Perceptions of Students and Teaching Faculty about Sexual Harassment at University Level in Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of the research was to examine the "Perceptions of Students and Teaching Faculty about Sexual Harassment at University Level in Pakistan". The primary aim of the study was to study the "Perceptions of Students and Teaching Faculty about Sexual Harassment at University Level in Pakistan". Sexual harassment is an issue both profound and pernicious present in many spheres of life, including education. The overall approach of this study was interpretive paradigm utilized in this research. The research used a phenomenology nature of the research. In the present research, the researcher employed the mix method (Quan-Qual sequential) approach. In this research, data were collected by utilizing survey (questionnaire) and interview strategy. The population consisted of university teachers and public and private sector university students of Lahore city, which is a provincial capital of Pakistan. A total of ten universities of Lahore city (5 public and 5 private) were selected randomly for data collection. A total of 1000 surveys (questionnaires) were distributed and completed by 200 university female teachers and 800 university female students. The sampling technique was both random and purposive (snowball) sampling technique. The majority of the university instructors and pupils are well aware of the definitions of harassment. The primary findings were that the majority of the instructors and pupils viewed sexual harassment cases to be seen in the Lahore city universities. The results of the research could be useful for future policy decisions regarding the awareness of laws.

Key words: Sexual Harassment, Perceptions, Higher Educational Institutes

INTRODUCTION

Across the world, sexual harassment (SH) among women has been recognized as a critical social and public health issue (Tarzia et al., 2024). Sexual harassment has been a problem that is becoming more widely acknowledged in every community, whether it occurs at work, on the street, in the educational institutions, or during leisure time (Madani & Kazmi, 2023; Shaikh et al., 2015). In Pakistan, the issue of sexual harassment of women in higher education institutions. The phrase sexual harassment is essential to understand the unwanted sexual occurrences, experiences, but various studies have shown that even then it is not clearly understood at university level (Anyadike-Danes et al., 2024).

Sexual harassment has been described as "inappropriate and unacceptable sexual behavior or other gender-based behaviors which disrupt a person's ability to   be   in a supportive,   respectful,   and safe environment and destroy their dignity." More precisely: "any type of unwanted sexual behavior that is not wanted and is viewed by the recipient, as offensive, unmanageable or injurious to their well-being." This is verbal, nonverbal and   physical behaviors that   the   recipient perceives as unwanted and distressing (Dogars et al., 2021. Sexual harassment is one of three types of subgroups: gender harassment, sexual coercion and unwanted sexual attention (Schneider et al., 2011). Gender harassment comprises verbal and non-verbal degrading or negative behaviors towards individuals based on gender. Unwanted sexual attention refers to making sexual advances or propositions that the recipient finds offensive. Sexual coercion means pressuring someone to have sex through offers of rewards (such as better grades and promotion) or threats (for example, a threat of job loss and school failure). It was found in research that women report sexual harassment at higher rates compared to men in academic contexts (Cortina et al., 2021; McLaughlin, 2015).

The manner in which people view harassment incidents could be influenced by several variables like victim's gender,   the personality of   the harasser,   and   the context.   Females would rather resort to avoidance as a coping mechanism overlooking the behavior, challenging the perpetrator, or reporting them to the authorities. The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women defines sexual harassment as any unwelcome sexual advance, sexual favor, or any other physical or verbal conduct of sexual nature which, in itself or through its cumulative effect, would constitute or create an environment that is offensive or humiliating. Sexual harassment can disrupt or interfere with the educational setting, create intimidating or hostile environments, or even require individuals to encounter sexual behavior as a condition to participate. This definition aligns with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's (EEOC) interpretations from 1980.

Studies (Ramsaroop & Parumasur, 2007) have found various demographic variables that shape how people experience and perceive sexual harassment. Gender, in particular, plays a significant role in these perceptions. Researchers exploring gender differences have either focused on the gender of the target or the perspective of third-party evaluators. Whereas men tend to have a more dominating sexual desire, which ocassionally result in harassment, the attraction of men towards women as well as women towards men can happen in a work or school environment without necessary being sexual (Kamal, 1998; Manuel, 2017).

Research also established the belief about sexual harassment based on gender of the victim, credibility of the complainant, and punishment of the perpetrator. Women are more likely to not only disavow myths about sexual harassment (Kamal & Tariq, 1997; McDonald, 2012; Mishra et al., 2024).

This research tries to bridge the gap through exploring sexual harassment and allied problems in the context of Pakistani universities academic culture. It also identifies the various contexts of Sexual harassment- defining sexual harassment as any behavior that causes physical or emotional distress an unwelcome sexual overture from male to female. Within educational settings, this harassment is employed as a means for dominating and controlling women. The current study intends to contextualize its findings for the international academic discourse on sexual harassment. In reality, it can help educational institutions design good initiatives and policy to curtail and respond to sexual harassment at schools.

Statement of the Problem
This research was formulated with the goal of determining the "Perceptions of Students and Teaching Faculty about Sexual Harassment at University Level in Pakistan". It may generates a widespread awareness level for students and faculty members, unwelcome atmosphere in classrooms and universities where 'sexual harassment' misconduct occurs, which may significantly interfere with learning.

Objectives of the Current Study
The objectives of the research were:
• To investigate the perceptions of students about sexual harassment at the university level.
• To investigate the perceptions of teachers about sexual harassment at the university level

Research Questions of the Current Study
•What are the student perceptions about sexual harassment at the university level?
•What are the teacher perceptions about sexual harassment at the university level?

Significance of the Study
Since the major widespread issue of sexual harassment affects the educational community worldwide, while the sensitivity of this multifaceted problem has been increasing day by day, there is still a lot of confusion about what causes behind it. Apart from the right ways of tackling the issue. All academic organizations must recognize all of their resources and offer preparation and guidelines against 'sexual harassment' to help eliminate these unhealthy behaviors. Faculty and students of universities must be alerted to the problem's occurrence related to harassment and features of current response strategies. The study outcomes may be helpful for the policymakers in developing, strengthening and ensuring protection of women's rights within universities of Pakistan. Furthermore, through this research, sufficient and proper information for the training of preventing harassment in Pakistan might be developed to prevent and intervene programs to deal with the grievances of female victims while also being helpful in protecting them from future assaults.

Limitations of the Study
The study covered only public and private universities of Lahore city.

• Only female university teachers and students was the part of this research.
• Interviews were not recorded, because owing to the sensitive nature of the 'sexual harassment' university teachers and students were not agreed to record the interviews. So researcher take the notes of their responses during the interview.

LITERATURE REVIEW

What does Sexual Harassment mean?
Figure 1

Source: https://drewlewis.law/workplace-sexual-harassment-law

Harassment is commonly understood as any consistent behaviour that subjects someone to torment or distress. Harassment is specifically an unwanted or offensive behaviour, remarks or advances, typically from someone in a level of power (Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary and Thesaurus). Harassment can occur in many forms such as a casual comment or an unsolicited volley of undesirable overtures, repeated or unconsented contact, threats, repugnant language, or physical activity, which disrupts someone psychologically or emotionally. Harassment is closely associated with the improper sexual behaviours toward women, where both were wronged, but it also exists in other forms such as racial harassment, appearance, intellect, and politically based harassment (Almasri et al., 2024; Rezvan et al., 2020; Saguy, 2003). Harassment is unlawful and unethical, that causes victims substantial emotional and psychological harm (Gulzar, 2020). The Canadian Human Rights Commission had already defined harassment as a form of discrimination or unseemly conduct that is likely to offend or embarrass the person. (Stern, 2022).

Sexual harassment is any non-consensual sexually-based behavior that is deemed offensive by the recipient and that the recipient is unable to deal with to the point of endangering their well-being, whether physical, non-verbal, or verbal, which the victim cannot endure. Social scientists categorize three basic subtypes of sexual harassment as under: gender harassment, unwanted sexual attention, and sexual coercion (Schneider et al., 2011).

Some of the instances of sexual harassment include inappropriate touch, solicitation of sexual favors, at schools, universities or workplaces. Sexual harassment can also include sexual images, physical activity, texts, phone calls, and intrusive questions or remarks about an individual's body (Anwer et al., 2024; Atkinson, 2020; Sadruddin, 2013).

Sexual harassment is very hard to define because of differences in culture. What may be considered harassment in one culture might be perceived as normal behaviour in another, complicating the creation of a universally accepted definition. Sexual harassment encompasses a wide variety of behaviors like

attempted or actual rape, unwanted sexual advances, unwelcome physical actions (e.g., touching, cornering, or pinching), unwanted sexual gestures or looks, unsolicited sexual communications (such as letters or phone calls), persistent pressure for dates, and sexual teasing or jokes (Joseph, 2015). Other examples include inappropriate terms to refer to adults (e.g., "girl," "babe"), catcalling, whistling, inappropriate comments, or spreading false gossip about someone's sex life. Unwelcome touch—such as neck rubs, touching clothing, hair, or body, hugging, kissing, or giving unwanted personal gifts—also falls under sexual harassment. In addition, sexual gestures, body language, and inappropriate staring can constitute harassment.

Theoretical Framework: Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory

In an attempt to understand comprehensively the university student and staff perceptions of sexual harassment, 'Bronfenbrenner's Ecolodgical Systems Theory" is a perceptive and multi-dimensional lens. According to this theory, human behavior and development are conditioned by dynamic interplay between various interrelated environmental systems (Bronfenbrenner, 2013; Campbell et al., 2009). In Pakistani higher education, these systems heavily impact the way in which people perceive, live, and act on sexual harassment.

Microsystem: Students' and Teachers' Immediate Environments

The microsystem consists of the immediate environments of students and teachers; for example, classrooms, peer groups, and faculty-student interactions. Each of these elements of the microsystem is where the first incidents of harassment occur. When students have access to supportive peer networks or fostering faculty relationships, students may be more able to recognize harassment and report it. When students have engaged with a microsystem that normalizes or dismisses inappropriate behaviors, they may ignore harassment to further their own interactions, resulting in potentially harmful perceptions and responses to coping with harassment (Sabri et al., 2013).

Mesosystem: Between Microsystems

The mesosystem consists of relationships between microsystems—for instance, how academic departments interact with student welfare offices or how student-teacher relationships affect classroom behavior and complaint mechanisms. A positive connection between faculty and student support services can encourage awareness and foster reporting channels. On the contrary, weak or fragmented communication may result in a lack of institutional trust, hindering proactive coping responses.

Exosystem: Institutional Policies and Social Systems

The **exosystem** includes larger institutional structures such as university administration, anti-harassment committees, and legal reporting mechanisms. In Pakistan, while many universities have formally established harassment policies under the 2010 Workplace Harassment Act, implementation often remains inconsistent. Teachers and students may therefore perceive institutional support as either empowering or ineffective, depending on how these systems function in practice (Campbell et al., 2009; Pittenger et al., 2018).

Macrosystem: Cultural Values and Gender Norms

The macrosystem represents a wider set of cultural beliefs, norms, and laws that shape people's understandings of harassment. In Pakistani society, established patriarchal values and taboos on

discussing sexual harassment impact people's understanding's about harassment. In Pakistani society, established patriarchal values and taboos on discussing sexual harassment impact people's understandings about harassment. Moreover, various victims might refrain from reporting an incident due to the stigma associated with speaking out or fear of family shame. Such cultural influences are pervasive both for students and teachers, thereby resulting in a deficiency of reporting and normalizing of inappropriate behavior (Nelson & Lund, 2017; Sheng, 2023).

Chronosystem: Change Over Time

Finally, the changes that occur within the chronosystem addresses the dynamic of time and how various attitudes of individuals, institutions, or societies toward sexual harassment have modified or will modify over time. For instance, the implications of the global march against sexual harassment, #MeToo, and the potential enactment of anti-harassment legislation in Pakistan, have led to incremental change in the societal levels of discussion about these behaviours particularly among institutions of higher education. Similar to the claims surrounding micro- and exosystems, the chronosystem illustrates that and individual's experiences and coping mechanisms will evolve and change based on the time as history changes (Hong et al., 2018).

Relevance of Bronfenbrenner's Theory for the current study

By using Bronfenbrenner's theory, this research not only identifies individual attitudes toward harassment but also analyzes how these attitudes are socially and institutionally constructed. Not only are teachers' and students' perceptions influenced by immediate personal experiences but by larger environmental systems as well—such as administrative responsiveness, cultural expectations, peer norms, and legal protections. Understanding these layers is essential to developing multi-level strategies that enhance awareness, promote adaptive coping, and build safer university environments across Pakistan.

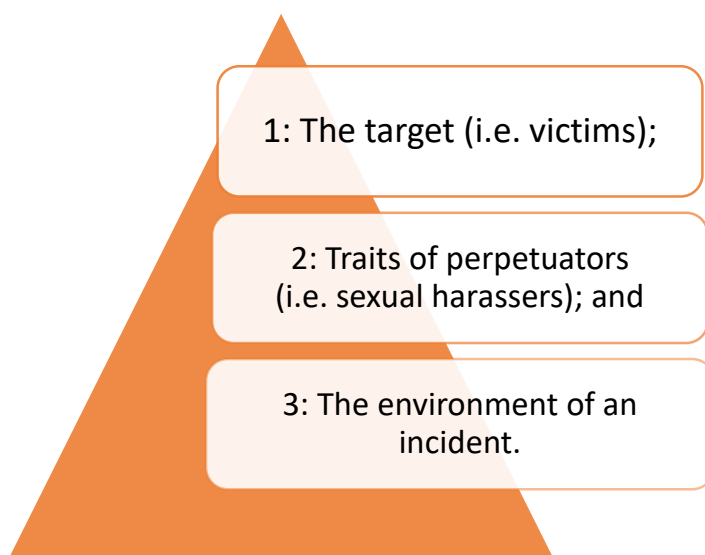## Variations in Perceptions of Harassment

Perceptions of sexual harassment describes the way how individuals understand and experience it personally (Malone & McHugh, 2021). Manuel (2017) explained that societal differences in how men and women are socialized play a role in shaping these perceptions.

Al Gazali et al. (2023) contended that the people with a higher sensitivity to sexual harassment are more likely to communicate and act. If someone perceives sexual harassment in their institution as having serious negative consequences for students and teachers, they are more inclined to address the issue actively. The stronger the person's awareness of the problem in their environment, the greater the motivation to behave (Rotundo et al., 2001; Runtz & O'Donnell, 2003).

Factors Associated with the Perception of Sexual Harassment

In the paper To confront versus not to confront: Women's perception of sexual harassment, Herrera et al. (2018) found that it had been a challenging task to define "sexual harassment". Despite efforts by researchers, legal professionals, scholars, and policymakers, no universal definition has been agreed upon. Perceptions of harassment can vary depending on several factors, and understanding these factors is crucial in shaping the response to sexual harassment. Some important factors as under:

Figure 2: *Three Factors Related to* the Perception of Sexual Harassment

Perceptions of Harassment in Pakistani Context

In Pakistan, societal perceptions do not generally attribute the problem of harassment to the patriarchal system. Instead, discussions often focus on individual solutions such as education, self-help workshops, and psychotherapy (Hadi, 2018). In contrast, a study in Hong Kong involving 5,902 students revealed that 80% agreed that touching or pulling someone's clothes constituted sexual harassment, but only 40% viewed verbal harassment— e.g., calling someone "gay" or "tomboy" as harassment (Goh et al., 2022; Gurung et al., 2016; Pojwan & Osoki, 2021; Zervoulakos, 2024).

Pakistan's religious, economic, and socio-cultural context is in contradiction to that of the Western world (Dryland & Syed, 2011). Although Islam and Constitution of Pakistan ensure women's respect, protection and equal rights, Pakistan remains a male dominated nation where women are struggling for their rights (Salman et al., 2016; Akhtar & Métraux, 2013). Although sexual harassment in Pakistan is not defined by law, the majority of acts of violence against women are found in Pakistan e.g. acid attacks, honour killings, domestic violence, rape, early marriages, trafficking, torture etc. (Nosheen, 2011; Salman et al., 2016).

METHODOLOGY

Research Paradigms
For the study, the interpretative paradigm of research was used. Interpretative methods involve social theories or comprehension that possess a notion of reality as socially constructed, or rendered meaningful by human interpretation of affairs.This methodological approach is appropriate for dealing with sensitive topics, such as sexual harassment. The approach also allows for the definition of phenomenon of interest (Mawere & Seroto, 2022).

Type and Nature of Research
The research employed a phenomenology research type. Since the phenomenological style permits us to understand better the phenomenon (Hu et al., 2021). Gallagher (2022) argued that phenomenology, or non-positivism, is an interpretative form of research that includes hermeneutics (interpretation) and

symbolic interactionism (human actions based on the meanings attributed to things, which makes meanings vary from individual to individual, and over time).

Population of Study
The sample included public and private university teachers and students of the Lahore city

Study participants
University female instructors and students of Lahore city were the subjects of this study.

Sample Size
The researcher used random sampling as lottery method for collecting data in the selection of universities of the Lahore city (Palinkas et al., 2015). Ten universities in Lahore city (5 public and 5 private) were chosen at randomly for data collection purposes. This study includes 1000 surveys questionnaires filled by female teaching faculty and female students, as well as 20 interviews from students and faculty.

Sampling Technique
The sampling method that was applied in this research was random and purposive (snowball). First of all in quantitative part the researchers randomly selected universities of Lahore city for data collection. While in the 2nd part of the research purposive snowball sampling technique was applied due to the nature of research subject 'Sexual Harassment'.

Research Tools/Instruments
Following instrument were used for data collection
1.   Questionnaires and
2.   Interviews

In the current study, the researcher was used the mix method (Quan-Qual sequential) approach. Data was collected through survey using a questionnaire and an interview technique. This research adopted quantitative and qualitative research, which is known as the mixed method. The mixed method application in a study was considered more practical for solving a problem and optimizing the results (Creswell, 1999; Timans et al., 2019).

Validity

Expert opinion was utilized in determining the content validity of this questionnaire. The tool and the objectives of the study were provided to five member's university teacher educators who specialize in evaluation and the subject field research. The validated questionnaire was divided into two sections: one for the female university teachers and other one for the female university students.

Reliability

The instrument was subjected to a pilot investigation to determine its internal consistency. Aside from the actual sample, the questionnaire was sent to 20 university faculty members and 20 university students. The instrument's reliability was determined to be 0.84 using the Cronbach alpha value, which is regarded as good for survey-type investigations.

Ethical Considerations
The respondents were told about the study's aims and were promised that the information obtained would be used only for research. Their participation in the study was entirely voluntary. Data

collected is exclusively used for research purposes. Sexual harassment is a particularly sensitive and complex study topic because it displays aspects of private experiences in a very personal and emotional way. The identities of the institutions and respondents names were kept hidden / concealed due the sensitive nature of the matter and to maintain secrecy.

Quantitative Data Analysis
Part 1: Perceptions of University Teachers about Sexual Harassment

What do you understand/ perceive the term harassment? (Mark all that apply)
This item was consisted on 13 statements. In this item respondents can chose more than one options in their responses and also write any other statement according to their knowledge. Responses of the university teachers mentioned in the following table:

Table 1

Respondents (University Teachers) Perceptions of Harassment

| Sr. No	Statements	Selected by Public university teachers	Selected by Private university teachers	*F*	%
1	Unwelcome touch	82	84	166	83 %
2	Gawking or ogling	59	60	119	59.5%
3	Suggestive remarks or jokes	73	53	126	63%
4	Sexually explicit photographs or posters	81	87	168	84 %
5	Unwanted offers to go out on dates	89	87	176	88 %
6	Request for sex	89	96	185	92.5%
7	Intrusive inquiries regarding a person private life or body	83	80	163	81.5%
8	Unnecessary familiarity such as intentionally rubbing up against a person	56	51	107	53.5%
9	Insult or taunt based on sex	71	87	158	79 %
10	Sexually explicit physical contact	89	88	177	88.5%
11	Sexually explicit email or SMS Text messages	83	90	173	86.5%
12	Any behaviour that is unwanted and makes you uncomfortable	66	89	155	77.5%
13	Any other (please specify)	0	0	0	0
		(921) Responses of 100 Respondents Public sector	(952) Responses of 100 Respondents Private sector	(1873) Responses of 200 Respondents	

As indicated by the above table, in their own understanding of harassment from university teachers. two hundred 166 (83%) respondents chose first item i.e. "unwelcome touching". 119 (59.5 %) respondent views 2nd item "Staring or leering" is part of harassment. 126 (63%) respondents choose 3rd item "Suggestive comments or jokes". 168 (84 %) instructors thought 4th item "Sexually Explicit pictures or posters" is under harassment. 176 (88%) participants were chosen 5th item "Unwanted invitations to go out on dates". Most of the teacher's 185 (92.5%) were chosen the 6th item which is "request for sex". 163 (81.5%) participants were thought 7th item "Intrusive questions about a person private life or body" is covered under harassment. Few of the respondent's 107 (53.5 %) interpreted 8th item "Unnecessary familiarity such as deliberately brushing up against a person" is covered under harassment. 158 (79 %) respondents chose 9th item "Insult or taunt based on sex". Highest number of the respondents 177 (88.5 %) respondents felt that 10th item" Sexually explicit physical "contact" is covered under harassment.

The majority of the respondents 173 (86.5 %) recognizes that 11th item "Sexually explicit emails or SMS Text messages" is covered under harassment cases. 155 (77.5 %) respondents were chosen 12th item "Any behaviour that is unwanted and makes you uncomfortable" as perceived harassment. Researcher inquired from respondents in 13th item "others" (please specify) regarding any other opinions they thought were harassment but no one write something in this box. All the respondents leave this box empty.

The responses from university teachers reflect a broad awareness of harassment, with most identifying behavior such as unwanted touching, suggestive comments, and sexual requests as forms of harassment. There is strong agreement on recognizing sexually explicit material, unwanted invitations, and intrusive questions as harassment. However, there was a notable decrease in the number of respondents who perceived unwanted familiarity, e.g., intentionally bumping into somebody, as harassment. Additionally, when given the option to specify other forms of harassment, no respondents provided any additional examples, which may indicate that the existing list of behavior was comprehensive and aligned with their understanding. Overall, the teachers demonstrate a strong awareness of harassment, though there may be opportunities to further expand their understanding of its more subtle or nuanced forms. In the end, the researcher aimed to present the interpretation of this table in a single graph that provided an overview of the entire picture at a glance.

Figure 3

Teacher's perceptions about harassment
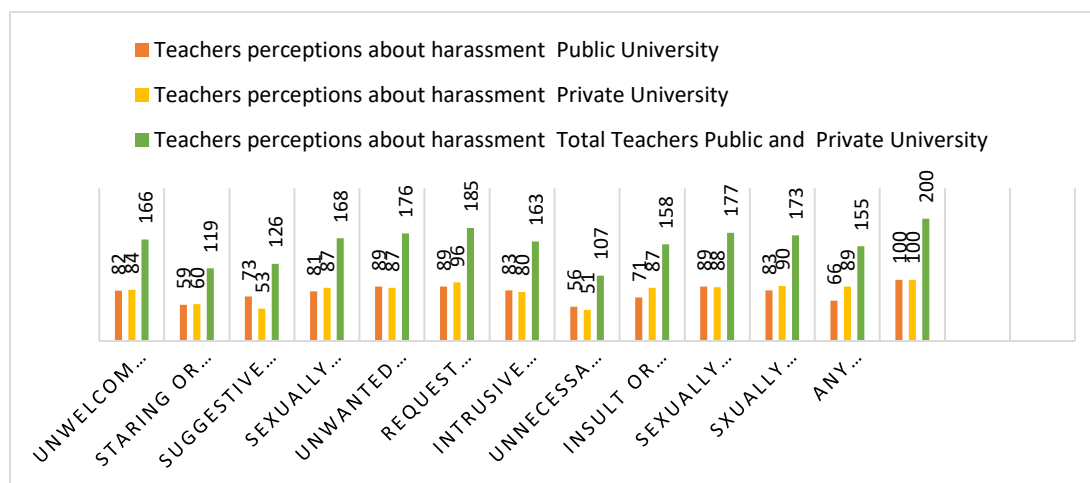
Part 2: Perceptions of University Students about Sexual Harassment

What do you understand/ perceive the term harassment? (Mark all that apply)
This item was consisted on 13 statements. In this item respondents can chose multiple options in their response and also can write any other statement according to their knowledge in last option:

Table 2
Respondents (University Students) Perceptions of Harassment

Sr. No	Statements	400 Public university students responses	400 Private university students responses	*F*	%
1	Unwelcome touching	334	320	654	81.75%
2	Staring or leering	237	236	473	59.13%
3	Suggestive comments or jokes	255	245	500	62.5%
4	Sexually explicit images or posters	336	333	669	83.63%
5	Unwanted offers to go out on dates	352	330	682	85.25%
6	Request for sex	374	361	735	91.88%
7	Intrusive questions about a person private life or body	324	314	638	79.75%
8	Unnecessary familiarity like intentionally rubbing against a person	216	206	422	52.75%
9	Insult or taunt based on sex	315	308	623	77.88%
10	Sexually explicit physical contact	354	345	699	87.38%
11	Sexually explicit emails or SMS Text messages	343	338	681	85.13%

| 12	Any behaviour that is unwanted and makes you uncomfortable	311	309	620	77.5%
13	Any other (please specify)	0	0	0	0 %
400+400=800 students multiple responses		(3751)	(36450)	(7396)	

There were 800 university students as respondents. As the above table shows, when asked from university students about their perception of harassment above 654 (81.75%) respondents selected first item that is "unwelcome touching". 473 (59.13%) respondents perceives 2nd item "Staring or leering" is included in harassment. 500 (62.5%) respondents were selected 3rd item "Suggestive comments or jokes". 669 (83.63%) students considered 4th item "Sexually Explicit pictures or posters" is included in harassment. 682 (85.25%) respondents were selected 5th item "Unwanted offers to go out on dates". The majority of the students 735 (91.88%) selected the 6th item, which is "request for sex," and they considered this behaviour to be called harassment. 638 (79.75%) respondents were considered 7th item "Intrusive comments on an individual private life or body" is included in harassment.

422 (52.75%) respondent's perceived 8th item "Unwelcome familiarity like intentionally brushing against an individual "Unwelcome familiarity like intentionally brushing against an individual" is included in harassment. 623 (77.88%) respondents selected 9th item "Insult or taunt based on sex". 699 (87.38%) respondents perceived that 10th item" Sexually explicit physical contact" is included in harassment. 681 (85.13%) understands that 11th item "Sexually explicit emails or SMS Text messages" is included in harassment cases. 620 (77.5%) percent population were selected 12th item "Any behaviour that is unwanted and makes you uncomfortable" as perceived harassment. Researcher asked from respondents in 13th item "others (please specify)" about any other views they considered harassment but no one write anything in this box. All the respondents leave this box empty.

The responses from university students indicate a strong and consistent understanding of various forms of harassment, including common and explicit behaviors like unwelcome touching, suggestive comments, and sexually explicit materials. While most students recognized these overt forms, fewer acknowledged subtler behaviors, such as unnecessary familiarity or sexual taunts. Overall, students demonstrated a good grasp of what constitutes harassment. In the end, the researcher aimed to present the interpretation of this table in a single graph that provided an overview of the entire picture at a glance.

Figure 4

Student's perceptions about harassment
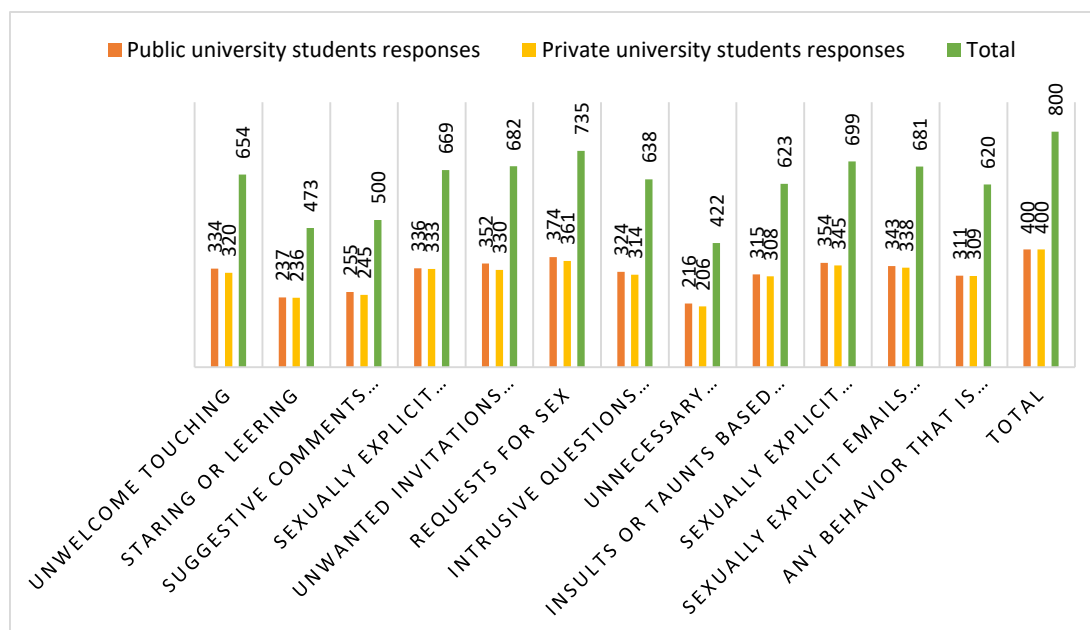
T-test Analysis

T-test was apply on the data gathered from Public and private university educators and students from the Lahore city related to the sexual harassment.

Part 1: Teachers perceptions of Harassment

Table 3

Independent sample T-test was used to investigate the perceptions of university teachers about the sexual harassment.

	Public University Teachers responses		Private university Teachers responses		t(df)	P	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	M	SD	M	SD			LL	UL
Teachers perceptions about sexual harassment	9.21	1.55	9.52	2.11	-1.18 (198)	.238	-.82	.20

Note: 100 respondents were from public universities and 100 from private universities total (N= 200).

Independent sample T-test was employed to contrast public and private university teacher's perceptions of sexual harassment. Assumptions and normality Levene's test were first checked. Both conditions were fulfilled since the value of Levene's test is .09 > .05 (i.e. equal variances assumed). Outcomes of independent sample T-test reveal P value of .238 > .05 which reveals there existed no difference at all between public and private university teacher's perceptions of sexual harassment. Public university teachers' means (M=9.21, SD=1.55) and public university lecturers (M=9.52, SD= 2.11) in terms of perceptions of sexual harassment. This

suggests that there is no difference in the understanding of public and private university lecturers of perceptions of sexual harassment.

Part 2: Students perceptions of Harassment
Table 4
Independent sample T-test was utilized to examine the sexual harassment perceptions among university students

	Public University Students responses		Private university Students responses		$t(df)$	P	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*			*LL*	*UL*
perceptions about sexual harassment	9.37	1.85	9.11	2.15	1.862 (798)	.063	-.01	.54

Note: 400 respondents were from the public universities and 400 from the private universities total (N= 800).

The above table indicates that independent sample T-test was conducted to compare the public and private universities students' perceptions regarding the sexual harassment. Initially, assumptions and normality levene's test was tested. Both assumptions were satisfied because that levene's test value is .08 > .05 its means there is a homogeneity of variance (i.e. equal variances assumed). Outcome of independent sample T-test reveals that P value is .063 > .05 reflects that there was statistically 'NO' significant difference between the private and public university student's beliefs regarding sexual harassment. Since public university student's (M=9.3775, SD= 1.85) and private university students (M=9.11, SD= 2.15) on sexual harassment. This difference indicated that there is no distinction between public and private university student's knowledge about the attitudes of sexual harassment.

Qualitative Data Analysis

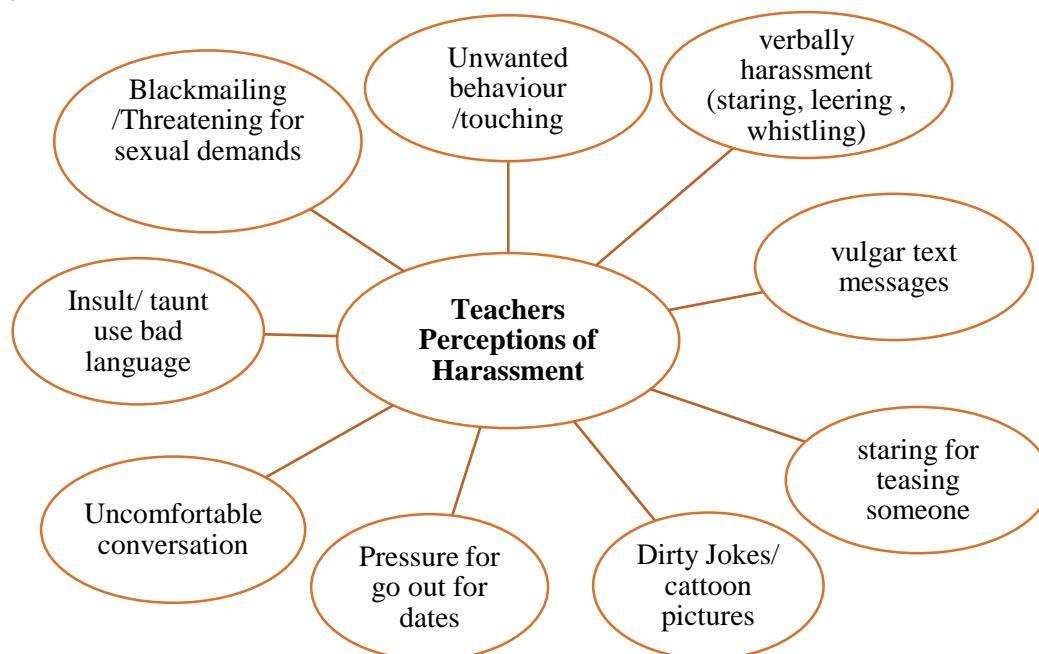**Interpretation of Thematic Analysis from Teacher's Interviews**
Teachers Perceptions of Harassment

This section was included in the interview protocols to investigate the perceptions of the university teachers about sexual harassment terms.

Question 1: What do you understand/ perceive the term sexual harassment?

Figure 5

When it is asked from university teachers about the Perceptions and understanding level of sexual harassment then responses shows that almost all of the respondents know very well about the term of 'sexual Harassment'. Responses of the university teachers are shows that majority of the university teachers perceived that every *'unwanted behavior/ touching, Uncomfortable conversation'* is included in harassment. Most of the respondents said that '*Dirty jokes, staring, leering, whistling, pressure for dates/ sex'* is harassment. While one of the respondent T5 told that *'If someone threaten or blackmailed you in any way and teasing you with continuously ignoring behaviour it is all included in harassment'.* One of them T7, said that *'If someone insulted you in front of other colleagues, taunt in bad language during conversation'* all the acts that make you uncomfortable are called harassment'. Two of the respondents T8 & T9 said that *'If a person sending you dirty jokes or vulgar drawings and massages, dirty cartoons pictures, sexual photos, and touch your body but pretend it is a non-accidental touching is also included in harassment'.*

Overall, the above responses reveals that university teachers have a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of sexual harassment. They recognize a broad range of behavior as harassment, from obvious physical actions to more subtle forms of verbal and psychological abuse. There is consensus on the importance of consent, respect, and comfort in distinguishing harassment from acceptable behaviour. The inclusion of digital harassment, as pointed out by T8 and T9, reflects a more modern and inclusive understanding of the issue, while others highlight the psychological and emotional aspects, broadening the scope beyond physical or sexual actions.

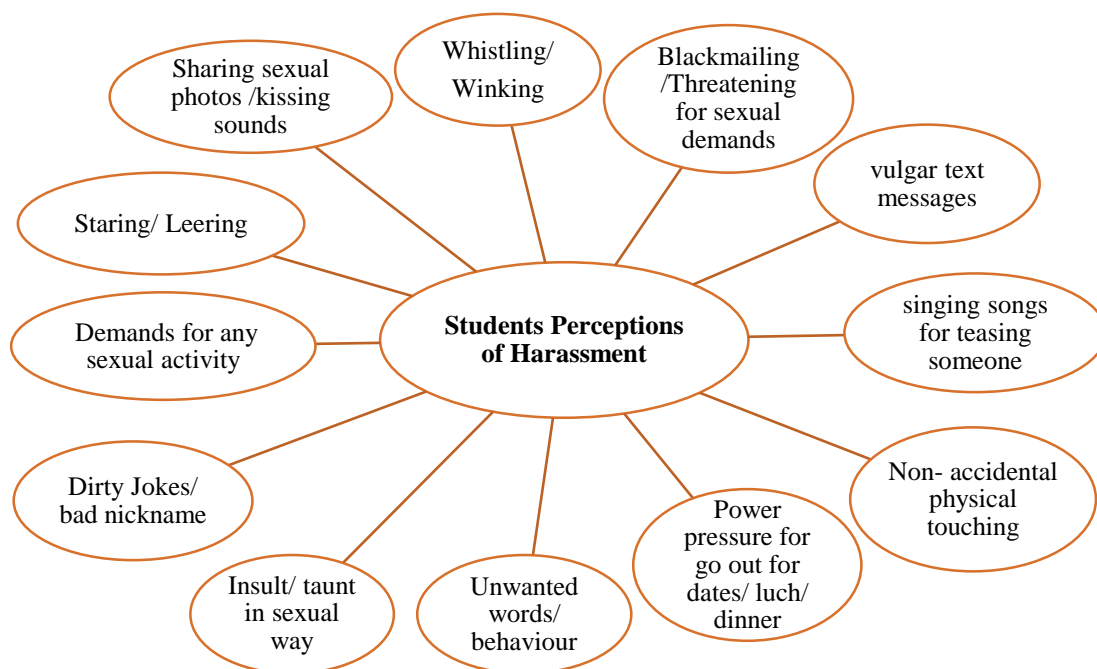**Interpretation of Thematic Analysis from Student's Interviews as under:**

Students Perceptions of Harassment

This section was included in the interview protocols to investigate the perceptions of the university teachers about sexual harassment terms.

Question 2: What do you understand/ perceive the term sexual harassment?

Figure 6

When it is asked from university students about the Perceptions and understanding level of sexual harassment then responses shows that almost all of the respondents knows very well about the concept of the 'sexual Harassment'. Above responses of the university students expressed that majority of the respondents perceived that *'Every bad behavior, bad touching and demands of sexual activity is harassment.'* While most of the respondents replied that *'bad conversation, dirty jokes, staring, leering, whistling or winking, singing vulgar songs, pressure for go out on dates /lunch / dinner/ all these activities are included in harassment.'*. One of the respondent *S-2* said that *'If someone taunt you and call you with bad name like 'Honey, Baby, Bitch, chishmish (a girl that always wear glasses), Burqaa maayi (Hijab girl), Hoor nhi Langoor (ordinary figures means not so pretty), Mooti Bainss (girl with bulky body figure) all these acts are included in harassment... in my point of view every bad behaviour that made you uncomfortable is included in harassment.'* Two of the respondents S-3 & S-8 point out that *'other than bad touching... if someone sending you kissing sounds on your mobile phone again and again with the changing phone numbers....sending vulgar messages and dirty pictures all these activities are counted in the term of harassment'.* Respondent S-4 expressed that *'Due to power, 'If someone threatened you for any favor.... Or gave pressure / blackmailed you for any sexual demands is also included in harassment'.* Although one of the respondent S-6 told that *'Other than sexual demands....If call someone in his office separately or in awkward time period....see continuously in sexual way....touch someone and pretended, its non-accidental physical touching... in my point of view its harassment.'*

University student's responses demonstrate a broad understanding of sexual harassment, recognizing it as a range of behaviours that violate personal boundaries and cause discomfort. These include physical actions like inappropriate touching, verbal abuse such as lewd comments or taunts, and digital harassment like unsolicited explicit messages. Some respondents highlight the role of power dynamics and coercion, while others stress that harassment can also involve non-physical actions like suggestive behaviour or

intimidation. Overall, the responses reflect an awareness that harassment can take various forms, including both overt and subtle misconduct in different contexts.

STUDY FINDINGS

Findings from Quantitative Analysis

1. Most of the respondents both university teachers and students chose these options of the statement related to perceptions 'Request for sex', sexually explicit physical contact.
2. Sexually explicit emails or SMS Text messages, Sexually Explicit pictures or posters, Unwanted invitations to go out on dates, Unwelcome touching is part of harassment.
3. The majority of the respondents (students and university teachers) felt that 'Staring or leering, Suggestive comments or jokes, Insult or taunt based on sex, Any behaviour that is unwanted and makes you uncomfortable 'Intrusive questions about a person private life or body', is also viewed as harassment.
4. Lest of the respondents felt that 'unfamiliarity such as deliberately brushing up against a person is harassment.
5. The key findings were that most of the students and teachers felt that sexual harassment cases are common in the universities of Lahore city.

Findings from the Result of Independent sample T-test

The independent sample T-test results indicated that there was 'NO' statistically significance difference between public and private university teacher's perception regarding harassment. And also there was statistically 'NO' significant difference found between the public and private university student's perceptions regarding sexual harassment. The findings revealed that there was no difference between public and private university teachers' and students' perception of the views of sexual harassment."

Findings from Qualitative Analysis

Data collecting through interviews reveals that most of the university teachers perceived that every unwanted behaviours/ touching/ unwanted conversation, dirty jokes, staring, leering, whistling, pressure for dates/ sex, and blackmailing is included in harassment. While majority of the university students understand that staring, leering, whistling, dirty jokes, non-accidental physical touch, call in office separately & blackmailing, vulgar text messages, power harassment, sharing dirty images/ photos/ kissing sounds, consciously touching private body parts, every unwanted behaviors/ touching/ unwanted conversation, pressure for dates/ sex, and blackmailing is included in harassment. This showed that all the respondents have fully understanding with the term of sexual harassment.

DISCUSSION

Following data collection and analysis, based on findings of the current study, the researcher emphasized discussion of the current research is as under:
Research question 1&2: "What are faculty and students' perceptions about sexual harassment at the university level?" Perceptions can have large potential for explaining the term 'Sexual Harassment' for university teachers and students. Perceptions can influenced how individual define, interpret and respond to the occurrences of instances of sexual harassment. Perceptions may be influenced on definitions, awareness, reporting behavior, intervention activities and emotional and psychological effects on the victims of harassment.

Higher learning institutions are responsible to address these perceptions through education, awareness seminars and training, implementation of policies and legislations and creation of safe and hospitable environment for all members of the campus community. According to the first research question, the present study was conducted with the purpose of finding out the perceptions of teachers and students towards the sexual harassment in the higher education institutions. Findings of the present study revealed that the majority of students and teachers felt that incidents of sexual harassment are prevalent in the universities of Pakistan. It was observed that the majority of the respondents felt that unwanted touching, stares leers, suggestive remarks or jokes, unwanted invitation for lunch/dinner/tea, discussion of any person private life or body, sexually explicit mail and text massages, any act which make uncomfortable to any person" is also harassment. Lest of the respondents believed that 'unfamiliarity like intentionally brushing against a person. It was discovered that female University professors and students of Lahore city were aware of the sexual harassment attitudes at the university level.

Various studies conducted recently explored regarding perceptions and experiences of sexual harassment among students of university level. Nature and causes of sexual harassment were also explored. Data was generated with the help of individual interviews and focus group discussions. Result of aforementioned studies showed that sexual harassment was prevalent at university in the form of verbal, non-verbal and physical harassment (Burczycka, 2020; Goh et al., 2022; Jagath and Hamlall, 2024).

Result of aforementioned above-mentioned studies are interested in this current research. Results of one study conclude gender discrimination and harassment are on-going trends in Pakistan, mostly by insiders. Women are largely affected by this situation, causing distress in their domestic and professional lives. To cope with such experiences on a frequent basis often leads to silence by mistrust of institutional systems set up for their protection.

In some cases,such disillusionment might even lead them to step back from their obligations or duties (Iqbal et al., 2024). Ludwig et al. had, in 2024, conducted research 'Perceptions of lecturers and students regarding discriminatory experiences and sexual harassment in academic medicine–results from a faculty-wide quantitative study'. The aim of their research was to quantify the level of discriminatory experiences and sexual harassment of lecturers and students in academic institutions. Findings revealed that they are shared in academic medicine among professors, higher study program students in the health sector as well as medical and dental students.

Other scholars have still made clearer that sexual harassment is then the aspect of the university habitus, due to the daily presence and diversified perception of the community, which, trivialized, promote the violation of women's essential freedoms, hindering to get them proper conditions to exercise their self-determination in the education setting, and the right to continue their higher studies in a dignified manner (Aina & Kulshrestha, 2018; Duque Monsalve et al., 2022).

Two studies investigated the experience of harassment in instances such as receiving unwanted sexual comments or audiovisual content without permission, and women were more likely than men to consider the experiences as sexual harassment (Ekore, 2012; MacDougall et al., 2020).Current study findings also showed female university students experienced the unwanted acts of the male members of the university. Hackman et al. elaborated in 2022 that their qualitative purposes were to enhance understanding of social norms perceptions concerning the ill effects of sexual assault on an individual's mental and physical health and to provide interpersonal suggestions and policy

reforms to improve mental   and   physical well-being assistance and   reporting protocols in a bid to better assist LGBTQ- college student sexual assault survivors. The aforementioned study also serve the   serve the current   study   in   spite   of the fact that it was conducted among college students while current study is conducted among university instructors and students in higher level. Ghassan et al.'s (2021) conclude their study in Pakistani context and intent behind their study was to determine the differences of perception of male and female students towards sexual harassment at university level. This study was a quantitative study. Sample of Ghassan's study included 400 students (200 male and 200 female) from two government and two private universities. Results revealed that policies of sexual harassment should be implemented in universities; laws should be brought into action for sexual harassment in higher education institutions.

Students should be informed of sexual harassment through seminars, self-defense classes and awareness campaigns. And every institute should have a counseling center for better mental well-being of students. They also come to the conclusion that university students are now well-informed about sexual   harassment   and have a   proper idea of   what is   sexual harassment situation and what is not. Students opine that sexual harassment is present in university and the most common form of it is verbal harassment. In Pakistani context sexual harassment is tantamount to face shame and it is mostly hidden or not observed. Recentstudy findings are same with the study mentioned above. Current study findings is same with the study of 'A survey of teachers' and students' perception of sexual harassment in tertiary institutions of Edo State, Nigeria' findings of this study is that Sexual harassment of women students is prevalent in the education institutions (Imonikhe et al., 2012). The National Union of Students (NUS) reported that 33% of women students were sexually harassed on campus via touching and groping (Dogars et al., 2021).

CONCLUSION
The primary objective of the study was to establish the "Perceptions of Students and Teaching Faculty about Sexual Harassment at University Level in Pakistan". The findings were calculated from each outcome of the two main data collection methods, surveys and interviews. Based on findings, the researcher attempted to determine the solutions of research questions as delineated in this current study. The study's result showed that Majority of university teachers and students have a great understanding about the perceptions of harassment. Independent sample t-test results indicated that there was "NO" statistically significance difference between the private and public perceptions of university teachers and students regarding sexual harassment. Therefore, the quantitative and the qualitative results prove that most of the respondents both students and teachers were on consensus that cases of verbal harassment are dominated in the higher institutes of the Lahore city of Pakistan, whereas cases of physical harassment are uncommon.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Higher education institutions in Pakistan must go beyond addressing existing perceptions of sexual harassment. They should actively prevent it by implementing educational programs aimed at making students and faculty aware of their responsibilities, boundaries, and the legal consequences of harassing behavior.
- Universities should organize regular character-building workshops, gender-sensitivity training, and awareness seminars. These initiatives should focus on transforming student and faculty perceptions of harassment and cultivating a respectful academic culture across all campuses.
- Addressing deep-rooted societal values is essential. Universities should take an active role in reshaping perceptions related to toxic masculinity, gender inequality, and social tolerance for

harassment. This can be done through curriculum updates, public discussions, and inclusive debates promoting equality and respectful behavior.

- Teaching faculty must be trained regularly to identify, address, and report harassment incidents involving students. Their active engagement helps shape students' perceptions of acceptable behavior and reinforces a zero-tolerance stance on harassment.
- Faculty should not only empower female students but also focus on educating all students—especially males—on respectful communication, boundaries, and mutual consent. This helps shift peer perceptions and reinforces that harassment is unacceptable and punishable.

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