

# A Study on Sexual Harassment against Women in Public Transport: Dhaka City Badda Area

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** This article tries to find out the sexual harassment against women in the public transport and identify the consequences of sexual harassment against women in public transport from the Badda area of Dhaka city, Bangladesh.

**Methodology:** This is a quantitative type of study; Purposive sampling techniques were done, and data were collected via face-to-face interview with structured questionnaire. Data was calculated by SPSS software.

**Result:** The study found that the harassment against women in the public transport was very high (68%) unfortunately. The scenario has shown that public transports (80%) were mostly crowded that is why women face difficulties to get in and off. In fact, women faced misbehaved (70%) by the driver and conductors and faced harassment (20%) by the co-passengers. Bullying (20%) and body shaming (16%) were common for women in public transports. In these reasons, the consequences also horrible. Women felt helpless (68%), could not get enough support from family. Many of them needed to take mental care (44%). Some of them tried to quit their job due to the harassment in the public transport. None of the victims seek legal assistance (100%) due to fear, social stigma, and social dignity.

**Conclusion:** Women were facing sexual harassment in public transport and it's a serious issue. Lack of proper education on gender sensitivity, intention of perverters, improper implementation of policy, loose law enforcement policy and monitoring, lack of family support, insufficient number of public transports against population number, overcrowded are the reasons for sexual harassment of women in the public transportation. Due to lack of action being taken against the perpetrators, harassment exists in the system. In this study, there were some possible solutions suggested by the respondents who faced harassment in the public transport in Dhaka city from Badda,

**Keywords:** Sexual harassment, gender sensitivity, body shaming, consequences, public transport.

## INTRODUCTION

Bangladesh's capital, Dhaka, has become one of the world's most crowded cities; residents must move about the city for a variety of reasons, including commerce, employment, and education.

Dhaka city ranked as the sixth fastest growing metropolis in the world at the beginning of this year. According to a January estimate by the World Population Review, the present metro area population of Dhaka is 22,478,116 as of 2022, with a density of 23,234 people per square kilometer (Rahman et al. 2010); 13. Over the span of decade, the city's rapid expansion and growing population have resulted in a huge demand for transportation. However, there hasn't been enough investment made in transportation infrastructure, services, and management to meet the rising demand for transportation (Rahman et al. 2008). Therefore, the city's transport and traffic issues have gotten much worse. Congestion, delays, poor traffic control, high accident rates, rising air pollution issues, a public transportation crisis, and the fact that many people are unable to

afford public transportation are all characteristics of the city's transportation environment (Rahman et al., 2007; Rahman et al., 2010). In Dhaka, Bangladesh's capital, public transit seems to be the main mode of transportation used by the largest amount of people for rapid mobility. The Government of Sweden received a proposal from the Government of Bangladesh on October 16, 2003, to continue the cooperation by sponsoring an additional 95 double-decker buses. The exporting company is anticipated to commercially finance the remaining 15% of the buses' purchase price, with the Swedish Government funding the other 85% through grants and soft loans. The Ministry of Communications and the Ministry of Finance (the Economic Relations Division) are the two ministries that handle the double decker. 350 double-decker buses were allotted in the National Plan. As part of the 1999 Bangladesh National Plan, 350 double-decker buses were to be introduced in Dhaka as a first step toward high-capacity public transportation. 50 Volvo buses from Sweden and 205 Ashok Leyland buses from India have been delivered thus far. Volvos are the favored option for the remaining 95 buses in the plan due to their proven high performance and favourable environmental attributes. Efforts to get the private sector to operate big buses are aided by the World Bank and the ADB. Although it is early to evaluate the outcome of this endeavor, Dhaka generally lacks expertise in large bus fleet operation (Olsson et al., 2004). Unfortunately, the gender perspective has not been given enough thought in the design and operation of transportation. Women are therefore frequently harassed by verbal taunts, jokes, hints, shock sexual remarks, and even physical assault or target on public transit and other related locations, particularly young college, university, and working women. The women become insecure and uneasy as a result of this unpleasant harassment, which also limits their movement in numerous ways. The awful circumstances on public transportation also make it more difficult for women to participate in public life, the workforce, and education. Sexual harassment on public transit is a serious issue that should not be ignored. Both the victims and perpetrators may suffer long-term consequences if the authorities do not properly handle the issue to lessen and prevent the ongoing harassment on public transit. The offenders could become less sensitive to harassment against women and believe that getting pleasure anytime they want is really simple. Nevertheless, it may significantly impair the sufferers' physical and mental health (Kabir et al., 2023). Harassment on public transit typically consists of both verbal and nonverbal behaviors, such as offensive remarks, catcalls, touching, groping, tweaking, and even assault. It is assumed that such conduct is not linked to more severe types of harassment, such rape, even though rape in public transit is also steadily increasing in frequency in society, particularly at night when a girl is traveling alone as a passenger. This matter should be resolved quickly since women's freedom of movement is significantly hampered by dangerous public transit. All types of sexual offense cannot be adequately addressed by existing laws. Another contributing reason to violence in Bangladeshi public transportation is the lack of a legal framework and the insufficient execution of the country's inadequate laws (Kabir et al., 2023).

The aim of this research was to determine the challenges women face when harassed on public transportation and the consequences of harassment in the Badda area of Dhaka, Bangladesh.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The review of existing literature from both global and Bangladeshi contexts highlights the widespread occurrence of harassment in public transportation. It also underscores the current legal gaps in Bangladesh and suggests potential solutions to combat sexual offenses. It is evident that sexual harassment, including eve teasing, is an offense that undermines the honor, dignity, and respect of individuals. However, Bangladesh's legal framework in this area remains poorly defined and ineffective. To decrease the prevalence of such offenses, proper enforcement of laws is essential. The legal system concerning sexual offenses in Bangladesh lacks strength and is often unclear and incomplete. Additionally, the frequency of sexual offenses is alarmingly high, with daily reports of at least one rape case, which is the most severe form of sexual violence, in Bangladeshi newspapers (Islam et al., 2019). Sexual harassment can happen in various settings, and victims may encounter it in different life circumstances. Harassment in educational institutions, online platforms (particularly social media), and public transportation is a significant issue in Bangladesh. Studies have shown that around 94% of women who use public transportation in Bangladesh experience some form of sexual harassment. Furthermore, the laws surrounding sexual offenses are fragmented and require immediate

amendments to ensure comprehensive protection (Khan et al., 2022). Public transport plays a critical role in providing access to employment and education, particularly for women, who make up a larger proportion of public transport users compared to men (Wolch et al., 1989). For these women, public transport is essential to accessing work, education, and social opportunities. The impact of sexual harassment can be long-lasting, and in some cases, victims may contemplate leaving their jobs (Fitzgerald et al., 1997). Sexual harassment represents a significant barrier to the mental and psychological well-being of women, with many victims experiencing severe distress and depression (Ho et al., 2012). This negatively affects their ability to freely access and use public spaces, which in turn impacts their social and economic well-being (Fileborn et al., 2013). Determining the full extent of sexual harassment is challenging, as it is difficult to gather information from all women, and rates of harassment may be underreported. Many women may accept harassment as “normal” and refrain from reporting it. Nevertheless, harassment is a persistent issue in public transportation and related spaces. In Nepal, the primary cause of sexual violence in public transport is attributed to the prevailing masculinity among men. Survey results indicated that many drivers viewed harassment as an expression of power and entertainment. Interestingly, some conductors and passengers also intervened to protect women from harassment, asserting their physical strength and perceived superiority. Surprisingly, many women reported feeling physically weak, insecure, and powerless, especially during office hours while using public transport (Paudel et al., 2011). In 2010, the NGO Jagori conducted a survey in Delhi, India, to examine harassment faced by women. The study involved 5,010 participants across various occupational categories in 50 different locations in Delhi, using purposive sampling and intercepting survey techniques in public spaces such as markets, parks, bus stops, and residential areas. The findings revealed that sexual harassment was regarded as the greatest risk to women's safety in Delhi. Women expressed fear of being physically harmed, molested, or even raped in both isolated and crowded spaces, particularly in crowded public transport. In Chennai, a study on harassment faced by women commuters found that 66% of the women were college students, with many of them reporting harassment while commuting. Different countries have implemented measures to address such harassment (Kabir et al., 2023; Mitra et al., 2009). In Bangladesh, women-only buses have been introduced on a pilot basis. However, segregation is not the ideal solution to this issue. Societal attitudes and behaviors need to be addressed and reformed (World Bank et al., 2014).

## JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

In the literature review, there is evidence of huge incidence of harassment in public transport in Bangladesh as well as the world. Our laws in Bangladesh are not well defined in this case. Rather than there is lack of public transport in Dhaka city especially for the Women who are student, different jobholder. There was evidence of sexual violence in the public transport as well as rape. There were many unreported cases of sexual harassment due the women fear to report. It had seemed that there was a lack of social support as well as family support against the harassment in public transport. Women felt unsafe and were afraid of being physically hurt, harassed, molested or even raped in deserted spaces, as well as in crowded spaces, most commonly in crowded public transport. Many women think to quit from the job due the harassment.

So, in this study, it was tried to find out the challenges about harassment for women in the public transport and identify the consequences of harassment against women in public transport from the Badda area of Dhaka city, Bangladesh.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

### General objective:

To demonstrate the challenges and consequence of harassment against women in public transport: Insight from Badda in Dhaka.

### Specific Objectives:

- To find out the challenges about harassment in public transport against

- To draw the consequence of harassment in public transport against

## METHODOLOGY

### Study Design:

The study was conducted from October to December 2024 with the structured questionnaire. The quantitative method was chosen to study with limited resources. With this method, the data analysis was less time consuming, which was relevant, seen to the short timeframe for the study.

### Study area:

The study area was different bus stands, universities in Badda region of Dhaka City which is urban area.

### Study population:

The study participants were healthy, concise women who normally uses public transport in different routes of Dhaka from Badda.

### Sample Size:

Due to the scarcity of time and resources, data was collected from only 200 respondents via in-person interviews. Every respondent was educated, and they were well informed about the questionnaire; they themselves filled it out, or the interviewer filled out the questionnaire on their verbal permission.

### Characteristics of Sample:

The sample size (200 respondents) was diverse representation across various age groups, occupation and religious affiliations.

#### Age (in years):

Below 20	21-25	26-30	Above 30	Total
36	62	78	24	200

#### Occupation:

Students	Private Job holders	Total
148	52	200

#### Religion:

Muslim	Others	Total
189	11	200

### Sample Procedure:

Purposive sampling techniques were followed.

### Data Collection Instrument:

Data on sociodemographic characteristics, challenges about harassment in public transport were collected using structured questionnaires. The questionnaire was prepared in English and then translated into the native language when interviewed. Data was collected through face-to-face interviews with respect to the respondent's confidentiality.

## Analysis of Data:

Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS software to determine the challenges and consequence of harassment against women in public transport. Frequency distributions were obtained to check for data entry errors and to obtain descriptive statistics.

## Limitation of the study:

There were some limitations in this study. Due to short time frame and limited resources, the sample size had been decreased. There was a lack of confidential and quite area to conduct interviews. Although there were limitations, the study had been conducted successfully.

## Ethical Considerations:

To guarantee the rights, dignity, and safety of the 200 participants, this study complies with ethical standards. The following ethical standards were noted:

- **Informed Consent:** Every respondent received comprehensive information about the study's goals, methods, possible risks, and advantages. Informed consent was acquired prior to data collection, and participation was entirely voluntary.
- **Confidentiality and Anonymity:** No personal identifiable information was gathered or shared, protecting the respondents' identity. To eliminate the possibility of identity, the data was anonymous.
- **Privacy Protection:** Only approved researchers had access to the participant responses, which were handled with the utmost confidentiality and archived safely.
- **Right to Withdraw:** Participants were told they could leave the research at any time without facing any repercussions.
- **Non-Maleficence:** The research was planned to reduce participant risk for injury, discomfort, or suffering. The research did not include any intrusive or delicate questions.
- **Honesty and Integrity:** No information was fabricated, falsified, or misrepresented during the data gathering and analysis process.

By following these ethical rules, the study preserves its credibility and integrity while guaranteeing the preservation of respondents' rights.

## Analysis

### Sociodemographic Characteristics:

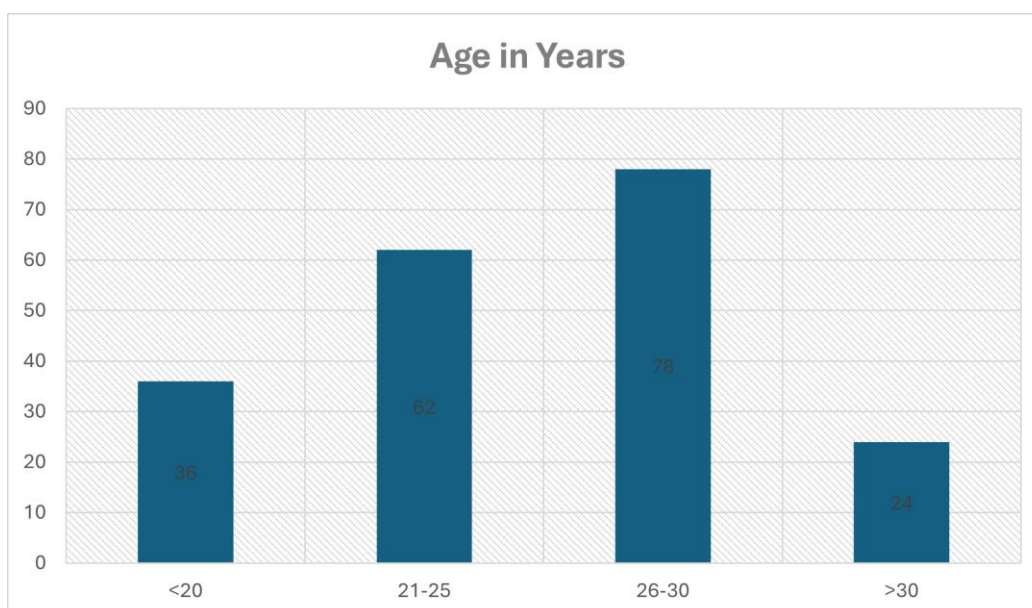


Chart 1: Frequency of Age of the Respondents in year



There was a total of 200 participants. Among them, 36 (18%) was in 15-20 years age group, 62 (31%) was in 21-25 years age group, 78 (39%) was in 26-30 years group and 24(12%) was in more than 30 years age group.

Table 1: frequency of marital status of the respondents

Marital status	Frequency	Percent
Unmarried	176	88.0
Married	24	12.0
Total	200	100.0

Among the respondents, 176(88%) were unmarried and 24(12%) were married.

Table 2: Frequency of Religion of the respondents

Religion	Frequency	Percent
Muslim	189	94.5
Others	11	5.5
Total	200	100

Among the respondents, most of them 189 (94.5%) were Muslims and 11(5.5%) belonged in different religion.

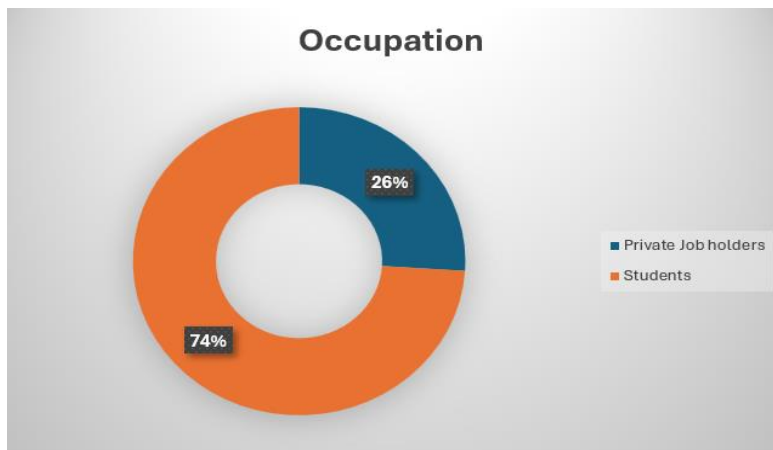


Chart 2: Occupation of the respondents

Among all the participants, 52(26%) swere private jobholders and 148(74%) were students on their occupation.

### Challenges and consequences

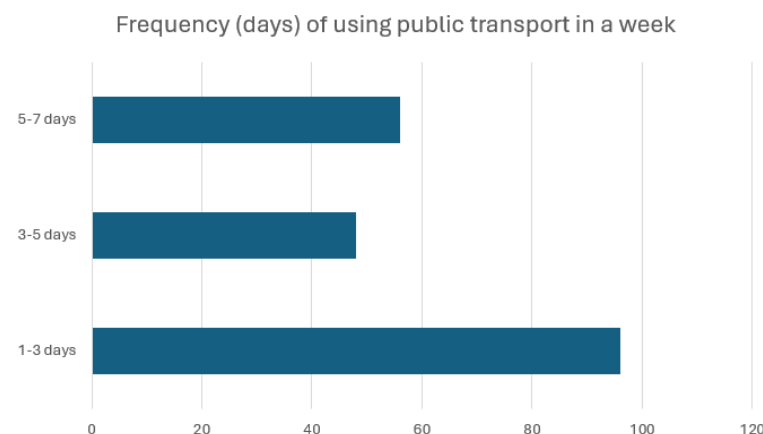


Chart 3: Frequency (days) of using public transport in a week

Among all the participants, 96(48%) respondents use public transport 1-3 days, 48(24%) respondents use public transport 3-5 days, and 56(28%) respondents use public transport 5-7 days in a week.

Table 3: Frequency of the most used type of public transport

Type of vehicle	Frequency	Percent
Bus	184	92.0
Other	16	8.0
Total	200	100.0

Among the respondents, 184(92%) mostly use Bus and 16(8%) mostly use other type of vehicle for their regular transportation.

Table 4: Frequency of faced overcrowded and no seat available in last 3 months

Overcrowded and no seat	Frequency	Percent
Yes	170	85.0
No	30	15.0
Total	200	100.0

Among the participants, 170(85%) faced overcrowded and no seat available in last 3 months and 30(15%) did not face overcrowded and no seat available in last 3 months.

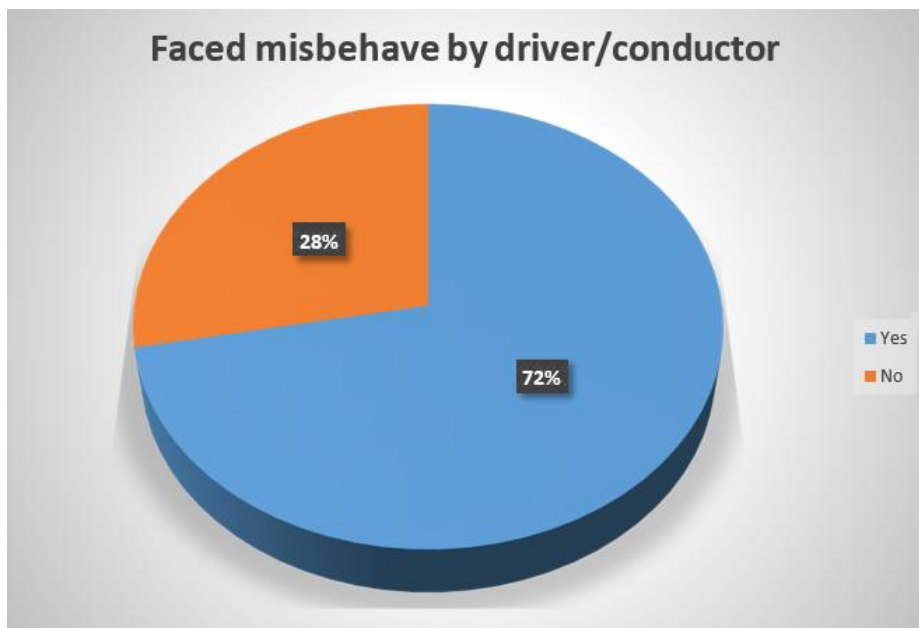


Chart 4: Frequency of facing msisbehavior by driver/conductor in last 3 months

There were 144(72%) participants who faced misbehave by driver/conductor in last 3 months and 56(28%) participants did not face.

Table 5: Frequency of faced physical harassment by co-passenger in last 3 months

Physical harassment by co-passenger	Frequency	Percent
Yes	40	20.0
No	160	80.0
Total	200	100.0

There were 40(20%) participants who faced physical harassment by co-passengers in last 3 months and 160(80%) participants did not face.

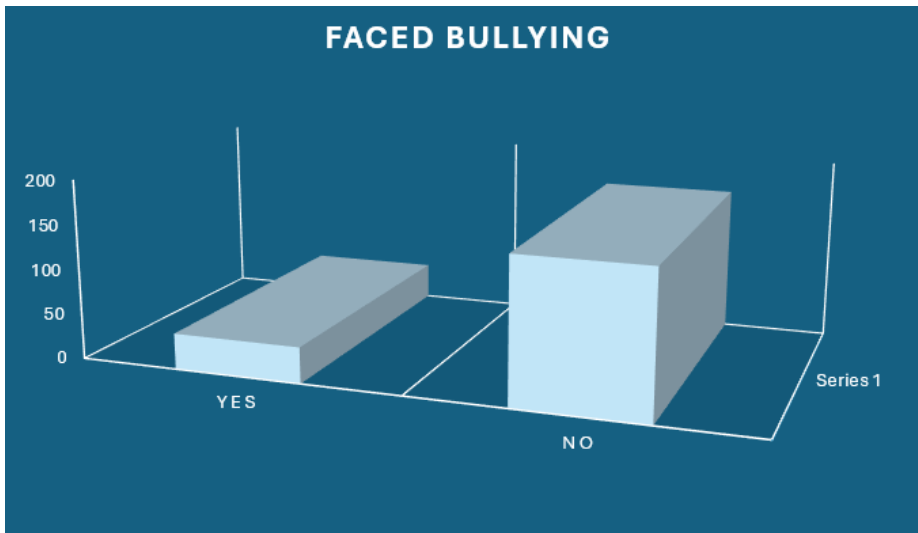


Chart 5: Frequency of bullying faced in last 3 months

There were 40 (20%) participants who faced bullying in the last 3 months and 160(80%) participants did not face bullying.

Table 6: Frequency of faced body shaming in the 3 months

Faced body shaming	Frequency	Percent
Yes	32	16.0
No	168	84.0
Total	200	100.0

There were 32(16%) participants who faced body shaming in the last 3 months and 168(84%) participants did not face.

### Faced difficulties to get in and off the vehicle

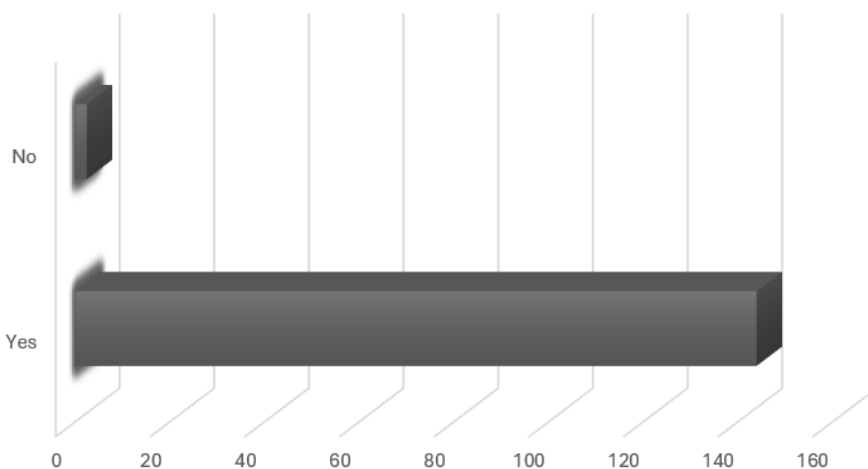


Chart 6: Frequency of faced difficulties to get in and off the vehicle in the last 3 months

There were 144(72%) participants who faced difficulties getting in and off the vehicle in last 3 months and 56(28%) participants did not face.



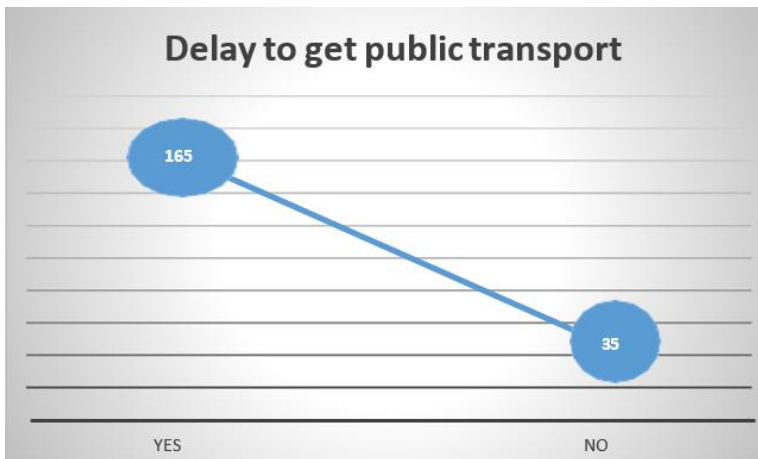


Chart 7: frequency of faced delayed to getting public transport in last 3 months

There were 165(82.5%) participants who faced delayed to get public transport in last 3 months and 35(17.5%) participants did not face.

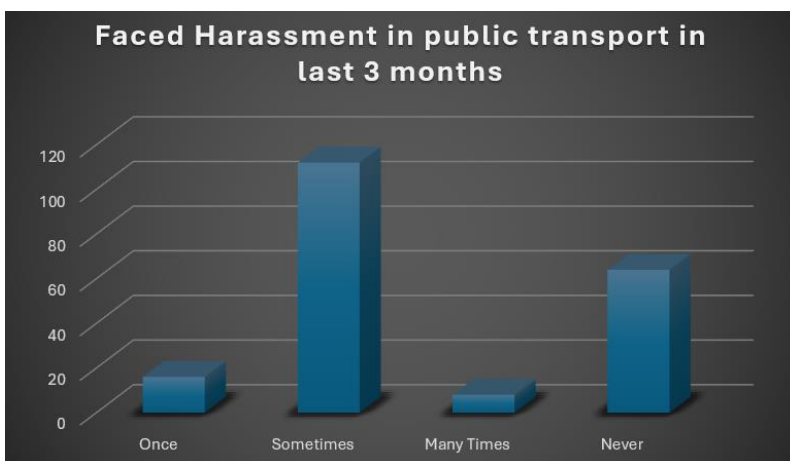


Chart 8: Frequency of harassment faced in public transport in the last 3 months

Among all the participants, 16(8%) faced one time, 112(56%) faced sometimes but more than one, 8(4%) faced harassment in public transport many times in last 3 months and 64(32%) never faced any harassment in public transport in the last 3 months.

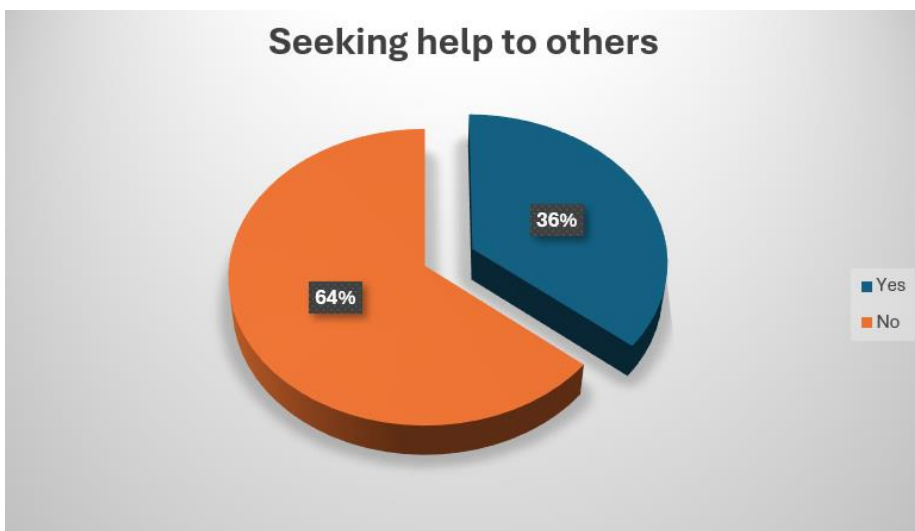


Chart 9: Frequency of asking for help while faced harassment in public transport

There were 72(36%) participants who asked for help while harassment in public transport and 128(64%) participants did not.

Table 7: Frequency of feeling helpless while faced harassment

Feel helpless	Frequency	Percent
Yes	136	68.0
No	64	32.0
Total	200	100.0

There were 136(68%) participants who felt helpless while harassment and 64(32%) participants did not.

### FEELING INCREASE MENTAL STRESS

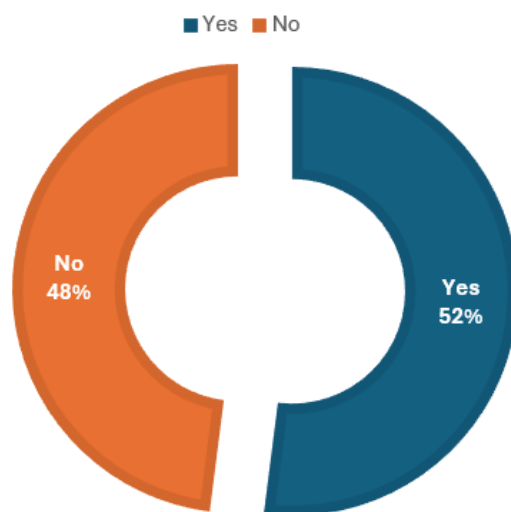


Chart 10: Frequency of increasing mental stress due to harassment

Among all the participants, 104(52%) participants felt an increase of mental stress and 96(48%) participants did not.

Table 8: Frequency of hampering daily work due to harassment

Hamper daily work	Frequency	Percent
Yes	88	44.0
No	112	56.0
Total	200	100.0

Among all the participants, 88(44%) participants felt hamper in their daily work due to harassment in the public transport and 112(56%) participants did not.

Table 9: Frequency of sharing with family about harassment

Informing incident with family	Frequency	Percent
Yes	80	40.0
No	120	60.0
Total	200	100.0

Among all the participants, 80(40%) participants shared the harassment incident with their family and 120(60%) participants did not.

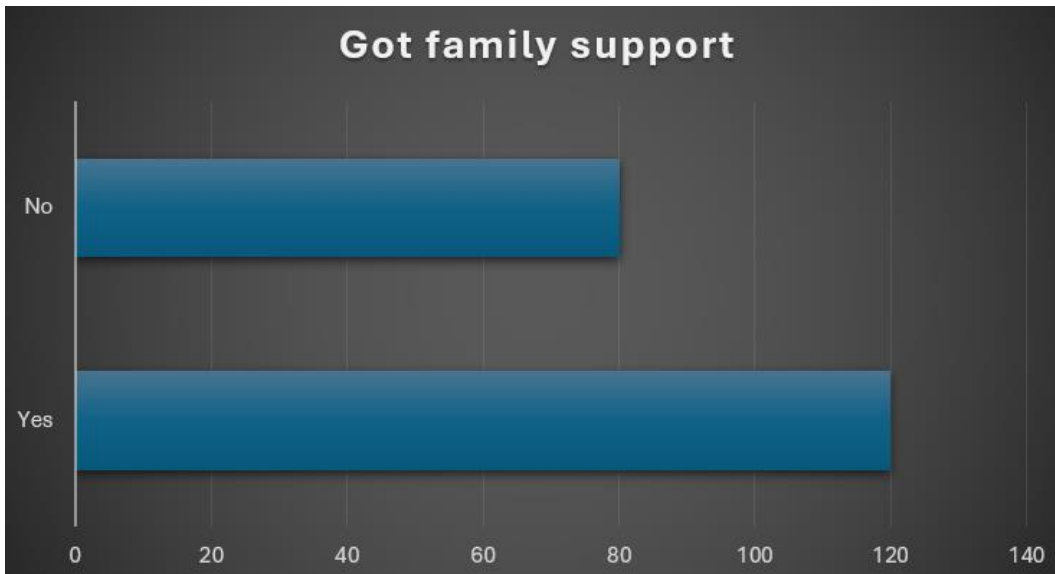


Chart 11: Frequency of getting family support after harassment

There were 120(60%) participants who got their family support after the incident and 80(40%) participants did not.

Table 10: Frequency of seeking medical care after harassment

Medical care needed	Frequency	Percent
No	200	100.0

All the participants, 200(100%) have no need to seek medical care after harassment.

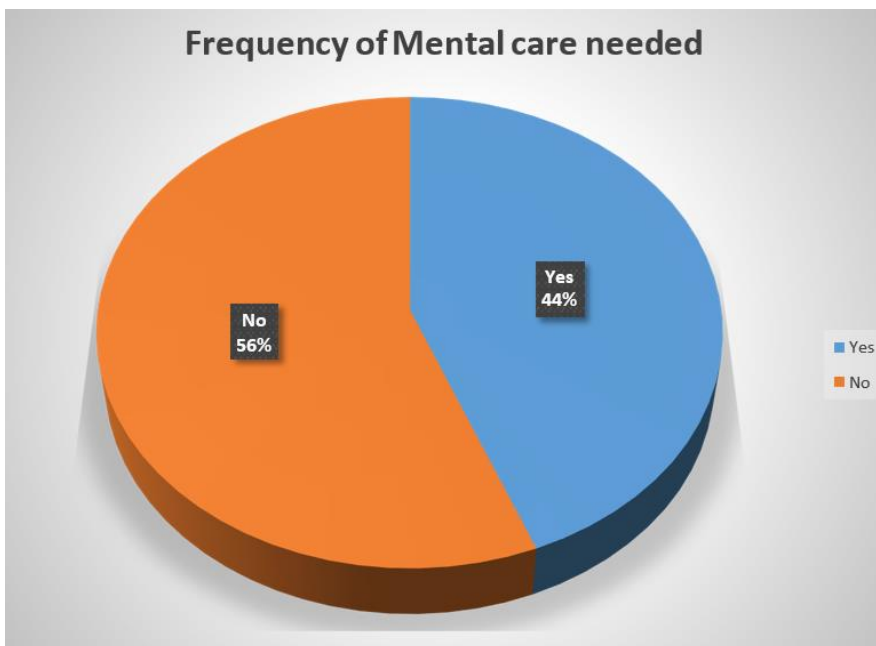


Chart 12: Frequency of seeking mental care after harassment

There were 88(44%) participants who needed to seek mental care due the harassment and 112(56%) participants were not needed among all the participants.

Table 11: Frequency of seeking legal assistance after harassment

Legal assistance	Frequency	Percent
No	200	100.0

Among all the participants, nobody (100%) seeks legal assistance.

## DISCUSSION

In this study, there was 200 participants and all of them was women. They choose to use public transport like bus for their daily movement because of the availability and cost-effective nature of it. Among them 94.5% were Muslim in religion and rest 4.5% were in different religion, educational qualification was HSC or higher. Among them, 88% were unmarried and 12% were married; 88% was student and 12% was private jobholder in their occupation. In this study, 92% of participants used bus as public transport for their daily movement and 8% of participants used others public transport. In our study, it was found that 80% of the participants faced overcrowded and no seat available on the public transport; 72% of the participants faced the misbehave by the staffs of the public transport.

From another study, it leaved on stupefied that only 1.17% of working women and 2.75% of students never experienced any kind of harassment during travelling in public transports. Study also found that 34.51% working lady, housewife and students felt harassed while using public transports like bus, mini bus, leguna and other vehicles. It may be because of the fact that the frequency of using public transport for communication is lower for housewives, they experienced less harassment than the students and working lady. The younger age of students and working lady may be another reason behind their high frequency of experiencing sexual harassment in public transport. Moreover, sexual harassment becomes a regular horrific experience for students and women in every working day. Type of harassment like staring, passing bad comments, comments with sexual innuendos are experienced by 49% women. Indecent gesture and comments with sexual whisper is experienced by 10.59% and 16.86% women respectively. Other types of harassment like men blocking the road to make women uncomfortable and making kissing noises is a very common scenario seen by women. (Kabir et. al. 2023).

In this study, 20% of the participants faced harassment by the co-passengers; 20% of the participants faced bullying in public transport; 16% of the participants faced body shaming in public transport. In this study, 72% of the participants faced difficulties getting in and off the public transport and delayed getting the public transport. In this study, it was found that 68% of the participants faced any type of harassment and felt helpless in the public transport in last three months; 52% participants felt that their mental stress had been increased due to this harassment in the public transport and 44% of them needed to seek mental health care; 60% of the participants could not share the harassment incident with their family and could not get support from the family. It is very important to note that none of the participants did seek any legal assistance from the law enforcement.

In another study from the sample size of 200 tertiary female students it is found that sexual harassment victimization appears to be most common in buses and the higher frequency of the use of public bus, the more the incident of sexual harassment. Furthermore, female students are mostly targeted amongst all women. (Tripathi et. al. 2017)

From the evidence of a relevant study in Kathmandu valley using multiple logistic regression model it is found that 78% of the female students experience sexual harassment while using public transport. Female students who live far away from their campus faces more harassment than who travel sometimes and also the highest frequency of harassment was found in the age gap of 20-23 years. This sort of harassment in young age may led to the increase in drop out of students due to the lack of security and it may causes mental illness also. It is found that harassment is more common in peak hours like morning and evening which is 41.39% and 40.46% respectively.

This study found that even though women in Dhaka city are choosing public transport as it offers budget friendly mobility but the kind of harassment they are facing daily is not addressed properly and even if it is addressed there is a discrepancy between official and self-reported figures. Due to this situation women feel insecure in their own city and this may lead to drop out of female students as well as cause mental illness to women because of adverse experience in daily movement. More attention from the government is not enough to address the problem and solve it, rather stakeholders should be more sincere about the alarming issue.

## RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION:

In Bangladesh, especially in Dhaka city, it seems that the harassment of women in public transport is much larger issue. Lack of proper education on gender sensitivity, improper implementation of policy, loose law enforcement policy and monitoring, lack of family support, insufficient number of public transports against population number, overcrowded are the reasons for harassment of women in the public transport. Due to lack of acting against the perpetrators, harassment exists in the system.

So, to prevent and decrease the rate of harassment in public transport, these may be recommended- As in this study, there is a major finding that overcrowding is an important factor for harassment in public transport.

So, there should be introduce separate buses for the Women, increasing the number of allocating seats for the women in the public transport, strictly partitioning the transport to separate the men and women section; Sensitization of police officials to handle the harassment cases smoothly and increasing the monitoring system on the public transport. Creating women friendly environment in the law enforcement department so that women feel encouraged to report there. Conducting awareness program about code of conduct in the public transport and basic human rights for the drivers, transport staffs and passengers may be recommended.

In this instance, the media can play a significant role in raising awareness of harassment actions and informing people about the laws that prohibit them, and the penalties met out to perpetrators.

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## APPENDIX

### Appendix-A (Questionnaires):

SL	Questions	Answer (By giving tick mark beside/ write as per need)			
1	Name Of the Respondent				
2	Age of the respondent(years)				
3	Marital status	a. Unmarried	b. Married	c. Widow	d. Divorced
4	Education of the respondent	a. Illiterate	b. Under SSC	c. SSC	d. HSC or Higher
5	Religion	a. Muslim	b. Hindu	c. Christian	d. Others
6	Occupation	a. Private job	b. Govt. job	d. Student	d. Housewife
7	How many days do you use public Transport in a week?	a. 1-3	b. 3-5	c. 5-7	
8	What type of public transport you use most?	a. Bus	b. Motor Cycle	c. CNG/Rickshaw.	d. Other
9	Have you faced overcrowded and no seat available in last 3 months?	a. Yes	b. No		
10	Have you faced misbehaving by Driver/conductor in the last 3 months?	a. Yes	b. No		
11	Have you faced physical harassment like bad touch by co-passengers in the last 3 months?	a. Yes	b. No		
12	Have you faced any bullying in last 3 months?	a. Yes	b. No		
13	Have you faced body shaming in the last 3 months?	a. Yes	b. No		
14	Have you faced difficulties getting in and off the vehicle?	a. Yes	b. No		



15	Have you faced delayed to get public transport?	a. Yes	b. No		
16	How much time have you faced harassment in public transport last 3 months?	a. Once	b. Sometimes	c. Many times.	d. Never
17	Do you ask for help while harassment?	a. Yes	b. No		
18	Do you feel helpless while harassment?	a. Yes	b. No		
19	Does it increase your mental stress?	a. Yes	b. No		
20	Does it hamper your daily task?	a. Yes	b. No		
21	Do you share the incident with family?	a. Yes	b. No		
22	Do your family support you in this case?	a. Yes	b. No		
23	Did you need to seek medical care due to harassment in public transport?	a. Yes	b. No		
24	Do you need to seek Mental care due to harassment in public transport?	a. Yes	b. No		
25	Did you seek legal assistance due to the harassment in public transport?	a. Yes	b. No		
26	Which Routes do you use regularly?				
27	Contact No:				