

INTRUDING INTIMACIES

SEXUAL HARASSMENT OF WOMEN ACADEMICS IN PAKISTANI UNIVERSITIES

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Abstract: Many people in Pakistan have not recognized sexual harassment as a serious social issue in Pakistani society. Most people, including women either deny its existence or take it as a part of the normal routine of working life. This denial may be because of its namelessness. Ironically, it is not even recognized as a form of discrimination against women in the constitution of Pakistan¹. The academy in Pakistan inadvertently supports this policy by denying its presence in higher educational institutions. The purpose of this study was to investigate what actually constitutes sexual harassment in Pakistani context and its presence in HE institutions. The namelessness, technicalities involved and broad scope of the definitions of sexual harassment confuse the women even working in academia. They find it hard to pinpoint which types of sexually harassing behaviours may be described as sexual harassment. Six in-depth interviews of women academics were conducted from two universities in Pakistan. Findings from the study revealed that sexual harassment exist in HE institutions and women academics have experienced it but did not know about the term to name their experiences. This study also showed that women academics face different forms of sexual harassment, which includes psychological, physical and professional harassment from their male colleagues in academia.

Keywords: Gender, reintegration, resettlement, violence

I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Universities and other higher education institutions are expected to provide learning and working environments wherein all members of the academic community can pursue their studies, scholarship and work without bias or being intimidated. These institutions must lead by setting examples in eliminating gender inequalities among all

segments of academia. However, in reality, issues related to sexual harassment in academia present a different picture in Pakistan.

Sexual harassment is still a *sub rosa* topic generally in Pakistani culture and society and particularly with reference to the higher education, where it is not considered a recognized serious issue. People usually believe that sexual harassment is something that may be swept under the table. In the same way, women usually take it as a routine matter of their working lives.

Sexual harassment remained an unspeakable issue for generations. Recently, with efforts of civil societies and activist women groups a bill has been passed in the parliament of Pakistan to legislate against this form of violence; which has been neglected in the past due to lack of documentation and availability of data. Besides, there is a dearth of research studies that directly address the topic under discussion. Little research has been done from the perspective of the problems of working women in Pakistan [8], [66]. Thirdly, researches conducted on sexual harassment of working women generally explore the issue in the Pakistani society from a psychological perspective [6], [7], [8], [9], [10], [11]. A considerable number of studies on sexual harassment in higher education has been conducted in the West and in Africa [3], [4], [13], [26], [35], [39], [41], [42], [47], [55], [56], [57], [58], [60], [62], [64]. However, in Pakistan, this issue is not much explored as stated earlier. Researchers such as Anila, Shah and Zaidi (op.cit) took an interest in research studies on this topic as late as the 1990s. Little research has been done on the question of sexual harassment, especially in the higher education institutions of Pakistan.

Anila [10] conducted a research study on sexual harassment that focused on the sexual harassment of female students studying in one of the institutions of higher education in Pakistan. Sexual harassment of staff and faculty members has been investigated by a

¹ Recently Pakistani parliament has accepted sexual harassment of women at workplaces as a law in constitution

few institutional studies [25], [30], [47], [58] their studies found that female faculty members report experiencing sexual harassment at some point of their tenure. They also reported that the longer a woman pursues her educational and professional career, the more likely she will experience one or more forms of sexual harassment.

In the higher education institutions of Pakistan, where this research was carried out, it was informed by the respondents that at institutional level, there is no policy which directly addresses sexual harassment as a problem in the institutions. Additionally there is no support or counseling system to help the victims and suggest measures to prevent these incidences. It therefore seems to appear like denial of the fact that sexual harassment exists in HE institutions in Pakistan.

II. MY OWN EMPOWERMENT JOURNEY

I must acknowledge that engaging in this research study has empowered me in many ways. I am confident that I am better informed now, as well as aware of the issue of sexual harassment from a variety of viewpoints. I am sufficiently versed in conceptualizing myself with previous research studies, and through investigating women academics life experiences working in HE institutions of Pakistan. This task provided me with a great opportunity to develop a PG course in the Gender and Women Studies Department at AIOU addressing issues related to different types of violence against women including sexual harassment.

III. THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A feminist perspective was considered appropriate for this investigation as it problematised the gendered relations in universities in order to interrogate the taken for granted relationships between men and women which has led to inequalities in the distribution of resources and opportunities among them [31]. A feminist perspective explains sexual harassment of women in terms of power dynamics. In the same way, the relationship between man and woman has the potential for economic coercion that restricts women's economic independence. The harassment of women reflects women's status in society and asserts their sex role over their work role [17], [63].

Sexual harassment is traditionally explained as biologically based natural behaviour. One variation of this traditional perspective assumes that the human sex drive is stronger in men leading them to act in sexually aggressive ways towards women. This traditional model of men's behaviour is usually accepted in patriarchal Pakistani society holding women responsible for men's indecent sexual behaviour

towards them [10], [66]. The variation maintains that man and woman are naturally attracted to each other and therefore inevitably engage in sexually oriented behaviour in the workplace. This traditional approach has several notable shortcomings. The most important drawback is the failure to recognize that man and woman are members of gender groups that have been socialized into learned gender scripts and work behaviours. As Acker [2] wrote, gender refers to patterns, socially produced behaviours between females and males. It is not something that is inherited in people but individuals and social groups arrived at through interactions that occur during relationships in work places and institutions.

Martin [43] argued that traditional views made sexual harassment less significant by asserting that such behaviour is "normal" or that is a futile effort to change the human nature. Feminists approach affirms that sexual harassment involves the use of power of men which is derived from the economic or occupational sphere to gain benefits, impose punishment and assert dominance in sexual sphere. Thus, economic inequality and gender inequality reinforce each other undercutting women's potential for social equality and placing women in lower paying gender stereotyped jobs with less promotion opportunities. In this way, their subordination makes them vulnerable to sexual harassment [43].

IV. METHODOLOGY

Two HE Institutions in Pakistan were selected for the present study and six women academics working in these institutions were interviewed. Their ages vary from 27-55 years and their work experience ranges from 4 years to 30 years. These women are not only academics but also administrators in their universities. Their main job responsibilities include teaching and developing curriculums at graduate and post graduate levels. At the same time, most of them had administrative responsibilities for different research projects in their respective departments. The interviews were not tape-recorded, as participants were not comfortable with the idea and resisted recording of any part of it. Notes and pseudonyms were used for the research study. All of these interviews were conducted in Pakistan on a one on one basis and were conversed in Urdu and English language and some quotes were later on translated into English. However, sometimes interviewees also used English to describe some terms such as sexual harassment and gender for a couple of reasons, such as there is no specific word in Urdu language, or they themselves do not know about any word that they may have used as substitute. They also used English words and sentences for expressing their feelings regarding their

experience of sexual harassment. Each interview lasted for more than two hours.

In-depth interviews for data collection were preferred and were a basic tool for research. Personally, I believed that sexual harassment is an experience that may be best described through in-depth interviews and in a face to face conversational setting. As Reinhartz [54] said, for a woman to be understood in a social research study it may be necessary for her to be interviewed by a woman. The other important reason for taking up this method as a basic research tool is as Bell [14] argued, interviewing offers researchers access to people's ideas and thoughts in their own words rather than in the words of researchers. This asset is particularly important for study of women because in this way learning from women is antidote to centuries of ignoring women's ideas altogether or having men speak for women [14].

A majority of feminist agree on the fact that finding one's voice is a crucial process of research and writing [54]. Renate Klien, [cited in 54] suggested that we cannot speak for others but what we can do is speak out for others. It is realized that women are usually not encouraged to digress into the details of personal histories and recent anecdotes about their working life experiences. The author's own interpretation and meanings to their experiences and interpretations of the events were avoided at maximum level.

The research was privileged from feminist epistemology while taking women academic's life experiences into account since feminist epistemology is one of the few of which not only fits into research paradigm and recognizes personal interpretations and experiences in formulating theory but also gives recognition to personal accounts. Besides, feminist epistemologies confer rational meaning to women's emotional experiences and feelings and may contribute in theoretical analysis on women in a gendered oppressed society such as Pakistan.

In Pakistan the low status given to newly born girl child over a boy child and unjust treatment given to girls in the family and then to women in the society, makes it quite probable that women develop guilt for being a female in Pakistani society [34], [52]. Hassan [34] presented a comparative view about working women in western and Pakistani culture. She discussed, in sexual harassment, vulnerability is the key factor. The weakest sections of the society and particularly women are the most vulnerable to get abused. In the case of women in Pakistan, it is both gender and culture. They are thus doubly damned. Nonetheless even in western cultures where role of working women is quite normal phenomenon, it is clear that sexual harassment in the work places is common as

for the most patriarchal cultures. In Pakistan, men usually have a view about working women that either there must be something wrong with the woman or the family setup when a woman of the family is outside of her home. Women are considered dependent in Pakistani society and men are considered providers for their families and if women shift from their traditional roles e.g. of mothers, daughters, sisters and wives towards earning persons, they are inviting trouble in their lives [34].

The problem of sexual harassment in HE is not different in Pakistan from the rest of the world, However, cultural differences among the countries, preventive measures and strategies to address and politicizes the issue make the difference. As Kia-Ming [37] expressed, problems may look alike in different countries and different parts of the country but their causes and nature may be considerably different [37].

Due to the fact that most of the literature used for this research study on sexual harassment is derived from research studies conducted in the west, it was hard to find relevant literature on sexual harassment in the context of Pakistan to support a couple of the arguments. It may also be relevant to mention here that though some of the reference used in this research study are comparatively old, the absence of any recent literature makes them valid and relevant to the Pakistani situation, as Pakistani society is passing through a period most of the western countries may have gone through 35-40 years ago with reference to awareness and level of debate regarding sexual harassment.

V. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Mauthner [45] expressed that the issue of sexual harassment is a very sensitive and delicate topic to do research on as it reveals aspect of intimate experiences in a very personal and emotional way. Keeping the sensitive nature of the topic in mind and ensuring confidentiality, the names of the institutions and respondents were withheld. Further, participants were referred as W1, W2, W3, W4, W5, and W6.

VI. SEXUAL HARASSMENT: A NAMELESS ISSUE

The word sexual harassment is generally a key in defining sexual harassment and gender harassment to distinguish it from other types of sexual interactions. The American Heritage Dictionary [5] defined the word harass to "disturb" or "irritate persistently". In simple words sexual conduct such as the use of the words, physical contact or display of sexually explicit material used in a work place or an educational institution to bully or intimidate another person, constitutes sexual harassment. In this section, the focus is

on why sexual harassment was kept nameless for so many years [24], [39], [61]. The inability to recognize sexual harassment as a phenomenon has meant that it has had no place in the language. As language is one of the ways in which people describe and shape their understandings of the world, the absence of a label makes talking about something unnamed difficult.

W6 described her point of view as: What I should have said about the torture I had gone through during my early years in this institution? I don't know at that time what should I refer to such kind of behaviour? I did not know the name of this behaviour. This was the basic impediment for us to share or discuss these harassing behaviours (W6).

Spender [61] argued that language is so powerful in structuring a thought and a reality that it can blind its users to evidence of the physical world; objectives and events remain vague and imprecise, if they are not named. De Beauvoir [20] stated that men describe the world from their own point of view, which they confuse with the absolute truth. Spender [61] made a similar point. Her analysis showed that language plays a central part and that naming the world is essential for construction of reality. She contends that when a group holds monopoly on the naming of something then it is usually able to enforce its own particular bias on everyone. This bias is embedded in that name. From this, it can be inferred that those who have power to name the world are in a position to influence reality. This problem arose with the phenomenon of sexual harassment as it remained under-reported, under-debated and under-considered just because an appropriate terminology was not available to refer to it to form a legal, social, academic and empirical point of view. MacKinnon [39] described that lacking a term to express it, sexual harassment was literally unspeakable, which made a generalized, shared and social definition of it inaccessible [39].

Once coined and used, the term became widely used, especially by women who could then relate to the issue. Farley [24] found a form of male behaviour in the workplace which she said, required a name and sexual harassment seemed to come about as close to symbolizing the problem as language would permit.

Commentators concurred that women were "naming" an experience they had endured in silence for many years. Once the problem was named, women could at least speak out and mobilize politically to tackle it [13]. Mackinnon [40] argued that it was not surprising that women would not complain of an experience for which there has been no name. Dworkin [21] claimed that as men were engineers of cultures they had named all the worlds. Women had their values, perceptions and understandings defined for them.

Therefore, the majority of people use language that is sexist, developed by men in their own interest, formed especially to exclude women and oppress them. Behaviours that were not experienced by men remained nameless or considered normal and by default regarded as unproblematic by most women and men alike.

A. Issues in defining sexual harassment

Sudden Sexual harassment is very difficult, if not impossible to define, perhaps because of complicated factors that have delayed both awareness of and responses to sexual harassment. Lee and Heppner [38] traced historical, legal and research based definitions of sexual harassment and found multiple definitions that have evolved over time. They noticed a growing recognition by researchers and lawmakers that sexual harassment is a complex phenomenon that must be evaluated with attention to the context within which the behaviour occurs. Nonetheless, sexual harassment continued to occupy an ambiguous ground, extending from flirtatious behaviour to assault. One of the consequences is of the confusion surrounding concept of harassment is that although a large number of women reported harassing behaviours at their work places, such as touching, fondling and propositions, only a small number of women indicated that they believe they actually have been sexually harassed [27], [28].

Somers [60] asserted that problems in understanding and dealing with sexual harassment in academic setting stems largely from the lack of clear, concise and universal definition of sexual harassment. Some definitions are quite restrictive, such as guidelines of American Psychological Association (Ethical Principles for Psychologist 1981) while others are very broad [65]. Definitions often suffer from the use of qualifying and descriptive terminology, which further confuse the issue [19]. Crocker's [19] central argument was that institutions of Higher education should remove distinctions between more and less serious forms of sexual harassment and between conduct that is 'deliberate', 'intentional' and 'repeated' and that which occurred rarely or unintentionally. In Crocker's [19] view, all definitions including these kinds "potentially allow for extreme laxity in preventing, correcting or punishing sexual harassment" [19]. She proposed that an alternative to existing definitions of sexual harassment would be to adopt victim-based definitions. What is allowed to be counted as sexual harassment should be defined from a victims' perspective rather than from the perspective of others that may never have experienced the problem personally.

Until 1974, many women who were sexually harassed all over the world were at a loss because they did not

know how to describe this unwanted male behaviour. Because of the language deficiency, there was an inability to express feelings adequately or to describe a man's unwanted approaches. Not being able to communicate the existence of such a problem prevented women from sharing experiences with others and forced them into an isolated, vulnerable and silent position. One of the research participants mentioned this issue as: In my early years in academia, though I faced some incidences that I can now name as sexual harassment. It was almost impossible to label them as such during the 70's as there was not any name for this phenomenon. Definitely, I felt terrible and disgraceful, as my boss embarrassed me in the meetings before the rest of the colleagues. All I could do was to respond to him with nervous laughter, which now I think was not enough (W2).

Hassan [34] commented on the existence of sexual harassment inferring that it is present in workplaces in Pakistan and it is as common as it is the far most patriarchal cultures. Anila [10] explained that sexual harassment is an unspeakable issue in Pakistani society. Although all women knew and experienced its different forms, nobody cared or dared to report it because throughout life women have been discouraged from speaking about such incidents. As more and more women in Pakistan are venturing out into workplaces, the issue of sexual harassment is becoming increasingly important to address [10].

B. Sexual harassment defined.

Another persistent and troubling problem besides the namelessness of sexual harassment is that, in the literature there has been a lack of a widely agreed upon definition, one that was broad enough to encompass the variety of experiences to which sexual harassment refers and yet specific enough to be of practical use. Stein et al [59] defined sexual harassment as any form of unwanted sexual attention defined by one person who is the target of the harassment. Although it lacked technical precision, it clarified the core concept of sexual harassment, that is, unwanted and unwelcome sexual conduct. Respondents were also confused about one comprehensive definition of sexual harassment. They mentioned that there are many behaviours and actions that can be labeled as sexual harassment yet have not come across any definition that may be complete enough to enfold all actions and behaviours in one concrete and concise definition. One of the respondents mentioned this dilemma as: Actually, there is not a single concrete and complete definition that covers the whole realm of sexual harassment. There are many definitions in the literature, which define what is sexual harassment. However, nothing covers the entire spectrum of actions and behaviours. When you look it up in the literature, various groups of

people e.g. lawyers, educators and researchers define this problem differently. Research studies generally showed that except for the most outrageous and clearly inappropriate behaviour, whether or not an incident is labeled as harassment varies with several characteristics of incident and people involved. Therefore, it is not easy to have a comprehensive definition that can be applied to all situations (W1).

The existing definitions of sexual harassment come from a number of sources. However, despite many differences in the existing definitions of sexual harassment, behaviours that can constitute sexual harassment are fairly well defined and consistent for all groups and individual. Many researches [26], [30], [35], [41], [63] showed significant levels of agreement between women and men as to which behaviours constitute sexual harassment and which do not.

C. Legal definitions

Legal definitions defined the behaviour that is actionable under the law and can be use for the victim's protection. Sexual harassment is recognized as a form of sexual discrimination prohibited under the Civil Rights Act of 1964 guidelines published by the United States of America. The Equal Opportunity Commission (EEOC) in 1980 in the United States of America defined sexual harassment: Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when submission of such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment, such conduct has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with an individual's work performance creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment [21].

Unfortunately, at present in Pakistan, sexual harassment is not considered as an illegal act as there is no law and legal definition available for women to protect themselves against sexual harassment [11]. Therefore, working women, especially in Pakistan, cannot complain on a legal basis that they have been sexually harassed at their work places.

D. Empirical/academic definitions

Academic definitions were devised to provide an in-depth understanding of problem and to develop policy based solutions for it. These definitions have been developed empirically, through investigation of what various groups of individuals have perceived sexual harassment to be under different circumstances. Asking women who have gone through harassment to describe their experience provides empirical definitions of sexual harassment [28], [53]. The most complete effort of this sort was of Till [64] who

classified responses of national sample of college women in United States of America as a general category ranging from sexist comments to rape. A generally acceptable definition remained, however, unavailable [30]. Farley [24] described one of the earliest definitions quoted through literature as: Unsolicited, on reciprocal male behaviour that asserts a woman's sex role over her function as a worker. It can be any or all of the following; staring at, commenting upon or touching a woman's body parts; repeating non-reciprocated propositions for dates; demands for sexual intercourse; and rape [24].

Understandable and useful definitions of sexual harassment are important because they serve as a guide to behaviour in workplaces and academia. Crocker [19] asserted that definition can educate the community and promote discussion and conscientious evaluation of behaviour and experience. One can learn that certain behaviours are officially recognized as wrong and punishable and sexual harassment is one such behaviour. Paludi [51] defined sexual harassment from an organizational perspective and it may be the same for Higher Education institutions in Pakistan. She described that a major barrier to general acceptance that sexual harassment is a devastating force in our society continues to be the widespread belief that it is a matter of personal relation outside of an institution and unrelated to the institutional powers and prerogatives. However, the reality is that the structure and culture of an organization interact with psychological dynamics to increase women and men's vulnerability to sexual harassment [51].

Paludi's [51] organization viewed that sexual harassment resulted from opportunities presented by power and authority relationships, created by hierarchical structure of organizations. Paludi [51] further claimed that, since work and academic organizations are defined by vertical stratification and asymmetrical relations between supervisors and subordinates and teachers and students, individuals can use its power of their positions to extort sexual gratification from their subordinates [51].

She is of the view that, in sexual harassment, the harasser is an individual who holds expert and informational power in an academic work or workplace, e.g., grades, letters of recommendations and promotions. Thus, sexual harassment is about abuse of power within the society and at different levels in different organizations.

The key point of the behaviour to be defined as sexual harassment is that it is unwanted. This is the only factor that was common to all definitions of sexual harassment. Sexual harassment can also be defined as

any behaviour that makes women feel different, usually in detrimental way because of her sex. One respondent described sexual harassment as: Any behaviour or comment that can make women worry in a way and relates to their sex in a detrimental manner. Any phenomenon that makes them feel unsafe, insecure, embarrassed, and inferior and reduces women to a status of objects. I think that any behaviour designed to get at a woman and which shows obvious disregard of her basic rights to be educated with respect and as a human being and not an object (W4).

Evans [23] argued that the reality of sexual harassment has also been obscured by popular myths that are contradicted by women's actual experience. The prevalent myths about sexual harassment are that women somehow enjoy it or it is trivial and unimportant and happens to particular types of women who seek attention from men in any form and whose moral conduct may be questionable. It is therefore, not the problem of all the women and can be handled by women if it happens at all. Evans [23] also claimed and this study showed that women's real feelings about sexual harassment are in fact quite different from the myths prevailing in many societies all over the world.

VII. FORMS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Sexual harassment can be manipulated in many ways in an educational setup as well as in workplaces. This section is intended to provide some of the forms that women academics mentioned.

A. *Sexual harassment is a part of violence against women*

In a number of important ways, sexual harassment is more similar than different from other forms of violence against women [47]. Sexual harassment is a form of control over women. As with rape, incest and battering, the locus of control is sex [41], [42]. When successfully practiced, it sustains male dominance and women's subordination by privileging the sexual desires of men over the needs of women. Like other forms of violence against women, secrecy-covered incidences of sexual harassment and victimization [29]. Sexual harassment is practiced in the majority of workplaces in Pakistan too, yet talk of this experience is taboo. Women have been socialized to keep details of their victimization to themselves. Thus, the pain that sexual harassment brings often goes unnoticed and the suffering of its victims is greatly underestimated. One respondent offered her opinion as: I take sexual harassment as an act of violence against women; it may start as casual sexual jokes and can end up in rape. I consider it as a form of violence against women because; it violates the basic right of

women as a human being. It destroys the life and reputation of women and they feel humiliated and suffer unforgiving pain in which they accuse their own self (W5).

B. *Sexual harassment as a form of sex discrimination*

Sexual harassment has been identified as the most common form of sex discrimination experienced by women in universities that is rarely acknowledged or reported [15], [17], [26], [41], [51]. Sexual harassment acts like a wall that blocks young women's movement towards equality. Equal opportunity has increased young women's access to education but sexual harassment ensures that they remain unequal there, promoting further discrimination and exclusion [64]. Sexual harassment is a form of discrimination based on one's sex. It is a type of discrimination that limits women's abilities in workplaces and academic settings. One of the woman academics commented: I think it is a form of sex discrimination against women. Once I had an opportunity to attend a training workshop and one of my male colleagues was very much interested in that course, though it was not very relevant to his field of research. He started to pressure administration to take my name off from the list of the people chosen by selection committee. Besides, he tried to ridicule me with his dirty comments in faculty meetings. He engaged in my character assassination and because of him my family life suffered. I had a really terrible time and was very disturbed (W5).

Mackinnon [40] argued that the practice of sexual harassment is supported institutionalization of gender inequality in all its forms. Even those women who managed to avoid firsthand experience of it are negatively impacted by its practice. Men have been using sexuality in exerting control or exercising power over women at home, in the workplace and in other areas that have been at the centre of feminist struggle for at least the last century. Because so many women have no other choice but to handle their sexual harassment problems by quitting or changing jobs, sexual harassment becomes a significant factor in women job turnover and slow or stagnant career advancement [51]. Besides, sexual harassment sustains the gender gap in pay and other benefits. Sexual harassment is reported to be one method used to maintain less favorable economic and occupational status within organizations [17], [58], [65].

Broadly defined, sexual harassment is referred to an unwanted imposition of sexual requirements in the context of unequal power relation [41]. Nicholson and Welsh [49] defined sexual harassment as any unsolicited and unwanted sexual advance, request for

sexual favors comment or physical contact, having a purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with the performance of the individual working or academic performance in creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive working or academic environment.

C. *Sexual harassment as a manifestation of hostility*

The first wave of sexual harassment litigation in the United States of America almost entirely involved complaints of *quid pro quo* harassment and, in fact, until the late 1980s, only those cases involving loss of employment were considered worthy of legal action. But, in 1985, the US Supreme Court broke new conceptual ground by declaring actionable claims in which there was no evidence of exchange of favors, nor was there any suggestion that the victim was punished for her intolerance. Their opinion legitimated a second category of perpetration now commonly referred to as 'hostile environment' harassment. Hostile environment is a far most common form of harassment that sexual blackmail or *quid pro quo*. Hostile environments are created by sexualized talk that results in some body experience a demeaning or humiliating behaviour. They occurred when acts of sexual harassment are both products and precipitators of sexist thinking and misogynist attitudes [19]. Hostile environments are nurtured in any organization where values supporting gender inequality are legitimated and hostility against women is permitted [48]. The primary difference between *quid pro quo* and hostile environment is about manifestation of power. In both cases, power is being exerted over others. In hostile environment, social power based on gender is exerted on the female.

One of participants described it as: I was the only female member when I joined the institution in the university. At tea and lunch breaks, my colleagues used to exchange sexual jokes with each other ignoring my presence. That situation used to make me very uncomfortable and finally, I started avoiding them at breaks. I also did not like the company of one of my colleagues, sometimes felt scared of him. He hummed dirty songs female's body and made sexist comments. He even sometimes made images of female bodies parts on paper and left them on my table. However, in the presence of other people he always behaved rudely towards me, as he it didn't like me. So working in that atmosphere was not easy. He made my life hellish for some years (W1).

Contrary to this, one of my respondents did not agree with the rest of the women academics. According to her: I have never experienced sexual harassment in my life. When my head of the department admires my work and sometimes appreciate my dress sense, I simply like it. He encourages me in front of my

colleagues too. I think it is in the minds of women that men usually exploit them and their beauty. It is just a matter of thinking, how one takes the other person's remarks. I never felt that my head or colleagues harassed or exploited me. Sometimes my colleagues also made jokes but nothing serious about them, I think when you come out to work in male dominated institutions, and one has to be bold enough to face these trivial things (W3).

It may be inferred here that, like many other women living in the patriarchal Pakistani society, she may not be able to understand gender dynamics prevailing in the society. She may also be persuaded by patriarchal power relations already existing in the Pakistani society and has accepted them as they are, without challenging unequal gender relations.

Beside this, it is argued that it is hard to tell people that they have crossed a line between harmless flirting and harassment. I personally feel that the difference between harassment and flirting sometimes overlapped and woman and man do not know that it has happened between them. It may be concluded here that flirting is said to take place when women and men mutually welcome attention and they do not wish to stop, but it carried on, then eventually sexual harassment happened. It is emphasized here that sexual harassment should be defined by its impact on victim and not by lack of intension of harasser.

As discussed above it is still a difficult question: How does one know when someone is a victim of sexual harassment. From a theoretical point of view, some feminist argue that sexual harassment occurs when a person feels she has been sexually harassed. For others, sexual harassment occurs when a behaviour that a woman experiences, meets objective criteria of unwanted, unsolicited verbal or physical sexual abuse. Then who should decide when sexual harassment has taken place, the woman herself or an observer who is an 'expert' in the field? [38]. I believe that, since women experience such a wide range of situations in which sexually harassing behaviour takes place, no single statement can adequately encompass all their experiences or all the different interpretations of these experiences. Education, social conditioning, level of maturity, sexual experience and political awareness all play a significant part in women's perception of what constitutes sexual harassment.

VIII. OPTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Certainly, this research study will raise many interesting and crucial issues concerning sexual harassment in society in general and HE institutions in particular which still needs to be addressed for further research in Pakistan. It is admitted here that this study

is limited and cannot be generalized for all women academics in all HE institutions in Pakistan. As there still is a greater need to investigate sexual harassment in HE in terms of power, men's perception of sexual harassment, its impact on women's lives, women coping mechanisms, and conflict of interests between women and men within the academia in Pakistan. Sexual harassment as an ethical issue influencing academic freedom and personal privacy of women in academia may also be further addressed.

IX. CONCLUSION

Within this paper I have discussed that how not having a term to describe an experience of sexual harassment has made it difficult for women to discuss the subject and has prevented the development of generalized, shared and social definition of the phenomenon. However, the lack of a definitive term should not be equated with non-existence of sexual harassment. Once a label was awarded to describe the phenomenon of sexual harassment women began to describe the experiences they face everywhere, including academia and in the rest of the world. However, it still remains difficult for Pakistani women to do so, since it will take some time before Pakistani women can discuss, publicize and politicize this issue in society as well as in educational institutions in Pakistan. Meanwhile, sexual harassment may continue to exert pressure in different forms to intimidate and discriminate against women, neglecting their basic right as human beings. There are various definitions available in literature but it is still unclear for a majority of women to include specific actions as sexually harassing. The judgment of men's sexually harassing behaviours also depends on women perceptions, e.g., how a woman experiences the incident. Nevertheless, there is one common factor on which every definition agrees, that sexual harassment is an unwanted and unsolicited sexual conduct which majority of women do not like and feel uncomfortable with.

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