probability sampling—the data collected from the study area through the questionnaire. The study shows that students and employees were 18 to 31 years old in which majority of the female's faces problems in public transport and few were faced problems in university transport. The study shows that the female passenger was unwilling to use public transport. They found it the most unattractive mode of transportation. Moreover, the study shows that most females reported facing the misbehaviour of drivers and co-passengers. The female passengers do not want to use public transport to avoid unpleasant situations. They also feel unsafe from drivers because they make rude remarks behind them, harass them, and miss their behaviour. Most of them want to act against the harassers, but they are afraid, and those who are harassed do not complain to the higher authorities because they think it can affect their self-respect and reputation. Further studies need to be conducted to get more information about public and university transport harassment.

Keywords: Harassment, Sexual harassment, sexual assault, harassment in public transport

Introduction

Harassment is one of the most severe issues in the world nowadays. Every woman in the world experience harassment daily or once and twice a week. In public transport, harassment is the most common issue that female faces every day. Harassment can have short-term or long-term effects on their lives. Studies show that approximately 70% of Pakistani women use public transport in Pakistan. They face harassment every day of which 75% of women reported the offender was another anonymous passenger, 20% said that the offender was a conductor, and 5% of women reported that the offender was a driver (Asian Development Bank, 2014). As demonstrated here women feel unsafe during public transport due to the fear of harassment. Therefore, harassment in public transport is labeled as a global issue. Particularly two-thirds of Pakistani women experienced such incidents, most of which are not reported. Studies show that harassment is a common experience for women in public transport. Most of the young female passengers said that they had been harassed all the time in public transport in which some females faced sexual harassment, which caused both social and psychological effects on their lives. The harassment of women in public and university transport assesses them in conditions of their short and long-term consequences.

Consequently, it is not essential to address the advantages of successful policies regarding their safety and protection. However, it is the right of women to feel safe when entering public space without threats and fear of harassment. The potential and confidence of women create empowerment opportunities for others. According to the study of Rachel Wilder (2018) that harassment in public transportation affects the lives of working women and female students. It also stated that harassment is mainly prevalent as in the case of South Asia, it might control women who depend on public transport for traveling; if these effects take off, then it will hold the essential consequences for policymakers whose purpose to improve social equality by increasing women contribution (Wilder,2018). Nearly all the information that is gathered focuses on harassment in public transport.

Harassment of women is particularly prevalent and has negatively impacted women's workplace efficiency, emotionality, and relations with family (Celik & Celik, 2007; Pryor, 1995). When others ignore these actions of harassment, it will cause long and lasting effects for women (psychological and physical effects on the wellbeing of females and the perpetrator (increased insensitivity to violent behaviour against women). Therefore, some studies show that there are many behaviours that women experience in public places, including public transport in which they usually are harassed in public spaces/public transport includes verbal and non-verbal behaviours ranging from rude remarks, touching, groping, catcalls, whistling, assaults, and obstructing female commuters' way (Asian Development Bank, 2014).

In all cases, the women claim that these actions should be gathered with more severe persecution, such as sexual assault and rape, that significantly impact women's lives. Most of the studies are based on working women and university students, which shows that women learn to navigate when they are delivered to the transport organizations of their city and imitates the mechanisms women use to create safer experiences for themselves (Korn, 2018). Mostly *harassment* in public transport is defined as "an action or comment, motivated by gender or sexual orientation or gender expression between strangers in public transport that is unwelcome, disrespectful, threatening and harassing." Though harassment includes a wide variety of behaviours, signs, and remarks, it also has some characteristics: like the harassers are male, and the target of harassment are women, the harassers are unaware of their targets; the encounter is always face to face; and forum in public places, transport such as taxis, buses, bus stations or any other site where public generally access (Asian Development Bank, 2014).

Considering the above facts, it is essential to conduct studies on harassment in public and university transport. Most previous studies are conducted in other countries, and few studies are conducted in South Asia, especially in Pakistan. Few studies have examined harassment in Pakistan, and therefore there is a gap in the existing literature. This study investigates harassment in public and university transport in Pakistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mardan. Mardan city is located in the southwest of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The reason for harassment is twofold. First, there has been a substantial increase in the issue of harassment in both public and university transport in recent years, as reported by many agencies, although no official data are available. Second, there is a lack of research on the particular topic; therefore, there is a gap in the current literature.

Literature Review

The review of existing literature from around the world in which Pakistan points to a high rate of harassment in public transport. In this regard, the feminist theory fitted well on the issue of harassment. The feminist theory presents the right of human beings. There are four types of feminism that includes liberal feminism, radical feminism, Marxist or socialist feminism, and cultural feminism. Among these, the liberal feminist's theory fitted well with this research which is presented by Mary Astell (1666-1731), Mary Wollstonecraft (1759–99), John Stuart Mill (1806–73), Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815–1902), Harriet Taylor (1807–58) and Virginia Woolf (1882–1941). According to liberal feminists, freedom is the fundamental right of human beings. "Liberal feminists share this point of view and insist on the freedom of women" Liberals disagree on what freedom is articulated, and it can take many forms more than one. "Liberal feminism conceives freedom as

personal autonomy (Living a life of own choice and political autonomy (being a co-author of the conditions in which one lives") (Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy-2007). Women have the freedom to her life to live as their own. Still, it depends on certain conditions that are not sufficient to exercise personal autonomy, or the social formation does not respect the individual sovereignty of women and other elements of the flourishing of women.

Harassment and Sexual Harassment are common issues in public transport. Sexual harassment and assaults on public transport are on the international agenda. The behaviours involved can range from relatively mild to very severe. These include, but are not limited to, lewd comments, boos, sarcastic looks, innuendo, sexual invitations, threats, viewing pornography, staring, being followed, or photographed, masturbation, rubbing, unwanted sexual contact, and rape. (Guardian Project, 2013) The researchers describe accessibility to transportation as a necessary precondition for accessibility to the workplace, and those who use public transportation due to the unavailability of any other option, such as "captive cyclists" or "prisoners in transit (Dear & Wolch, 1989)." Research shows that women comprise a higher percentage of captive riders than men. For these women, access to public transport is essential since it allows them access to work, educational and leisure opportunities, and the public sphere in general (Smith, 2008). Overcrowding and isolation are also vital characteristics that can promote harassment. For example, crowded and crowded rush hour conditions can make it easier to rub against a woman in an underground car.

According to the study of Aredener (1981) the separation between public and private spaces ensures that women remain within the domestic sphere of the home and family. They Maintain their dependence on men, with their helplessness and preserve the system of inequality (Bandyopadhyay & Khan, 2003: Raju 2011; Kelkar 1992). In women's lives, public harassment abuses are frequent reminders of the ever-present importance of their gender. With no history of public places, gender norms must be constantly established and implemented. Public harassment reinforces the fundamental division between the sexes and prescribes the conduct or mere presence while punishing others (Gardner, 1995).

Studies that show the effects of harassment at work found that women who were harassed reported a higher frequency of absenteeism at work than those who were not harassed (Fitzgerald et al., 1997). However, women are shorter in height and have less physical strength than men. Women are more vulnerable to attack harassment than men. Women's increased concern for personal safety has necessary implications for bus and train design, transport interchanges, waiting areas, and the manning of individuals. Women often see the problem of harassment in public spaces as evoking significant issues in their relationships with men, as men often see them as an evocation of their

own perceived gender dilemmas. Hence, few women have practiced gender-specific of unknown men with anything like the same sense of rights, freedom, and impartiality that men show and the assault that adolescents or young women sometimes commit in groups (Gardner, 1995). The literature suggests that the consequences of the risk or experience of bullying in public transport can profoundly affect women's lives everywhere. Since transportation is a critical factor in mobility, bullying restricts their mobility. It, therefore, limits their access not only to educational and job opportunities but also to socialization and recreation activities (Asian Development Bank, 2014).

Besides causing harm and suffering, it is suggested that VAW (violence against women) also fulfills several other functions, such as "maintaining the system, asserting power, exploitation and victimization" (Gupta, 2006). subordination of women by men (Poonacha,1991; Mathur, 2004) and the violation of women's freedom by the assumption of control by men over their bodies, altering conceptions of individuality and sovereignty (Menon, 2000).

The Ngo's activism and awareness-raising encouraged women to speak out, thus discovering previously hidden crimes of VAW (violence against women). However, it is argued that more actions are needed if more profound social transformation is achieved (Wanasundera,2000). Arguably, while they do not have an immediate effect on the likelihood of women being harassed on public transport, as is possible with gender segregation, these strategies seek to ensure that society takes responsibility for addressing and preventing harassment. While this includes women, the responsibility ultimately does not lie with them alone (Harrison, 2012).

It is tricky to establish the extent to which harassment occurs in public transport and connected spaces or estimate its incidence. For example, studies indicate that such harassment is widespread; it has been noted that these studies seek answers only from those who have experienced sexual harassment and therefore found inflated incidence rates. At the same time, it is also argued that bullying rates may be underestimated because many women are conditioned to accept bullying as "normal" and not report it. However, whatever opinion that adheres to, there is no doubt that bullying is prevalent in public transportation and connected spaces (Asian Development Bank, 2014).

A study on the psychological impact of sexual harassment on white and Asian women indicated that a higher frequency of sexual harassment and post-traumatic stress symptoms "preached" more depression and general psychological distress among women (Ho et al., 2012), as well as women, feel angry, offended, annoyed, anxious, weak, humiliated, nervous, and objectified (Dhillon & Bakaya, 2014). They may experience intense fear, sleep disturbances, and nightmares (Battered Women's Support Services, 2014). In

short, "the direct physical and emotional impact on victims cannot be underestimated" (NYPD Transit Bureau, n.d., p3).

Perhaps the most fundamental behavioural effect of experiencing unwanted sexual behaviours is the impact on mobility (Loukaitou-Sideris, 2014). Such experiences, or the fear of them, can make women feel that they must adopt self-protection strategies, such as altering the clothes they wear (Fahmy et al., 2014) or positioning themselves in specific ways, such as leaning against walls so that no one is behind them (Rossi, 2014). Some women also reported putting luggage between themselves and other passengers, adopting "deadpan" expressions, avoiding eye contact, traveling with a male partner (Dhillon & Bakaya, 2014), and traveling in groups (Tulloch, 2000).

The literature suggests that the risk or experience of harassment on public transportation can profoundly affect women's lives everywhere. Since transportation is a critical factor in mobility, harassment restricts their mobility and limits their access to educational and job opportunities and socialization and recreation activities.

Those women who men in public transport harass, are academic, and work-life can also affect their behaviour; they can stop going to work and university. Researchers say that women who experience sexual harassment indicate more depression and psychological distress. However, sexual harassment on public transportation appears to be a growing problem. Finally, by focusing on women as victims of bullying, this review did not cover the motivating factors behind bullying or understanding of the bullying experience of men. It would be helpful to do more research in these fields to provide more perspectives for a better understanding of public transport harassment and women's travel behaviour.

Research Methods

In this study, the researcher used the quantitative research method. Quantitative research collects and analyses numerical data. It can be used to find patterns and means, make predictions, causal test relationships, and generalize results to larger populations (Neuman, 2006).

Sampling and Recruitment Strategies

The researcher used random sampling to develop the research sample under discussion in this study. Random sampling belongs to the category of probability sampling, in which representatives from a larger population are chosen using a method based on the theory of probability. As the name suggests, random selection is an entirely unexpected method of selecting the sample. This sampling method is as easy as assigning numbers to the individuals (model) and then randomly choosing from those numbers through

an automated process. Finally, the numbers that were chosen were the members included in the sample (Neuman, 2006). According to this method, respondents were randomly selected based on their understanding. The researcher randomly selected 50 respondents in Abdul Wali Khan University- Main Campus in this study.

Tool of data collection

A *tool* is a source from which data is collected from a respondent in the field. Quantitative data have been collected by conducting a primary survey. The researcher collected data through a questionnaire survey from the study area.

Limitations

There are several limitations linked with this study. The first limitation is that this study was built on the quantitative method, which focuses on the broader picture. At the same time, qualitative research would allow more in-depth information about harassment in university and public transport. Second, the limitation of the study is that the sample size is minimal. Therefore, further studies should focus on a larger sample size.

Results

A total of 50 respondents completed the questionnaire. The data suggests that most of the respondents were young belongs to the age group of 18-28, and few belonged to the age group of 28-31, thus demonstrating that 90 percent of respondents belonged to urban areas (e.g., Cities) and 10 percent belongs to rural areas (e.g., villages). All the respondents were from Mardan, KP, Pakistan, and share the same culture and religious background. Out of 50 respondents, 92 percent were students, 8 percent were employees, 68 percent were bachelor's students, 24 percent were master's students, and 8 percent were employees at AWKUM.

In this paper, the result showed that most women use public transport to travel to workplaces, travel for educational purposes, or for personal goals, of which 64 percent of women use university transport, and 36 percent of respondents use public transport. When the respondents were asked about public or university transport safety, 82 percent reported that university transport is safe for females. The other 18 percent stated that university transport is not secure, whereas 98 percent of respondents said that local/public transport is not safe for females. Approximately 44 percent of females reported that they experience harassment (catcalls, stares, sexist remarks, touching, and sexual jokes.) from both drivers and co-male passengers. 24 percent of respondents were only harassed by drivers in both public and university transport, and 32 percent of respondents were sexually

harassed by drivers and co-male passengers when traveling in public transport.

Results show that 32 percent of respondents report that they face sexual harassment in public transport, 44 percent never experienced sexual harassment, and the rest of 24 percent were unsure about sexual harassment in public transport. When were the respondents asked about their attendance that is harassment affect their attendance at the workplace or university? Results show that 70 percent of respondents answered that harassment affects their attendance in university or workplace, while 30 percent reported that harassment does not affect their attendance. The respondents say that harassment is the leading cause of their low self-esteem. 68 percent were reported that harassment is the leading cause of their low self-esteem, while 32 percent of respondents stated that only harassment is not the leading cause of their low self-esteem.

To analyse respondents' mental health when they asked about the harassment that university/public transport mentally stress them? Out of 50 respondents, 92 percent reported that harassment mentally stressed them, and 8 percent reported they were unsure. They also noted that harassment cause emotional instability in females. Results show that 58 percent of respondents said that harassment affects their relationships with their colleagues and class fellows. The rest of the respondents or 42 percent reported that harassment did not affect their relationships with their colleagues and class fellows, as well as they, reported that the harasser intended to threaten the woman and also mentally hurt her. A total of 50 respondents reported that bus drivers, strangers, and co-male passengers in university buses made rude remarks and said negative things behind them.

To analyse the experience of harassment, 83 percent of respondents reported that because of experienced harassment, people treat them differently. 17 percent of respondents say they were never treated differently. The respondents were asked if they ever felt shy talking about harassment at home. Results show that 28 percent of respondents reported feeling nervous, and 72 percent said they never feel shy talking about harassment at home. Results show that most women do not complain to higher authorities because of their self-respect, so they face harassment daily. Result also shows that 50 out of 50 respondents report that the university needs to be aware of females harassment. They also noted that the university needs to arrange proper seminars and ordinations on harassment and teach them self-defence techniques to prevent harassment. They also stated that the females need more support and should act against the harassment.

Conclusion

Harassment in public and university transport is an ongoing, persistent issue. However, harassment in transport is highly prevalent, particularly in developing countries like Pakistan. This study attempts to provide some insight by analysing transportation survey data from women's point of view in AWKUM. In Mardan young women were more likely to experience harassment than older women. Harassment is a significant issue in our society faced by women. Most women far away from their community's face harassment in public transport.

In this study, women develop emotional consequences that can mentally harm them. Because of harassment, most women face psychological issues (depression, stress, etc.). Harassment can also affect their traveling patterns. To avoid harassment, they either travel by other vehicles or walk to their homes. If their homes are far away from the workplace or educational institutions, they can face these problems, which affect their performance and mentally stress them.

To minimize the issue of harassment and for safe traveling, the government of Japan and Pakistan, and with the help of UN Women and UNOPS, start a project to improve transportation available for women in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. The project was started on 14th April, 2019. Under the scheme, they started 14 pink buses for women passengers that run through proper routes in Mardan city, the most populated area in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. The buses provide a safe mode of transport for women having female conductors and the exact cost of a private vehicle such as rickshaws and minivans. This project gives women peace of mind, which hardly continued its services for a few months, and failed to provide a safe mode of transport.

Furthermore, no other safe mode of transport is available for females. Unfortunately, harassment in public transport and university transport is still a problem. Maybe it is the consequence of a system error in which the need for women is often ignored.

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