Women Victims Of Sexual Harassment In Public Transport System In Bangladesh: A Sociological Survey At Dhaka City

Josinta Zinia*

Abstract

Women harassment in public transport is a common and unexpected social phenomena all over the world. Developing country like Bangladesh, the outline of transport system usually became an unfriendly environment for women. This study portrays the unwelcoming and unexpected experiences by women while travelling by different public transports within Dhaka city. More often the transports remain overcrowded due to insufficiency and disgraceful administration which cause the unfavourable and risky condition for the commuters, particularly for women. Women are confronting verbal or nonverbal harassment, unwelcoming contacts, and at times coordinate contact with the sexual parts by co-travellers or conductor that is hindering individual and social development. This research aims to investigate the actual reason, nature of harassment, effects on the victim and address the solution of woman harassment on the public transport. To conduct the study both qualitative and quantitative techniques have been used. Firstly an exploratory was done to find out actual fact and online surveys had been developed through structured questionnaire; data were collected from the target population. Results of the study revealed that - lacking social justice and strong protest against woman harassment on the bus has a significant impact on identified factors.

Keywords - Public Transports, Dhaka city, Women Harassment, Victims, Reserved seats, Bangladesh

I. Introduction

Mainstreaming gender in transport arranging and execution activities is vital keeping in mind the end goal to have impartial social and economic advancement. Transport ventures that are composed with due thought to gender measurements can get huge advantages to women in terms of expanded access to business, education, market and wellbeing administrations, and in addition specifically lessening their time poverty. However, in developing nations like Bangladesh, the outline of transport tasks and administrations seldom address women’s travel needs, concern, priorities and preferences. Subsequently, women – particularly younger women and girls– frequently experience verbal and physical insinuations, grabbing, sneering, or even direct physical ambushes inside open transport. It not just makes their everyday business uncertain and awkward yet in addition endangers and frequently restricts their mobility. Thus, it decreases their capacity to take an interest in education and proficient exercises and in broad public life. These demonstrations of harassment, if overlooked, can cause long and enduring impacts for both victim (physical and mental consequences for the prosperity of women and girls) and culprit (elevated severity to viciousness against women).

Dhaka, one of the most densely populated mega city, covers in excess of 105 million individuals inside a territory of just 1463.60 square km, and half of the populations are women (Bangladesh National Portal: 2016). In Dhaka city, Bus and legunaare the highly utilized method of transport in regards to reasonableness, accessibility, and most extreme coverage area. The interest for transportation has expanded at an exponential rate. In any case, the demand isn't met adequately with the currently provided transport framework, services and administration. The daily life travelling picture by transport can be outlined by clog and postponement, high congested road, poor traffic administration, and so forth. Among every one of them the most uncontrolled troubles is insufficient transport system for the people and lack of favourable environment; especially for women.

Under these conditions, women are the victims of both verbal and non-verbal harassment at the time of travelling by bus. They often experience sexually abusive and different unwelcoming situations in the bus or at the time of getting on and getting out of the bus. These unexpected situation are creating
negative impact on their daily life activities that causes for the long-term effect on their personal lives as well as on the society construction and contribution.

The study has been done on the basis of scheduling, frequency, reliability, safety, comfort issues of public transport system within Dhaka city. The study is a decent effort to focus on the horrible environment of public transport such as bus and leguna, especially for in favour of women commuters and their mobility constraints. With several data and literature analysis and open-ended questions, this study efforts to take concern about the causes and effects of physical and mental harassment issues and tried to come up with strong resolution.

II. Literature Review

The survey of existing writing from around the world and Bangladesh focuses to a high rate of harassment in public transport. It also features its tendency, outcomes and strategy reaction in such manner.

*Dear and Wolch (1989)* depict availability to transportation as a vital precondition to openness to the work environment, and the individuals who utilize public transport due to non-accessibility of some other decisions as "captive riders" or "transit captive." Research demonstrates that contrasted with men, women involve a bigger extent of captive riders. For these women, access to open transport is essential as it permits them access to work, educational and public sphere in general (*Smith, 2008*). Public transport is an "important enabler in accessing the public sphere" without which girls may be kept away from schools [*Harrison (2013)*].

An investigation about the psychological effect of sexual harassment on white and Asian ladies showed that a high rate of experiencing sexual harassment and post awful pressure manifestations "predicated" more depression and overall psychological pain among victimised women (*Ho et al., 2012*). This barrier to women capacity to freely get to and use public spaces adversely impacts upon their social and economic prosperity (*Fileborn 2013*).

*Mitra-Sarkar and Partheeban (2009)* evaluated harassment looked by women commuters in Chennai by directing a study of women ages 18 years and older. A sum of 274 women respondents, majority of whom were students. The findings show that 66 percent of these ladies answered to have been experienced sexually harassment while travelling by public transports.

BRAC, a development organization of Bangladesh, conducted a study titled "Roads free from sexual harassment and crash for women". The study demonstrate that around 90% women commuting in public transport in Bangladesh have experienced sexual harassment in verbal, physical and other forms and also identified that males belonging to the age of 41 to 60 years as the major culprit who are responsible for 66% of such incidents. (*Dhaka Tribune, 2018*)

The literature recommends that outcomes of the hazard or experience of harassment in the public transport can have negative affect the lives of women all around. Given that transportation is a key factor in portability, harassment confines their mobility and consequently restrains their entrance to educational sector and working sectors as well as to socialization and recreational exercises.

Different countries all over the world have taken different steps to deal with this type of harassment. Part of these steps, women friendly transport has been introduced in number of cities. Tokyo was one of the first major cities to introduce women-only trains and directed transit police to enforce it. The idea is also introduced in other major cities like Jakarta, Delhi, Cairo, Kuala Lumpur and many others. [*Boros, 2014*]. In Bangladesh too, women friendly buses have been introduced on pilot basis within Dhaka city by the government of Bangladesh in collaboration with private company Rangs group. (*Dhaka Tribune, 2018*)
III. Objective Of The Study

Rapid appraisal of harassment in broad public transport is attempted to give a top to bottom comprehension of the need to address sexual harassment issues in arranging and tasks of public transport services that are planned inside the setting of building more secure urban areas and guaranteeing comprehensive development. The objective of the study is to find out women’s actual opinion and observation on public transport systems of Dhaka city. The broad objective is to find out the main cause of unexpected incident happened with women and also the psychological effects of harassment upon victimised women.

To achieve the broad objective, following specific objective will be investigate-

- Real condition and environment of public transportation system in Dhaka from the view of women
- The rate of mental and physical harassment of women
- The types of harassment in the public transport and the reaction rate of victims
- Some recommendation regarding women’s safety in public transports and their implication to improve the present condition to ensure women friendly environment.

IV. Research Methodology

Research design helps to organize the experiences, observations, examinations, analysis of data and information and their logical expression in a systematic way to achieve the goal and the objectives of the study. This study was conducted based on both primary data and secondary data. Paper based questionnaire and online survey both were used to collect primary data. The questionnaire was designed to collect the following information.

- Travel patterns like purpose, frequency of travelling and the travel time.
- Types of harassment, its intensity, the reaction and perceived factors that motivate its occurrence
- Respondent’s opinion about developing public transport service need and ways to prevent harassment in public transports of Dhaka city.

For the survey, respondent were selected through convenient judgement but sample were chosen randomly. The target population was the actual victim of harassment in the public transport to address the major issues that cause harassment. Primary data were collected from 25 copies of the questionnaire and 70 online surveys. Among them, the sample size kept near about 85 personals of different ages and sectors. Some of the data were considered redundant due to insufficient information and obscure authenticity. Secondary data was assembled from different journals, articles, newspapers and available literature review related to this issue.

V. Demographic Profile Of Sample Respondents

The demographic profile covers the ration of respondent’s occupation and age on the basis characteristics of respondents as illustrated in Table 1. The analysis revels the transport choices of different segment of the population.

5.1 Age Profile

Overall, the sample respondents are very young, with 81.81% of them in the age group 15-25 years. 12.94% of the overall respondents belong to the middle age group of 26-35 years and rest of the respondents about 5.88% belong to the age group of 36-45 years.

5.2 Respondent’s Status

Conducting the survey basically occupation-wise, the respondents were more or less evenly divided among students 77.65 %, working women 15.29 % and others 7.06 %. Others include housewives and unmarried non-student/ non-working women who although not employed outside of their homes, live with parents and do work inside the house.
### Table 1
Demographic Profile of Sample Respondents (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Bracket</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Valid percent</th>
<th>Cumulative percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15-25</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>81.18</td>
<td>81.18</td>
<td>81.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-35</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12.94</td>
<td>12.94</td>
<td>94.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-45</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>5.88</td>
<td>5.88</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents Status</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Valid percent</th>
<th>Cumulative percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>77.65</td>
<td>77.65</td>
<td>77.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women workers</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15.29</td>
<td>15.29</td>
<td>92.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7.06</td>
<td>7.06</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey; June 2018.

### VI. FEATURES OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT USAGES

This section describes the features of public transport usages by female commuters in Dhaka. Following Table 02, the largest share of types using public transport is local bus. Survey shows that about 83.53% women use local bus on regular basis, 9.41% of total numbers use leguna, 2.53% women use mini bus and 4.71% use other transport system such as different ride sharing transport- UBER, Pathao, CNG etc.

### Table 02
Types of using Public Transports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Transports</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid percent</th>
<th>Cumulative percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local Bus</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>83.46</td>
<td>83.46</td>
<td>83.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mini Bus</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9.38</td>
<td>9.38</td>
<td>92.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leguna</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td>95.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.69</td>
<td>4.69</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey, June 2018.

In the descriptive survey, about 56.47% participants reported that they travel by bus or other public transport 5-7 days a week. Near about 34.12% travel 1-4 times in a week and 9.41% use public transport 2-4 times a month.(Fig 01)
After analysis, it can be seen that 57.65% respondents usually move in the office time or school time at morning. Moreover, 8.24% move at noon, close to 23.53% respondent move at afternoon the time of returning home, 5.88% move at evening and few with the rate of 4.71% at night.[Fig 02]

Furthermore, Survey participants were also asked about the purposes of using public transport. 71.76% commuters stated that they use bus or leguna to go college or university. About 11.76% commuters stated the purpose of using public transport is to go work place and return in home. Consequently, 9.41%, 2.35% and 4.71% use public transport for shopping, medical and other purposes. Others included visiting relative’s home, vocational training etc. [Figure 03]
VII. Harassment In Public Transports

This section examines the incidence of harassment in local buses, mini buses, leguna and other public transport. As well as types of harassment and its consequences including reaction and effects.

7.1 Experience Of Harassment

Figure 04 shows frequency of incidence of harassment in public transports in Dhaka. Only 10.59% of participants stated that they never faced any unwanted action during travelling by local bus, mini bus or leguna. More than half 56.47% respondent felt harassed more than once while commuting. 17.65% participants address that they have face this situation once in their life and 15.29% experienced many times at the time of commuting. Students and working women usually experience sexual harassment compared to other women. Students and working women frequently travel every day and, thus, face incidences more frequently.
7.2 Harassed By Whom

Figure 05 points to the perpetrator or harasser. The major culprits in this respect are fellow passengers which rate is 78.82%, followed by bus/leguna conductor 15.29% and sometimes, even the bus driver 5.88%.

![Figure 05 - Harassed by whom](image)

Source: Field Survey, June 2018.

7.3 Types Of Harassment

Figure 06 expresses the types of harassment reported by respondent women commuters. One of the major types of harassment accounting for 50.59% percent responses is unwelcoming touches in their body and private biological parts. Another major type of harassment accounting for 17.65% percent responses is staring/leering intentionally. Sexual comments and obscene gesture are also common consisting 8.24% percent and 14.12% percent reprehensively. Other types of harassment accounting for 9.41% that are addressed with blocking the way of exit to disembark or following to assault physically.

![Figure 06 - Types of harassment](image)

Source: Field Survey, June 2018.
7.4 Reaction When Felt Harassed
The analysis show that females commuter react to incidences of harassment occurring in local bus, mini bus or leguna. The proportion of those who react always is about 8.24% only and about 74.12% women react many times when they felt harassed. On the other side 17.65% women never reacted to this kind of incident just because of self-respect or the fear of patriarchal dominant society.[Fig 07]

Source : Field Survey, June 2018.

7.5 Getting Supports From Others At The Time Of Reacting
This findings show that victimised female commuters rarely get supports from the other passengers or people around her at the time of reacting or getting harassed by the culprits. Figure 08 shows that 5.88% victims get support always from others to protest while 44.71% respondents stated that they never get any support at the time of being victimised or protesting the unwelcoming situations. About 49.41% respondents addressed that they get support sometimes regarding this issue. [Fig 08]

7.6 Effects Of Harassment
Source : Field Survey, June 2018.

Without sufficient transportation and well-disposed condition, women workforce support and efficiency are unfavourably influenced. Before picking instructive foundation or employment, women need to consider the course of their approach to goal which makes an impediment to their potential. Because of the arrangement shifts towards expanding women education, women chances at each level of training have become essentially finished the previous couple of decades. Nonetheless, numerous women educational prospects have been limited because of the insufficiency in the current transport framework. For their social mentalities and common tendency, the vast majority of the women can't
shield themselves from coarse bad conduct or physical contacting in the public transport which drives them to restrict their versatility. (Mannan, Ahmed: 2014)

The findings show that commuters, inevitably, cope with harassment and the responses are immediate and subsequent. The resulting impact is all the more enduring. Almost 40 percent of respondents said that they abstain from going after night; in this manner, limiting their versatility particularly with respect to socializing. All the more essentially, about 40-45 percent of participants have begun to wear the hijab and cover themselves as a methods for protecting themselves from provocation.

VIII. Recommendations

The literature and findings from this study propose that danger to women and girls security while travelling controls their versatility. This regularly brings about choices of not sending young girls to class or not letting women to look for work. In a nation like Bangladesh, where enrolment rate of girls and of female work constrain investment rate are now low, absence of satisfactory and secure transport exacerbates the issue. Given this, mainstreaming gender in transport strategies has additionally turned into an essential part of women strengthening as far as access to financial openings. An essential is to receive a rights-based way to deal with gendered advancement. This approach requests a promise to change in the prosperity of networks and people inside networks, based on women dynamic, liberated and important investment being developed and in addition in the reasonable dispersion of the subsequent advantages. (UN Declaration on the Right to Development; Mashiri et al, 2005)

The study identifies some of recommendation on the basis of respondent’s responses for government action to help prevent the unwelcoming occurrences of harassment. The open-ended survey exhibits a lot of suggestions from the female commuters. On the basis of their views some recommendations are-

8.1 Increasing Reserved Seats

In Dhaka city, all public buses allocated 9 reserved seats for women and children. Analysis shows that the reserved nine seats should be increased to meet the demand during busy hour. The survey reveals women’s opinion about reserved nine seats. 43% women suggested that reserved seat should be increased to 12-15, 39% women suggested to increase the reservation seat to 15-18 and 18% women think that the number should be above 20. (Fig 09)

Source: Field Survey, June 2018
8.2 Transport Infrastructure

At pick hour time, the quantity of transportation should increment to take care of the demand. Working women or student ought to be given pick and drop facilities from their working place and educational institution. A survey demonstrates that Physical and verbal harassment is a specific worry for all female employee, applying to labourers from all wage gatherings and occupations, and 79.6 percent of female expert specialists proposed the requirement for secure transport (Shefali: 2000). There ought to be strict rules for the conductor's behaviour towards women while gathering ticket reasonable. As they are the primary authority in the transport, conductors need to keep up a control over any argumentative circumstance with respect to saved nine seats for the female travellers. In the large two-door bus or double decor bus, doors can be separated with a designation of women-only and men-only door.

8.3 Moral Issues And Awareness

Another essential suggestion is to create awareness among the overall population about regarding women and ceasing from unacceptable conduct. None of the drivers, conductors or travellers know about the implicit rules out in the open transport and fundamental human privileges of travellers. In this association, media can contribute in bringing issues to light against badgering goes about and in addition giving data about laws on such provocation and discipline to culprits. In spite of the fact that a long haul process, incorporation of material in school educational modules on regarding women will make ready in such manner.

Finding shows that close to 70% women trust that a women friendly environment and condition can be guaranteed if the male travellers change their profound established qualities and mentality towards the women. This can be created by raising good qualities, moral values and giving family education from the adolescence.

8.4 Women Friendly Bus

A main consideration that prompts provocation in transports/smaller than expected transports is overcrowding. The survey show that women's first need is to present separate transports for them. Their second need is to present bigger buses with bigger women segment and strict dividing amongst ladies' and men's area.

"From July 2008, BRTC has lunched the special transport for women in Mirpur-Gulistan route and Khilgaon-Taltola-Gulistan route. Right around 95% of the travelers detailed that the quantity of transports working isn't adequate." (Rahman: 2010). "Moreover, the transport benefit framework additionally relegated women conductor (altogether there are 14 young ladies filling in as conductors in this organization). Be that as it may, Conductresses experience the harassment from male conductors, from absence of restrooms and toilets and spending their entertainment time in the bustling road." (Olsson, Thynell: 2006). Every one of these issues are the purposes behind unsuccessful women just transport benefit framework.

8.5 Strict Law Enforcement

It is a characteristic inclination of women that they can't challenge while being harassed or in the wake of being annoyed. They are habituated with the religious limit and social disengagement which don't give them enough fearlessness to oppose against any uncalled for event. Also, the casualties are blamed rather for the wrongdoer more often than not. In such manner, forcing strict measures and implication can be a solution for this condition. It is important to amend the current laws and execute those directions by supervision of BRTC expert, the minister of Women Welfare, Dhaka Metropolitan Police and judicial authority of the nation.
IX. Conclusion

Giving women inviting condition in transport isn't a totalled necessity, yet it is the demand of time of each female commuter. The specialist co-ops and strategy producers have taken a few activities for the improvement of this part. Both open and private area can get assistance from the result of this paper to build up the entire transportation framework remembering of women needs. In the meantime, women need to turn out from the custom of the *purdah*, need to split the quiet and talk up against any biased circumstance happening with them or some other female commuters. Continuously, their firm remaining in the ideal place and right time can encourage other women to handle any cruel circumstance.

X. References