

## Sexual Harassment among College Students using Public Transportation in Kathmandu Metropolitan City

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### ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** Sexual harassment phenomena is undesirable sexual advances, needs for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical behavior of sexual nature. It is one of the most endemic types of violence toward women and girls today. The objective of this study was to find out the prevalence of harassment among female students using public transport.

**Methods:** This was a descriptive cross sectional study, conducted among 422 female students of 3 school/colleges of Kathmandu Metropolitan City. Simple random sampling technique was used for the study area whereas for the sample population, convenience sampling was done. Data were collected by using semi structured, self-administered questionnaires based on objectives. Collected data were entered and coded in SPSS 16.0 and analyzed through descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage data, mean and standard deviation.

**Results:** Prevalence of sexual harassment was found to be 92% among teenage girls using public transportation in Kathmandu Valley among which physical form of harassment (59%) were mostly faced by the teenage girls. In respondents opinion, lack of laws and rules (39%) and people ignoring it (30%) were the major causes of sexual harassment in the city.

**Conclusions:** The finding of this study shows that the rate of sexual harassment in public transportation is high. Strict Law and enforcement to the perpetrators should be done in order to reduce sexual harassment. Attitude and behavior should be changed towards women.

**Keywords:** *College student; Harassment; Nepal; Prevalence; Sexual violence.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Sexual violence is an undesirable behavior of a sexual nature, where it does not involving physical contact is called sexual harassment. Simply, defined as violation of someone’s dignity, as it conducts an intimidating, hostile, humiliating and offensive environment.<sup>1</sup>

Public transportation makes it easy to access all parts of a city for everyone, resulting in crowds usually giving chances to the molesters with ample opportunity to sexually harass women passengers. One in three women and one in six men feel unsafe on public transport. Although, most of the cases go unreported.<sup>2</sup> Public sexual harassment, the serious issue of women and girls dignity and right, -damage mental, personal and social wellbeing.<sup>3</sup> Limited vehicles with increasing population in busy city like Kathmandu, has left no option rather than to travel in overcrowded transports resulting harrassments.<sup>4</sup>

In this context, the main aim of this study was to find out the prevalence and different forms of harassment that female students suffer while using public transport in Kathmandu Metropolitan City.

## METHODS

A descriptive cross- sectional study was conducted among 426 college students of Kathmandu, after ethical consideration from Nepal Health Research Council (Ref no. 2377). Data collection was done from February to March 2018. Formal permission was taken from the principal and written consent was taken from respondents.

### Sample Size Calculation:

The sample size was calculated by using prevalence formula,

$$n = Z^2pq/d^2$$

Where, p= prevalence= 50%= 0.5,

q= complement of prevalence= 1-0.5=0.5,

Z= 1.96 at 95% Confidence Interval,

d= maximum allowable error (5%) = 0.05

Non-response rate:10%,

Calculated the sample size for the data collection was 422. However, 426 students were recruited in our study.

For sample population, convenience sampling was done where students from class 11 and 12 were selected from 3 schools/colleges (Bhanubhakta school, Om health campus, Reliance college). Self-

introduction and purpose of visit was explained to the participants.

Data were collected using a semi structured, self-administered questionnaire based on objectives. It included socio-demographic characteristics, forms and causes of sexual harassment, sexual harassment in public transportation, respondent using of public transportation and respondents experiences after of sexual harassment .

The collected data was checked, reviewed and organized for accuracy. The data were entered and coded in SPSS 16.0 (Statistical Package for Social Science). The data was analyzed through descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage data, mean and standard deviation.

## RESULTS

Almost 391 respondents (92%) had experienced sexual harassment during their life time (Figure 1) where more than half of the respondents had faced physical form of sexual harassment (59%). Scratching or pushing 158% (135), Starring or bad looking 51% (20) and speaking bad words 66% (80) were three most different forms of harassment faced by respondents (Table 1).

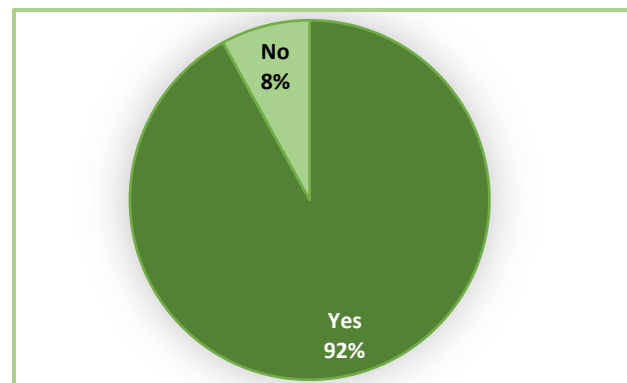


Figure 1. Life time sexual harassment (n = 426)

Table 1. Forms and causes of sexual harassment (n = 391)

Characteristics	n (%)
<b>Forms of sexual harassment (n = 391)</b>	
Physical	231(59.0)
Sexual	39(10.0)

Verbal	121(31.0)
<b>Physical form of sexual harassment (n= 231)*</b>	
Touching different body parts	58(25.0)
Scratching or pushing	135(58.0)
Poking	38(17.0)
<b>Sexual form of harassment (n= 39)</b>	
Starring or bad looking	20(51.0)
Touching unknowingly	10(26.0)
Commenting on body parts, clothes or face and body part	9(23.0)
<b>Verbal form of sexual harassment (n=121)*</b>	
Whistling	38(31.0)
Creating kissing sounds	3(3.0)
Speaking bad words	80(66.0)

\*Indicate multiple response question

Table no 2 describes socio-demographic features of the respondent where most participants were of age group 15-16 years . The higher number of respondents were Hindu. Almost all respondents were staying with their family. Maximum respondents were hindu 87%(370) staying with their family 86%(366) members rather than staying alone or in a hostel.

**Table 2. Socio-demographic information of respondents (n=426)**

Characteristics	n (%)
<b>Age</b>	
15-16	369(87.0)
17-18	57(13.0)
<b>Religion</b>	
Hindu	370(87.0)
Buddhist	44(10.0)
Christian	8(2.0)
Muslim	4(1.0)
<b>Respondents' Staying</b>	
With Family	366(86.0)
Alone	28(7.0)
At hostel	32(7.0)

Table 3 reveals that majority (99%) of the respondents were using public transportation and the perpetrator doing sexual harassment inside public transportation were mostly bus passengers (76%) and followed by conductors (18%). Beside public transportation, respondents had experienced

sexual harassment in public places like road and bus station. About one third of the respondent mentioned about the sexual harassment happening in the city due to lack of laws and rules in the country (39%) and people ignorance on such matter (30%).

**Table 3. Use of Public Transportation (n=426)**

Characteristics	n (%)
<b>Respondent using of public transportation (n=426)</b>	
Yes	424(99.0)
No	2(1.0)
<b>Perpetrator doing sexual harassment inside public transportation (n=391)</b>	
Bus passenger	294(76.0)
Drivers	25(6.0)
Conductors	72(18.0)
<b>Respondents experience of sexual harassment besides public transportation (n=391)*</b>	
Road	219(56.0)
Bus station	172(44.0)
<b>In respondents opinion causes of sexual harassment in the city (n= 383)*</b>	
Lack of education and awareness	19(5.0)
Male dominant society	100(26.0)
Due to lack of laws and rules in the country	151(39.0)
People ignore on such matters	113(30.0)

\*Indicate multiple response question

Table no. 4 shows that nearly all respondents had experienced effects of sexual harassment (93%) where they had felt effects like feeling bad (45%) and tensed (33%) after the harassment. Majority of the respondents mentioned scolding the person (31%) and ignoring it (33%) as the coping mechanism.

**Table 4. Respondents experiences after of sexual harassment**

Characteristics	n (%)
<b>Respondents experiences on effects of sexual harassment (n= 391)</b>	
Yes	363(93.0)
No	28(7.0)
<b>The different types of effects to respondents due to such incidence (n= 363)</b>	
Felt bad	162(45.0)

Tensed	120(33.0)
Fear	71(20.0)
Sleep disturbance	10(2.0)
<b>Coping mechanism of respondents inside public transportation (n= 383)*</b>	
Telling other people nearby	78(20.0)
Ignore it	128(33.0)
Scolding the person who does it	120(31.0)
Changing route	51(13.0)

\*Indicate multiple response question

## DISCUSSION

A cross-sectional descriptive study aimed to estimate the prevalence of harassment among female college students of Kathmandu district. The study further assessed demographic profile, knowledge on sexual harassment, forms of sexual harassment, effects of it and coping mechanism of respondents inside public transportation. The prevalence of sexual harassment is increasing day by day in public transport. In this study most of the girls had experienced some form sexual harassment during their life time. In Nepal, about 98% of all respondent women had experienced some form of sexual harassment during their life time<sup>5</sup> which is almost same with our study.

The degree of seriousness perceived by women for all measures of sexual harassment was greater than that of men, and the gender difference was supported by statistical significance, a finding consistent with Ekore's 2012 from the Nigeria's study.<sup>6</sup> In another, study in Egypt at Mansoura University the sexual harassment phenomena among female students was done. A total of 1070 female students from various faculties were taken. Results showed that female exposed to sexual harassment in the first semester of academic year either verbal harassment (100%), or physical form harassment (36%). Public transportation was the prominent place (84%).<sup>7</sup> Compared with our study nearly half of the respondent girls' experienced verbal harassment or physical form of harassment and nearly all agreed that public transportation was the prominent place.

As for the limitation, our study explored prevalence of sexual harassment among college students of Kathmandu district, therefore the findings of this study could not be generalized.

## CONCLUSIONS

Almost all respondent experienced sexual harassment during their life time with the higher prevalence of physical form of sexual harassment than sexual and verbal form. As, the prevalence of sexual harassment was seen high as a result of overcrowded vehicles, proper implementation of laws and well managed system should be developed in a busy city like Kathmandu. Peoples' ignorance towards such incidence and patriarchal society shows the vulnerability of women and girls to the sexual assault and abuse. So, this concerned matter needs to be addressed in our legal system of government.

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Not Applicable

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None

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