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Published: 01/01/2022

Document Version
Final published version

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Please cite the original version:
Anwar, F. (2022). *Victimisation of Women in Public Places: Sexual Harassment in Pakistan, Ghana, and Finland*. Åbo Akademi University. https://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-12-4199-4

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Victimisation of Women in Public Places: Sexual Harassment in Pakistan, Ghana, and Finland

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Cover picture by Sameeha Khaliq

Victimisation of Women in Public Places: Sexual Harassment in Pakistan, Ghana, and Finland

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Abstract

The overall aim of the thesis was to investigate the prevalence rate of victimisation of women from sexual harassment in public places in countries with different cultural norms: Pakistan, Ghana, and Finland. The study investigated victimisation of women from sexual harassment in public places from various perspectives including attributes associated with the victims (marital status, age, education), concomitants of sexual harassment (immediate distress, immediate defensive reactions, long-term negative consequences, sharing of the experience), and the association of sexual harassment with victimisation from other types of aggression. It was also investigated whether victimisation from other types of aggression and poor self-esteem could serve as risk factors for sexual harassment. The relationship between victimisation from sexual harassment and the development of PTSD and depressive symptoms was also studied. Furthermore, the moderating and mediating social factors involved in the process, more precisely sharing behaviour of the victims, the social support they receive on the disclosure of their experience, abuse-related shame, and fear of being harassed, were examined.

Study I: The study aimed at examining the frequency of sexual harassment and its psychological concomitants among female victims in Pakistan with different levels of education. A questionnaire was filled in by 543 female students in Pakistan, the mean age was 22.3 years ($SD = 4.3$), the age range was 16–47 years. Of the respondents, 481 were single and 55 married, 417 had a Bachelor's degree or less, and 125 had Master's degree or higher. The questionnaire included scales measuring (a) victimisation from physical, verbal, and nonverbal sexual harassment, (b) reactions to sexual harassment, including (i) immediate distress, (ii) immediate defensive reactions, (iii) long-term negative consequences, and (iv) sharing of the experience with someone. Two more scales were also included to measure (c) the identity of the perpetrator and (d) the location where the sexual harassment took place. Sexual harassment was found to be most common in *marketplaces*, and the perpetrator was typically *a stranger*. Nonverbal sexual harassment was the most frequent type. The most common single act of harassment was identified as being *"stared at with dirty looks"* followed by *"stood close to you in a crowded place"*. The most common reaction of the victims was to *run away*. Respondents highly victimised from physical, verbal, or nonverbal harassment scored higher than others

on defensive reactions, immediate distress, and long-term negative concomitants. Age, marital status, and education level of the victims were not associated with the amount of victimisation from any type of sexual harassment, but respondents with a high education scored significantly higher on negative reactions to sexual harassment.

Study II: The aim of the study was to investigate to what degree victimisation from sexual harassment, and the level of emotional distress due to sexual harassment, are associated with four other types of victimisation, thus constituting revictimisation and/or multiple victimisation. A questionnaire was completed by 280 female university students and lecturers in Ghana. The mean age was 26.7 years (SD = 6.2). Of the respondents, 6% had high school education, 49.1% had tertiary education, 36.7% had a Bachelor's degree, and 8.2% had a Master's degree. The questionnaire included scales for measuring the frequency of victimisation from sexual harassment, emotional distress due to sexual harassment, retrospective measures of physical punishment during childhood, and victimisation from peer aggression at school. Victimisation from verbal and physical intimate partner aggression as an adult was also included. No correlation was found between the amount of sexual harassment and the age of the respondents. Unmarried women were harassed significantly more than married ones. The most common act of harassment was being *"stared at with dirty looks"* followed by *"having one's hand shaken or pinched in the palm"*. The most common perpetrator was a *friend* or *fellow student*, and the most common place of harassment was found to be *at university*. Respondents with a higher level of education underwent higher emotional distress due to sexual harassment than others. Respondents who were more than average victimised from sexual harassment scored significantly higher on physical punishment during childhood, victimisation from peer aggression at school (thus constituting revictimisation), and victimisation from verbal and physical intimate partner aggression (multiple victimisation). When the frequency of sexual harassment was controlled for, emotional distress caused by sexual harassment correlated positively with victimisation from peer aggression at school, and victimisation from verbal intimate partner aggression.

Study III: The aim of the study was to investigate whether victimisation from prior and simultaneous aggression found as risk factors for victimisation from sexual harassment in Ghana (Study II) could be identified in Finland. A questionnaire was completed by 591 female university students in Finland. The mean age was 25.2 years (SD = 7.1).

Nonverbal sexual harassment was found to be the most common type followed by physical harassment. The most common place of victimisation was in a *nightclub or bar*, and the most common perpetrator was *a stranger*. The most common single act of victimisation was "*to be stared at with filthy looks*" followed by "*talked to in an unpleasant sexual way*". Victimisation from sexual harassment in public places was significantly predicted by physical punishment during childhood, victimisation from peer aggression at school, victimisation from verbal and physical intimate partner aggression, and low self-esteem. When frequency of sexual harassment was controlled for, emotional distress due to it was significantly correlated with victimisation from verbal intimate partner aggression, victimisation from peer aggression at school, and low self-esteem.

Study IV: The aim of the study was to examine the association between victimisation from sexual harassment and the development of PTSD and depressive symptoms among victims, and in addition, to examine potentially contributing mediating and moderating social factors involved in the process. A questionnaire was completed by 586 female university students in three cities in Pakistan. The mean age was 22.3 years (*SD* = 4.3). Of the respondents, 84.1% were single and 15.9% were married. 62.1% of the respondents had a Bachelor's degree or less, and 37.9% had a Master's degree or higher. The questionnaire included scales for measuring the frequency of sexual harassment, sharing behaviour of the victims of sexual harassment with a close one, the subsequent social support they received on disclosure of the experience, abuse-related shame, fear of being harassed, self-esteem, symptoms of PTSD, and depression. Abuse-related shame and fear of being harassed were found to serve as mediators between exposure to sexual harassment and PTSD and depression, respectively. Social support, but not simply sharing the experience with a close one, had a moderating effect. The indirect effect of abuse-related shame was weaker among women who received social support after being victimised. No association was found between victimisation from sexual harassment and the level of self-esteem of the victims.

Key words: Sexual harassment, public places, concomitants, education, emotional distress, risk factors, revictimisation, multiple victimisation, abuse-related shame, fear of being harassed, sharing behaviour, social support, PTSD, depressive symptoms, Pakistan, Ghana, Finland.

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Acknowledgements

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List of Original Publications

Original Articles:

Article I
Anwar, F., Österman, K., & Björkqvist, K. (2019). Three types of sexual harassment of females in public places in Pakistan. *Journal of Contemporary Medicine, 9*(1), 65–73. https://doi.org/10.16899/gopctd.468324

Article II
Anwar, F., Österman, K., Afari-Korkor, J., & Björkqvist, K. (2020). Sexual harassment and victimization from four other types of interpersonal aggression in Ghana: A cycle of victimization. *Journal of Educational, Health, and Community Psychology, 9*(1), 1–20. https://doi.org/10.12928/jehcp.v9i1.14195

Article III
Anwar, F., Österman, K., & Björkqvist, K. (2020). Risk factor for sexual harassment in public places. *Technium Social Sciences Journal, 8*(1), 329–343. https://doi.org/10.47577/tssj.v8i1.594

Article IV
Anwar, F., Österman, K., & Björkqvist, K. (2022). Sexual harassment and psychological well-being of the victims: Role of abuse-related shame, fear of being harassed, and social support. *Eurasian Journal of Medical Investigation, 6*, (2), 227-239. https://doi.org/10.14744/ejmi.2022.73988

Author Contribution
The first author is responsible for the collection of all data, and for writing the main part of the text. The statistical analyses have been conducted jointly within the research group.

1. Introduction

1.1 Aim of the Studies

The overall aim of the thesis was to examine victimisation of women from sexual harassment in public places in three countries with distinct cultural backgrounds. The countries selected were Pakistan, Ghana, and Finland. Victimisation from sexual harassment in public places was studied from different perspectives. These included descriptions of the most common behaviours experienced by women in the three countries, frequency of victimisation from sexual harassment, psychological concomitants, emotional distress due to victimisation (study I, II, III), and level of education of the victims (study I, II). The association between victimisation from sexual harassment and the self-esteem of the victims (study III, IV) was also investigated. Furthermore, it was examined to what degree victimisation from sexual harassment was associated with prior victimisation during childhood from physical punishment at home and peer aggression at school, as well as with victimisation from verbal and physical intimate partner aggression during adulthood, thus, qualifying sexual harassment as revictimisation or multiple victimisation, or both (study II). In addition, it was investigated whether prior and/or simultaneous victimisation from other types of aggression and the level of self-esteem of the victims could serve as risk factors for victimisation from sexual harassment (study III). The relationships between victimisation from sexual harassment and the development of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depressive symptoms were analysed (study IV). Furthermore, the mediating and moderating role of different social factors involved in the process were investigated (study IV).

1.2 Sexual Harassment in Public Places

The ground-breaking work of MacKinnon (1979) brought sexual harassment into the academic limelight defining it as "the unwanted imposition of sexual requirements in the context of a relationship of unequal power" (p. 1). Efforts were made in order to propose a model explaining different behavioural dimensions of sexual harassment; unwanted sexual attention, gender harassment, and sexual coercion (Gelfand et al., 1995). The model showed stability across cultures (Holland & Cortina, 2016). The verbal, nonverbal, and physical behaviours of sexual harassment including sexual gestures, sexual jokes, staring, whistling,

pinching, groping, requests for an unwanted kiss or a date, repeated requests or threats to get sexual favours, an attempt of or completed rape, all fall under the subcategories of gender harassment, unwanted sexual attention, and sexual coercion (Burn, 2019; Fairchild & Rudman, 2008; Reed et al., 2019). Some researchers have suggested that any sexually suggestive behaviour that is apparently friendly should be labelled as sexual harassment (Benokraitis, 1997). Initially, the model was applied to understand sexual harassment as a form of gender and sexual discrimination at workplaces and educational institutions where several negative associations with victimisation from sexual harassment were identified, including a hostile work environment, job dissatisfaction, and negative psychological well-being (Murrell et al., 1995). However, victimisation of women from sexual harassment outside the workplace was first highlighted in the late 80s with feminists' demand to protect women in public places. A meta-analysis showed that efforts by feminists to legitimize intrusion into women's privacy in public places have been successful in highlighting and naming the sufferings of women that they face (Vera-Gray, 2016). The issue of sexual harassment in public places recently received worldwide media and public attention due to an incident on New Year's Eve, 2015, in Cologne, Germany (Chambers, 2016). Moreover, the #meetoo movement on social media has encouraged women around the globe to share their experiences of sexual harassment, thus making this common daily problem a global issue of aggression against women (Hosterman et al., 2018).

Sexual harassment has been declared as a form of gender-based aggression against women (Council of Europe, article 40, 2011) which includes a variety of abusive and discriminatory behaviours towards women ranging from "staring" to "rape". Gardner (1995) defines street harassment as, "that group of abuses, harrying, and annoyances characteristic of public places and uniquely facilitated by communication in public" (p. 4). Unlike in a workplace setting where a perpetrator is an acquaintance to the victim (Mkono, 2010), with few exceptions (Aryeetey, 2004), perpetrators of sexual harassment in public places have been found to be strangers; this is the case in both developing and developed countries (Vera-Gray, 2016). Moreover, the perpetrators in most of the cases studied were men perpetrating sexual harassment against women (Kearl, 2014), and ethnic and sexual minorities (Cortina, 2004; López & Yeater, 2021). A review of the literature shows that no consistent term has been used to detail men's intrusion into the daily lives of women in public places (Vera-

Gray, 2016). For example, it has been termed street harassment (Fileborn & Vera-Gray, 2017), public harassment (Baptist & Coburn, 2019), and stranger harassment (Spaccatini et al., 2019). Although it has been found that the perpetrator of sexual harassment in public places was not always a stranger (Aryeetey, 2004). Moreover, the word "street" does not fully explain and reflects the larger public domain (Brockschmidt & Wadey, 2021), where women are exposed to or may experience victimisation from sexual harassment, for example in restaurants (Kearl, 2014), bars (Mellgren et al., 2018), transportation (Orozco-Fontalvo et al., 2019), educational institutions (Apaak & Sarpong, 2015), and marketplaces (Rosenbaum et al., 2020). Therefore, in the present thesis, instead of "street", the word "public place" is being used to demarcate the location where the victimisation of women from sexual harassment that is examined is taking place.

1.3 Theoretical Framework
Several theories have explained the mechanism of sexual harassment at workplaces. A number of those theories can be employed to understand victimisation from sexual harassment in public places. A few important theories are discussed below to explain the theoretical framework of the studies.

1.3.1 The Theory of Structural Violence
The theory of structural violence offers a useful context to understand how structures or institutions restrict the excess of individuals to their fundamental needs and human rights (Ho, 2007). Structural violence, at times also referred to as indirect violence, originates in its unequal distribution of power and resources among individuals. Social injustice and inequalities are used to "threaten people into subordination" (Galtung, 1969, p.172), constituting a structural violation of human rights (Ho, 2007).

In the case of sexual harassment, the prevailing power distance and gender inequality place less powerful members of the society in a vulnerable position to be victimised from gender-based aggression. Similarly, rigid gender roles and discrimination against women have been identified as strong predictors of violence against women (Webster et al., 2021). Women who are frequently victimised from other types of aggression tend to find sexual harassment as a less severe form of aggression. However, the social stigma attached to the victimisation from sexual aggression intensifies their experience of victimisation from sexual harassment (Rodriguez-Martinez & Cuenca-Piqueras, 2019).

Similarly, gender inequality and the low status of women in a country have been found to be associated with high levels of sexual aggression against women in comparison to countries where the status of women is higher (Yllö & Straus, 1999; Yodanis, 2004). Perpetrators take advantage of the hierarchical social system and commit sexual harassment against women (Das, 2009). In other words, sexual harassment has been used as a tool to sustain gender hierarchy and male dominance (Berdahl, 2007; MacKinnon, 1979). The larger the social inequalities in a given society, the greater is the rate of violence against women (Caprioli, 2009). Thus, sexual harassment is a violation of women's rights by the social institutions (Rodriguez-Martinez & Cuenca-Piqueras, 2019). As Galtung (1969) stated, when a man commits aggression against a woman, it is a case of personal violence, but when such aggression against women becomes common in a society, then it is a form of institutionalised or structural violence, in which men use aggression to maintain power or control over women (Yodanis, 2004).

1.3.2 Multiple Victimisation and Revictimisation/ Cycle of Violence
As postulated by the cycle of violence model, violence begets violence (Widom, 1989). Extended research on the model has corroborated that victimisation from violence can lead to not only perpetration but also repeat victimisation (Widom et al., 2008). One form of aggression can make the individual vulnerable to another, and this cycle of victimisation is called repeat victimisation (Pease & Farrell, 2017). Exposure to the victimisation from multiple types of aggression has been termed as poly-victimisation (Turner et al., 2017) or co-occurrence of violence (Simmons et al., 2015).

An association has been found between maltreatment during childhood and revictimisation later in life in the form of victimisation from peer aggression and intimate partner aggression (Baldry, 2003). The development of a victim personality due to victimisation from physical punishment during childhood has also been suggested (Björkqvist & Österman, 2014), and those victimised during childhood were found to be victimised from peer aggression at school more often than others (Afifi et al., 2012; Corboz et al., 2018; Söderberg et al., 2016). Furthermore, victimisation from aggression during childhood and/or adolescence has also been found to be predictive of abusive intimate partner relationships later in life (Heyman& Sleps, 2002; Manchikanti Gómez, 2011). Therefore, some researchers have defined revictimisation as the victimisation from

different types of aggression at the hands of different perpetrators over a period of time (Matlow & DePrince, 2013). For example, women who reported one or more incidences of victimisation since their childhood were found to be at higher risk of revictimisation (Scott, 2003). Likewise, those who have been victimised from sexual harassment in high school were found to be victimised from multiple types of aggression including victimisation from peers and intimate partner aggression later in life (Chiodo et al., 2009). It has been argued that exposure to multiple types of aggression decreases the ability of the victims to escape from being victimised in an abusive relationship (Auerbach Walker & Browne, 1985), and they develop feelings of powerlessness, self-blaming, and lower levels of self-esteem (Ramsey-Klawsnik, 2017).

Victimisation from multiple types of aggression by one or multiple perpetrators could lead to the severe negative psychological well-being of the victims (Ramsey-Klawsnik, 2017; Simmons et al., 2015). In addition, it has been linked with increased emotions of abuse-related shame and guilt (Aakvaag et al., 2016). The fear of being victimised again (Mellgren et al., 2018) and the emotional distress due to multiple victimisation (Palm et al., 2016) might make the victims psychologically vulnerable to further victimisation including sexual harassment. The fact that studies have identified an association between sexual harassment and victimisation from childhood abuse (Campbell et al., 2009), peer aggression at school (Pellegrini, 2001), and intimate partner aggression (Campbell et al., 2009) corroborates the hypothesis.

1.3.3 Hofstede's National Cultural Framework

Hofstede's national cultural framework (2001) has been used to study human behaviours from a cross-cultural perspective. Cultural differences might impact the likelihood of men perpetrating sexual harassment against women and the tolerance among women against such behaviours (Luthar & Luthar, 2007). To test this assumption, a number of studies have applied the national cultural framework (Luthar & Luthar, 2007; 2008; Merkin, 2012) since incidences of sexual harassment vary by country, age, marital status, and educational level of the victims (Merkin, 2012). Moreover, sexual harassment can be perceived differently based on one's cultural background, where certain behaviours labeled as sexually harassing in one culture might not be considered as offensive in another (Luthar & Luthar, 2002; Pryor et al., 1997) as people interpret messages in their social interactions differently (Soares et al., 2007). Therefore, Hofstede's three

cultural dimensions of power distance, individualism-collectivism, and masculinity-femininity are relevant as parts of the theoretical framework for the present study.

The dimension of power distance explains the unequal distribution of power among individuals, thus promoting inequality as an acceptable norm. According to the dimension of individualism-collectivism, societies differ in how their cultural values encourage individuals to pursue their personal interests or endorse interdependence and loyalty to their community, family, and/or in-group (Hofstede, 2001). The dimension of masculinity-femininity suggests differences in the division of gender roles and responsibilities between males and females in different national cultures (Kalra & Bhugra, 2013). Hofstede (2001) suggested that in masculine societies, use of force and power is endorsed and there is a clear distinction between gender roles, whereas in feminine cultures, gender roles overlap, and caring for others and quality of life are encouraged.

1.3.4 Feminist Theory

Feminist theory is also relevant for the current study. It proposes that unequal distribution of power and the subordinate position of women can result in discrimination, oppression, and violence against women at different levels (Bograd, 1988). This theory has been argued to be one of the most dominant models to describe and explain the victimisation of women (Gelles, 1993, p.41). Along with individual attributes, the theory takes into account certain socio-cultural factors that could contribute to the victimisation of women from sexual harassment. Studies testing the feminist theory substantiate the association between violence against women and the educational, occupational, and political status of women in a given country.

Exponents of the feminist theory argue that gender inequality, power imbalance, and society's tolerance toward aggression against women could be risk factors for sexual violence and sexual harassment against women (Berdahl, 2007; Bowman, 1993; Rozee & Koss, 2001). Moreover, sexual harassment may be interpreted as a tool to assert power and to uphold the gender hierarchy (Berdahl, 2007; Halper & Rios, 2018). It is supported by the fact that aggression against women is prevalent in countries with patriarchal cultures (Luthar & Luthar, 2008), probably because the cultural norms of these countries are tolerant toward discriminatory behaviours (Merkin, 2009). In addition, it has been argued

that rigid norms promote gender inequality, resulting in sexist hostility and discrimination against women (Cornwall & Lindisfarne, 2016).

1.3.5 Rape Myths Acceptance and Victim-blaming

The concept of victim-blaming can be explained by the theory of rape myth acceptance (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994); that is, the endorsement of false and stereotypical beliefs about the incident of rape, the rapist, and the victim (Burt, 1980). Rape myths have been described as "attitudes and beliefs that are generally false but are widely and persistently held, and that serve to deny and justify male sexual aggression against women" (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994, p.134).

It has been argued that irrespective of culture, female victims are blamed for allowing the harasser to repeat the harassment (Cortina, 2004). Similarly, affirmation of traditional masculine norms in a given society blames female victims for their sexualized appearance that incites the harasser (Gramazio et al., 2018). The stigmatization associated with being a victim of sexual aggression induces shame in the victims (Lewis, 1992). Thus, social reactions play a key role in maintaining gender differences in a given culture. In addition, the stigma attached is sometimes so strong that even a positive social reaction is not sufficient to help the victim cope with the consequences of sexual harassment (Takeuchi et al., 2018). Thus, most women hide their experiences and do not seek formal help to avoid large-scale social rejection and added distress (Ullman, 1999). Therefore, victimisation of women keeps going on because of the fact that people fail to perceive sexual harassment as a form of sexism and aggression against women (Frye, 1983).

Social support has been found to have a positive impact on the well-being of the victims in coping with the aftermath of sexual harassment (Cortina, 2004) and in preserving the sense of worthiness and positive well-being of the victims (Littleton, 2010). Thus, positive social support could be pivotal in repelling the notion of victim-blaming in case of victimisation from sexual harassment.

1.3.6 Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory

Bronfenbrenner proposed that every person develops within many deeply interconnected rings of influence (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). These interconnected rings one lives in include microsystems (i.e. family, school, neighbourhood), mesosystems (connections between microsystems), exosystems (larger social systems), macrosystems (i.e. cultural values,

customs, laws), and the chronosystems (environmental changes over time) (Hess & Schultz, 2008). It has been argued that observations, interactions, and socialisation norms could impact one's perception of victimisation as well as the perpetration of aggression (Sheng, 2020). This might be the case also for victimisation from sexual harassment. Studies have applied Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory to understand the victimisation of children and adolescents at multiple levels (Sabri et al., 2013), victimisation from peer aggression at school (Espelage, 2014), revictimisation from sexual violence (Pittenger et al., 2018), cyberbullying (Hong et al., 2018), and victimisation of women from intimate partner violence (Nelson & Lund, 2017). Similarly, the psychological consequences of sexual assault have been examined from the perspective of social ecology and its contribution at multiple levels (Campbell et al., 2009).

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) could also be useful in examining one's interpersonal relationships within a complex environment consisting of immediate family, schools, society in general, and the prevailing cultural norms in a given society. Therefore, it can be applied to the present study to understand the impact of complex social systems on the tendency of women to be victimised repeatedly over time (Sheng, 2020), thus qualifying sexual harassment as a form of revictimisation and/or multiple victimisation. Moreover, it can be used to understand how individuals from different socio-cultural backgrounds and with distinct socialisation patterns perceive and experience sexual harassment

1.4 Concomitants of Victimisation from Sexual Harassment

1.4.1 Consequences of Sexual Harassment

Systematic reviews of the literature have revealed negative effects of sexual harassment on the mental, emotional, and physical well-being of the victims (Gautam et al., 2019; Klein & Martin, 2021). The most frequently reported consequences include being scared of becoming victimised again and victims becoming more conscious of their appearance (Mellgren et al., 2018), developing fear of certain places (Pinchevsky et al., 2020), and avoiding going to specific public places (Brockschmidt & Wadey, 2021). Female victims have also reported feelings of embarrassment, loss of appetite, and disturbed sleep (Keswara et al., 2017), anxiety, loss of self-confidence (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2014), and being let down and insulted due to the victimisation from sexual

harassment (Wright & Fitzgerald, 2007). It has been argued that having an intense negative emotional reaction like fear, shame, helplessness, and guilt due to traumatic victimisation leads to the development of high levels of PTSD symptoms (Ozer et al., 2003). Sexual harassment, as a subtle form of aggression, has adverse impacts on the daily life of women where they have to stay alert and conscious about their appearance and lifestyle to avoid discomfort (Mellgren et al., 2018) and subsequent social shame (Leskela et al., 2002).

1.4.2 Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

People who are exposed to a traumatic event may develop post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The symptoms include flashbacks of the experience, avoidance, negative changes in thoughts and mood, hyperarousal, and changes in physical and emotional reactions (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Repeated memories of traumatic events are a common factor among patients suffering from PTSD and depression; depression is mostly associated with anxiety, and PTSD with feelings of fear and helplessness (Reynolds & Brewin, 1999). The psychological concomitants of sexual assault including rape have been studied extensively. A significant association has been identified between sexual assault, PTSD symptoms, and symptoms of depression in the victims (Pegram & Abbey, 2019; Wolfe et al., 1998).

Victimisation from sexual harassment meets the criteria of A1 and A2 types of PTSD (Avina & O'donohue, 2002). However, the development of PTSD symptoms due to victimisation from sexual harassment in public places has not been given thorough academic attention. PTSD symptoms have been diagnosed among victims who have experienced moderate (a combination of gender harassment and unwanted sexual attention) to severe (a combination of gender harassment, unwanted sexual attention, and sexual coercion) forms of sexual harassment (Stockdale et al., 2009). Furthermore, it has been argued that victims of severe sexual assault develop PTSD due to negative social reactions (Littleton, 2010; Peter-Hagene & Ullman, 2015). Similarly, low levels of post-trauma social support have been identified as one of the significant predictors of post-traumatic stress disorder among the victims (Ozer et al., 2003). Women have been found to be more prone to develop PTSD than men (Brewin et al., 2000). This observation has been explained by the fact that they face more negative social reactions in cases of violent crime than men (Andrews et al., 2003). Although sexual harassment is considered to be a less violent

crime (Herzog, 2007) victims of sexual harassment still encounter social rejection, stigmatization (Cortina, 2004; Takeuchi et al., 2018), and assault-related shame that might contribute to the development of PTSD (Caretta & Szymanski, 2020).

1.4.3 Depression

A threatening event is often found to be associated with the onset of depression (Brown et al., 1994). Similarly, the sense of loss and humiliation due to aggressive life events can result in the onset of depression (Brown et al., 1995). Similarly, victimisation from sexual harassment could lead to increased levels of depressive symptoms (Houle et al., 2011).

Studies have found a strong association between victimisation from sexual harassment and depression (Friborg et al., 2017; Kaltiala-Heino et al., 2016). Another study identified a bidirectional relationship or a reciprocal effect between sexual harassment and depression among female victims (Wolff et al., 2016). The development of depression, anxiety, and substance abuse due to chronic victimisation from sexual harassment has been reported by college and university students in the U.S. (McGinley et al., 2016). Another study reported increased feelings of anger and depression in women who had been victimised from sexual objectification and harassment (Swim et al., 2001). Similarly, Pakistani women working in the private sector reported severe depression and anxiety due to sexual harassment (Yasmin & Jabeen, 2017). Abuse-related feelings of shame might serve as a risk factor for the development of depressive symptoms (Mills, 2005). The feeling of shame has been found to mediate the relationship between victimisation from sexual harassment and depressive symptoms (Duncan et al., 2020) whereas positive support moderated the association (Crowley et al., 2021).

1.4.4 Abuse-related Shame

Emotional sensitivity to criticism or fear of negative evaluation by others can lead to the development of negative emotions like shame (Gilbert & Miles, 2000), affecting the mental health of the individual (Ullman & Filipas, 2001). Experiencing a variety of shame-triggering events may increase proneness to shame among individuals (Mills, 2005) especially in women (Aakvaag et al., 2016). Shame involves feelings of powerlessness, inferiority, embarrassment, self-consciousness, and fear of social rejection (Barrett, 2000; Budden, 2009; Wicker et al., 1983). The emotion of shame is the manifestation of anticipated self-stigma, the internalisation of the social

belief of holding the victims responsible for their sexual assault subsequently increases trauma symptoms among the victims (Deitz et al., 2015). It has been argued that a sense of being unwanted, wrong, harmful, and to be avoided is always attached to traumatic events like sexual harassment (Avina & O'donohue, 2002). The notion of embarrassment is often attached to the subject of sexuality (Zerubavel, 2006), and stress further induces shame among the victims. Abuse-related shame has been found to be associated with depression (Aakvaag et al., 2016) and could lead to subsequent negative psychological health problems (Andrews et al., 2000). In addition, shame has been found to significantly mediate the relationship between negative social reactions on disclosure of the experiences of sexual victimisation and subsequent symptoms of psychological distress (DeCou et al., 2017). Similarly, a recent study has found mediating effects of shame, fear of rape, and safety concerns on the relationship between sexual harassment and PTSD symptoms (Carretta & Szymanski, 2020).

1.4.5 Self-esteem
Self-esteem represents the affective component of the self-concept, manifesting how people feel about themselves (Leary & Baumeister, 2000). It is a sociometer that measures the worth of an individual as a member of a desirable group. Thus, low social support or negative social reactions could impact one's self-esteem negatively (Leary et al., 1995) and lead to other psychological issues. It has been argued that low levels of self-esteem contribute to an ongoing cycle of victimisation (Egan & Perry, 1998). Moreover, poor self-esteem has been found to be associated with both internalizing and externalizing problems, including depression and aggression (Mann et al., 2004).

Women with lower self-esteem tend to be more vulnerable than men to develop depressive symptoms (Babore et al., 2016). Similarly, poor self-esteem and internalisation problems have been found among adolescent girls who had been victimised from peer aggression at school (Özdemir & Stattin, 2011). Victimisation of women from sexual objectification and demeaning behaviours could affect the psychological well-being of the victims by lowering their level of self-esteem (Swim et al., 2001). In contrast, individuals with high self-esteem are less likely to feel demoralized by being victimised from sexual harassment (Wright & Fitzgerald 2007). Although the effect of victimisation from sexual harassment on self-esteem has been shown to be smaller than other health

outcomes, victimisation still has been found to be a significant predictor of low self-esteem among working women (Malik et al., 2014; Gruber & Fineran, 2008). Similarly, poly-victimisation has been found to negatively affect the self-esteem of individuals during their adolescence and in old age (Ramsey-Klawsnik, 2017; Soler et al., 2012).

Previous studies have identified an association between low self-esteem and victimisation from other types of aggression. For example, harsh physical punishment during childhood has been shown to be predictive of low self-esteem (Amato & Fowler, 2002). This fact might explain the association between victimisation from childhood punishment and later vulnerability to intimate partner aggression (Aucoin et al., 2006; Papadakakiet al.,2009). A bidirectional relationship has been observed between low self-esteem and victimisation from peer aggression, suggesting low self-esteem to be predictive of peer victimisation and vice versa (Van Geel et al., 2018). Likewise, an association between victimisation from sexual harassment and low self-esteem has been identified among female victims in the U.S. (Gruber & Fineran, 2008), Norway (Bendixen et al., 2018), and Pakistan (Malik et al., 2014; Muazzam et al., 2016). However, subsequent low self-esteem might not always predict revictimisation like in the case of other sexual assault experiences (Overbeek et al., 2010). A systematic review of the literature found no significant difference in the level of self-esteem between women who were revictimised from sexual assault and those who were not (Breitenbecher, 2001).

1.4.6 Fear of Being Sexually Harassed
Girls are socialized to be concerned and cautious about their safety. This could lead to the development of fear of being victimised in public places (Loukaitou-Sideris, 2014). It has been argued that fear impacts our perception of certain places as much as the experience of certain places influences the feeling of fear (Koskela & Pain, 2000). For example, high levels of fear of rape have been found to be associated with prior sexual victimisation (Krahe, 2005). Similarly, the use of self-protective measures like avoiding walking in the vicinity of men, not going out alone, or not using public transportation in the evening, has been found to further induce fear from stranger harassment in women (Scott, 2003). Thus, stress and increased psychological pressure (Swim et al., 2001) restrict the free movement of women in public places (EUAFRU, 2014). A study from Germany found that cognitively more vigilant women reported higher levels of fear of being sexually assaulted, and they also used more rape-

avoidance tactics (Krahe, 2005). Similarly, female victims of sexual harassment in public places in Canada have been found to develop a fear of men in general, and, compared to non-victims, they were also more cautious about certain parts of the city while moving out alone after dark (Lenton et al., 1999). The feeling of being uncomfortable at certain public places has been reported by women in the U.S. even during the daytime (Pinchevsky et al., 2019).

Gendered social relations have been argued to be the cause behind fear in women related to the surroundings and public places (Condon et al., 2007). Similar to public incivility, which limits women's access to public places (Bastomski & Smith, 2017), fear of being harassed limits their stress-free movement in the public domain (Pinchevsky et al., 2019). Women have reported safety concerns for example when alone outside their home in India (Bharucha & Khatri, 2018), while waiting for public transports in the U.S and New Zealand (Loukaitou-Sideris, 2009; Chowdhury & Van Wee, 2020), in marketplaces in Nepal (Rosenbaum et al., 2020), and public parks in Saudi Arabia (Maniruzzaman et al., 2021). Women also avoid locations where they have been victimised from sexual harassment (Kearl, 2014). Other than avoiding certain public places, women stay alert with self-defensive strategies, like women in Spain carry pepper spray (García-Carpintero et al., 2020), in England they change the way they dress (Brockschmidt & Wadey, 2021), in Latin America women feel safe when accompanied by a male (Kash, 2019), and in many countries, women prefer a private vehicle over a public transport (Gardner et al., 2017). Thus, many women across the globe live in continuous fear of being harassed in public places and worry about related safety concerns (Kearl, 2014). Not only does it violate the basic rights of women to stress-free access to the public domain, but it also significantly affects their psychological well-being and makes them vulnerable to the risk of revictimisation.

1.4.7 The Effect of Social Support
Social support has been found to moderate the relationship between social stressors and mental health issues (Zhang, 2017). Results of a meta-analysis identified a correlation between social support and positive mental health effects in individuals who encountered stressful situations (Harandi et al., 2017). According to the theoretical stress and coping perspective on social support, reassurance by close ones or social networks protects people from the harmful effects of a stressor and promotes coping, thus contributing to their positive mental health (Lakey & Cohen, 2000). Similarly, less

perceived social support has been found to be predictive of depression in survivors of a traumatic life event (Adams et al., 2019). Women from collectivist as compared to individualist societies more frequently share their experiences of sexual harassment with friends and family for emotional support and to take advice on how to handle it to avoid further harm (Adikaram, 2016; Latcheva, 2017). It has been argued that social support from social networks buffers distress caused by victimisation from bullying (Davidson & Demaray, 2007). Moreover, it moderates the association between victimisation from dating violence and psychological well-being (Holt & Espelage, 2005), and the relationship between intimate partner violence and depression (Beeble et al., 2009). However, the moderating effect of social support on the association between victimisation from sexual harassment and the psychological well-being of the victims has not been extensively studied, especially in the Pakistani context.

It has been argued that women from patriarchal and high-power distant societies receive less social support, especially in case of a severe form of sexual harassment (Cortina et al., 2002), and the subsequent negative social reactions add to the development of post-traumatic stress disorder among the victims (Ullman et al., 2007). Rigid social beliefs about masculinity and femininity have been suggested to be risk factors for aggression against individuals in a given society (Wilkins et al., 2014). Women in patriarchal societies are still scrutinized and stigmatized for not conforming to the gender norms set by the society (Noreen & Musarrat, 2013). Even those who follow the norms become victims of "girl watching" behaviour by men (Quinn, 2002). In such situations, the lack of social support provided to the victims could contribute to prevailing gender inequality in the culture. For example, mothers abiding by traditional norms are more concerned about the cultural imperatives of shame, stigma, and embarrassment related to sexual assault rather than the well-being of their daughters (Gilligan & Akhtar, 2006). Similarly, women who raise their voices against discrimination are labelled as bad women, since silence is the socially accepted and expected behaviour from a woman in traditional cultures (Ali et al., 2011). In addition, the negative social reactions the victim is met with disregard the fact that sexual aggression against women is in fact outlawed (Ullman, 2010), and victimisation keeps going on because people at large fail to realize that it is indeed a crime and a form of sexism and aggression against women (Frye, 1983). In such circumstances,

the provision of emotional and material support could help victims deal with sexual harassment (Chung et al., 2017).

1.5 The Cultural Context of Pakistan, Ghana, and Finland

The social context plays an important role in the victimisation of women from sexual harassment in public places. Social norms tolerant of discriminatory behaviours facilitate individuals to carry out acts of sexual harassment against women (Wesselmann & Kelly, 2010). Thus, sexual harassment has been described as a form of social control and a display of men's desire to assert power and domination (Laniya, 2005). Myths like the belief that males cannot control their sexual desires and that, women provoke males with sexually provocative dressing or by acting against the traditional gender norms (Burt, 1991) can justify sexual harassment in a given culture.

The position of an individual in the hierarchical society acts as a critical source of power which makes it difficult for less powerful individuals, in this case, women, to fight back sexual harassment in order to avoid potential harm posed by male perpetrators (Luther & Luther, 2002). Therefore, it is important to understand this phenomenon in a broader social context from the perspective of power relations in a given society (Fitzgerald, 1993). It has been argued that sexual harassment is overlooked in collectivistic and high-power distant cultures where verbal, nonverbal, and physical objectification of women by men become normal and is not considered as sexual harassment or discrimination (Luther & Luther, 2002). However, people from individualistic societies are particular about individual rights and consider sexual harassment a violation of the basic human right of privacy and freedom (Sigal, 2006). Thus, the cultural context and social beliefs could serve as a context to understand the responses of victims of sexual harassment and its effect on their emotional and psychological well-being (Li & Craig, 2020).

A major part of the academic attention has previously been paid to sexual harassment of women at workplaces and the legal redress involved. The review of the literature shows scarcity in research on victimisation of women from sexual harassment in *public places*, including Pakistan, Ghana, and Finland. This was one of the reasons for selecting samples from these countries. In addition, country comparison scores on cultural dimensions proposed by Hofstede (2001), are useful in explaining the prevalence of sexual harassment. Sexual harassment against women has been found to be common in high power distant cultures compared to feminine societies

(Karla & Bhugra, 2013). In addition, the three countries studied differ in their ranking on the Index of Gender Gap (World Economic Forum, 2021). The level of gender equality and gender power distance explains the status of women in a given country, and therefore, acts as a useful context to evaluate sexual harassment of women.

1.5.1 Pakistan

Pakistan is located in Southern Asia, and its total population is around 217 million (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2019) where females count for half of the total population (World Bank, 2021a). According to Hofstede's cultural dimensions, Pakistan is a highly collectivistic society with an intermediate score on masculinity, it also tends to fall into the category of high-power distance (Hofstede et al., 2010). The constitution of Pakistan (1973) states that "all citizens are equal before the law" and "there shall be no discrimination on the basis of sex". However, women in Pakistan face discrimination in many spheres of life (US Department of State, 2020). In Pakistan, a "good woman" is supposed to be considerate, tolerant, compromising, and sacrificing her dreams to maintain good relationships, whereas the one who raises her voice, who is argumentative, dominating, and blame others is not a good woman. Thus, a mother, a wife, a daughter, a sister, a daughter-in-law are all expected to hold these traits of a good woman (Ali et al., 2011). These expected personality traits might push Pakistani women to tolerate aggression and hide the emotional trauma they go through to avoid social shame and victim-blaming after being victimised from aggression (Lari, 2011) and might restrict them from reporting the incident (Yasmin & Jabeen, 2017). Moreover, undergoing different stressors in a lifetime might make women vulnerable to developing depression subsequent to being victimised from sexual harassment (Brown et al., 1995).

Pakistan is among 125 countries that have introduced laws to protect women from victimisation from sexual harassment (United Nations, 2015). There are two legal provisions that govern sexual harassment throughout Pakistan: section 509 of the Pakistan Criminal Penal Code and the Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act of 2010. Despite the strict laws and the fact that sexual harassment has been declared a criminal offense (Hussain, 2020; Noreen & Musarrat, 2013), a large-scale prevalence of sexual harassment against women has been observed in Pakistan (Hadi, 2017; Hoor-Ul-Ain, 2020; Lari, 2011; USDS,

2020). In addition, women in Pakistan are still not well acquainted with the procedure of sexual harassment redress (Ali & Kramar, 2015), and they experience different forms of sexual harassment in public places, especially when not accompanied by a male (Asian Development Bank, 2014). One obvious reason is the weak implementation of the law to curb the crime; another reason could be existing cultural barriers preventing women from reporting the gender-based aggression they face in public places. Moreover, in order to avoid social shame (Lari, 2011) and to maintain the status of a "good woman", Pakistani women tolerate acts of sexual harassment, thus strengthening its position in the public eye as an acceptable social norm (Wasti & Cortina, 2002). The lack of awareness among women about their legal rights and cultural barriers results in low reporting of the crime (Lari, 2011). It has been argued that in collectivist societies like Pakistan, one's life is greatly influenced by other members of the society. That might be the reason why women face abasement and shame due to victimisation from sexual aggression and fall prey to victim-blaming (Ali & Kramar, 2015). The cultural attributes of Pakistani society along with its low ranking, 153rd position, in terms of gender equality (WEF, 2021) mark it to be a good fit for the study.

1.5.2 Ghana

Ghana is situated in the Gulf of Guinea in Western Africa. The country has a total population of about 30,417,856 where females are 49.7% of the total population (World Bank, 2021b). Ghana scores high on the cultural dimension of power distance and collectivism, according to Hofstede's cultural dimension theory (Hofstede et al., 2010). Moreover, high levels of illiteracy among women, sexual exploitation of women in politics, and inequality in carrying out household responsibilities further strengthen gender stereotyping and inequality in the Ghanaian society (Abass & Döşkaya, 2017). The high scoring of Ghana on the cultural dimension of power distance also explains the superior status of males in domestic and social matters (Mahama, 2004). Males use their power of superior status to assert dominance over females, resulting in widespread aggression against women in Ghana (Amoakohene, 2004).

The strong socio-political situation of women in Ghana and the values of gender-equal society changed drastically at the onset of the British Colonial era. The changes imposed by the colonial administration led to the marginalization of women, beginning with abolishing the right of women to get an education (Abass & Döşkaya, 2017). This change affected

the job opportunities available to women in the post-colonial era, placing them in an economically unstable position and dependent on men (Prah, 1996). A recent study has shown that the socio-cultural structures are reinforcing unbalanced gender roles, contributing to the limited access of women and girls to get an education and healthcare facilities in Northern Ghana (Sikweyiya et al., 2020). The notion of an ideal woman in Ghana is one who is submissive to her husband, respectful, patient, dutiful, and serviceable (Amoakohene, 2004). Such cultural norms support and validate male supremacy and different forms of violence against women, including sexual harassment (Ardayfio-Schandorf, 2005; Aryeetey, 2004, Sedziafa et al., 2016). A large number of women in Ghana have reported intimate partner violence, but marital rape and harassment are not perceived as violence. However, some women blame traditional practices which promote violation of the rights of women (Amoakohene, 2004).

Victimisation from sexual harassment of women has been identified in public places, workplaces, homes, and educational institutions in Ghana (Andoh, 2001; Aryeetey, 2004; Norman et al., 2013; Apaak & Sarpong, 2015). Female victims of sexual harassment have reported victimisation at the hands of males known to them and by male relatives (Aniwa, 1999), subsequently affecting their well-being in the form of physical injuries, depression, anxiety, and loss of trust (Norman et al., 2013). Even though Ghana is a signatory state to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 1979), no formal law to tackle sexual harassment exists in Ghana to safeguard women (US Department of States, 2017). However, under the Domestic Violence Act-732 (2007), sexual harassment has been declared as an offense against women which is degrading and an intrusion into the privacy of an individual. This could be the reason why no noticeable decline in different forms of aggression against women has been observed in Ghana (Civil Society Coalition, 2014). The absence of strong legislation to control sexual harassment against women in Ghana and its low ranking, the 117th position, on the gender gap index (WEF, 2021) makes Ghana a suitable country to include in the study.

1.5.3 Finland

Finland is a Nordic country, located in Northern Europe. Females in Finland count for 50% (World Bank, 2021c) of the total population of 5,537,116 (Official Statistics of Finland, 2021). Finland scores low on power distance and high on femininity and individualism on the cultural

dimensions proposed by Hofstede and his colleagues (2010). These scores on cultural dimensions explain the high ranking of Finland on the Gender Gap Index (WEF, 2021) and the Women, Peace, and Security Index (Klugman et al., 2018) declaring it as one of the safest countries for women.

The progress of Finland towards a gender-equal society can be traced back to a long struggle for equal rights for all the citizens, a noticeable transformation from the time when rights and obligations of women were divided according to their social class (Sulkunen, 1987). A pioneer in gender equality, Finland became the first country in the world to give women the right to vote and run for parliamentary elections (Sulkunen, 2007). Since then, Finland has to a large extent been able to reduce the gender gap in many fields of life. For example, in terms of labor force participation (OECD Labour Force Statistics, 2010), education, childcare, domestic responsibilities, and political representation (Statistics Finland, 2018). Overall, gender equality and non-discrimination have been declared as important principles in the Constitution of Finland (Ministry of Justice, 1999).

Despite remarkable achievements, different forms of gender discrimination and aggression against women have still been observed in Finland (Heikkinen, 2003; Husu, 2000; Mankkinen, 1995). The majority of Finnish citizens believe that Finnish women are yet not fully empowered (Kiianmaa, 2013). According to the Equality Act, sexual and gender-based harassment are declared as forms of discrimination and are prohibited in all areas of life (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, 2016). Despite high gender equality and strong legislation, sexual harassment against women has been observed (Statistics Finland, 2018); victimisation from different forms of sexual harassment has been reported by every tenth woman (Piispa et al., 2006). Findings of a survey showed that 37.8 % of a sample of Finnish women had been sexually harassed by men (Statistics Finland, 2018). This so-called Nordic paradox, as proposed by Gracia and Merlo (2016), could be explained by the fact that the high awareness among Finnish women about their legal and social rights make them readily disclose their victimisation. Aside from that, the negative effects of victimisation from sexual harassment on the well-being of the victims cannot be neglected, since it has been argued that victimised people from individualistic societies go through offense-related guilt and experience low self-esteem (Hofstede et al., 2010). Moreover, in an EU-wide survey (EUAFR, 2014) Finnish women reported high rates of sexual harassment. These circumstances led to the inclusion of a Finnish sample in the study.

2. Method

2.1 Sample

The respondents were female students living in different countries. They consisted of four separate samples; the data for Study I were collected in Pakistan ($N = 543$), for Study II in Ghana ($N = 280$), for Study III in Finland ($N = 591$), and for Study IV in Pakistan ($N = 586$). The mean age of the respondents was 22.3 years ($SD = 4.3$) in Study I, 26.7 years ($SD = 6.2$) in Study II, 25.2 years ($SD = 7.1$) in Study III, and 22.3 years ($SD = 4.3$) in Study IV.

A random sampling technique was used for the data collection. The respondents from Pakistan were from the cities of Rawalpindi, Islamabad, and Lahore. The data from Ghana were collected in Accra and Cape Coast. In Finland, the data were collected from Swedish-speaking females residing in the west and south coast of Finland, and from Finnish-speaking females from university cities in the rest of Finland.

2.2 Instrument

2.2.1 Overview of the Instrument

The questionnaire was constructed in the English language for data collection in Pakistan and Ghana. In the case of Finland, the questionnaire was translated into Finnish and Swedish. In Pakistan, the data were collected by the use of an online questionnaire, while the data collection in Ghana and Finland took place both with online and paper-and-pencil versions of the questionnaires. The online versions were distributed to the respondents using university emails, Facebook pages, and WhatsApp. The author personally visited the education institutes in Finland to collect paper-pencil data. The sexual harassment scale was applied in each study, and other scales were added in all four studies.

In order to measure victimisation of women from sexual harassment (Studies I, II, III, IV), the behavioural experience method was applied, in which the respondents were asked about sexual harassment as an experience rather than as an issue (Lengnick-Hall, 1995). The method allows respondents to report experiencing several unwanted behaviours sexually suggestive in nature. The Sexual Harassment Experience

Questionnaire for Workplaces in Pakistan by Kamal and Tariq (1997) was modified and used for Studies I and IV conducted in Pakistan to measure the frequency of sexual harassment in public places. The Modified scale was then adapted for Ghanian and Finnish culture in Study II and Study III, for that culture-specific items were added. The questionnaire also included items measuring the identity of the perpetrator and the location where the sexual harassment took place.

Scales were created to measure the reactions to victimisation from sexual harassment including (i) immediate distress, (ii) immediate defensive reactions, (iii) long-term negative consequences, and (iv) sharing of the experience with someone. The scale of Immediate Distress used in Study I was used in Studies II and III as well with the name of the Emotional Distress due to Sexual Harassment Scale (EDSH; Anwar, 2016).

Victimisation from physical punishment during childhood was measured retrospectively using the Brief Physical Punishment Scale (BPPS; Österman & Björkqvist, 2007) and aggressive behaviour by peers at school was measured in retrospect with the Mini Direct Indirect Aggression Inventory (Mini-DIA; Österman, & Björkqvist, 2010).

Victimisation from verbal and physical intimate partner aggression as an adult was measured with the Direct Indirect Aggression Scales for Adults (DIAS-Adult; Österman, & Björkqvist, 2009). The self-esteem of the female victims of sexual harassment was measured with the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965). A short version of the Social Reactions Questionnaire (Ullman, 2000) was used to evaluate the level of social support on disclosure of one's victimisation from sexual harassment. To measure the fear of being harassed among the victims, a short version of the Fear of Rape Scale (Senn & Dzinas, 1996) was used. The emotion of shame that a victim feels was measured with the Abuse-related Shame Questionnaire (Feiring & Taska, 2005). The symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder among the victims of sexual harassment were measured with the scale of PTSD symptomatology (PCL-5; Weathers et al., 2013). The depression subscale of the Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI) (Derogatis & Melisaratos, 1983) was used to measure the depressive symptoms in the victims of sexual harassment.

The responses were given on a five-point scale for all the measures (for all victimisation scales, scales regarding perpetrator and location of sexual harassment, fear of being harassed, and social support: 0 = never, 1 = seldom, 2 = sometimes, 3 = often, 4 = very often; for the scales of self-esteem and different reactions to sexual harassment : 0 = completely disagree, 1 =

slightly disagree, 2 = neutral, 3 = slightly agree, 4 = completely agree; for the scales of abuse-related shame and depression: 0 = not at all, 1 = slightly, 2 = moderately, 3 = very much, 4 = extremely; and for the PTSD symptomatology: 0 = not at all, 1 = a little bit, 2 = moderately, 3 = quite a bit, 4 = extremely).

2.2.2 Measurement of Victimisation of Women from Sexual Harassment in Public Places in Pakistan, Ghana, and Finland

Victimisation from sexual harassment was assessed using the Sexual Harassment Experience Questionnaire for Workplaces in Pakistan by Kamal and Tariq (1997). The original scale has 35 items. The scale was modified and twelve items from the original scale were used to measure the frequency of sexual harassment in public places in Pakistan. Nine more items suitable for behaviours of sexual harassment against women in public places in Pakistan were added to the scale. Three sub-scales measuring victimisation from physical (7 items, α = .81), verbal (6 items, α = .77), and nonverbal (8 items, α = .81) sexual harassment respectively were constructed. For Study II, the modified scale of the Sexual Harassment Experience Questionnaire (Kamal & Tariq, 1997) used in Study I was shortened and adapted according to the Ghanaian culture and 3 items were added to the modified scale *(15 items, α = .86)*. For Study III, the scale used in Study I was adapted for Finland. Three sub-scales measuring victimisation from physical (7 items, α = .89), verbal (6 items, α = .79), and nonverbal (7 items, α = .84) sexual harassment were constructed. The wording of a few items was modified, and one item (*Hummed filthy songs*) was removed from the scale used in Study I, since it was not suitable for Finnish culture. In Study IV, a shortened version of the scale used in Study I for the measurement of victimisation of women from sexual harassment in public places, was used. This version included the ten most common behaviours of sexual harassment reported by the respondents from Study I, conducted in Pakistan (Anwar et al., 2019). Single items of the scale are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

*Single Items of Three Scales measuring Sexual Harassment in Studies I (N = 543),
II (N = 280), III (N = 591), IV (N = 586)*

| | | Studies | | |
Has someone				
Physical Sexual Harassment				
Touched your hand (touched you inappropriately)[F] while giving you something	I	-	III	IV
Placed his hand on your hand while teaching you something like computer tasks	I	-	III	-
Shaked or pinched your palm[G]	-	II	-	-
Stood close to you in a crowded place/ Tried to stand too close to you (e.g. in an elevator)*(F)	I	II	III	IV
Collided with you while passing by	I	-	III	IV
Tried to have body touch with you while sitting	I	II	III	-
Tried to kiss you against your will	I	II	III	-
Tried to rape you	I	II	III	-
Verbal Sexual Harassment				
Told dirty jokes in your presence[G]	-	II	-	-
Passed unwanted comments on your appearance (with sexual allusions that you did not like)*(F)	I	II	III	IV
Said unwanted sexually oriented things to you*	I		III	-
Offered you an unwanted lift in a vehicle	I	II	III	IV
Assured you of promotion in the job, or of some other benefits (compensations), if you could fulfil his (bad) immoral sexual demands	I	-	III	-
Threatened to spread rumours about you if you did not fulfil his (bad) immoral sexual demands	I	II	III	-
Threatened to harm you physically if you did not fulfil his immoral sexual demands*	I	II	III	-
Nonverbal Sexual Harassment				
Stared at you with dirty looks	I	II	III	IV
Not let you pass by*	I	-	III	IV
Followed you in the street*	I	II	III	IV
Whistled while looking at you*	I	-	III	IV
Hummed filthy songs in your presence	I	-	-	IV
Tried to give you an unwanted card or gift*	I	II	III	-
Tried to give you a love letter you did not want	I	-	III	-
Tried to undress himself in front of you*	I	II	III	-
Tried to give or send you a text with sexual content[G]	-	II	-	-

*) Items with an asterisk were not from the original scale but were added to the

modified scale.

[G)] Items were suitable for Ghanaian culture and were added to the modified scale used in Study I

[F)] Wording of the items used in Study I was modified to suit Finnish culture in Study III

2.2.3 Measurement of Reactions to the Victimisation from Sexual Harassment
To measure reactions to the victimisation from sexual harassment, four scales were specifically constructed for the study.

A scale for the measurement of Immediate Distress was created and used to measure how the victims felt at the time of sexual harassment in Study I. The scale included 6 items (see Table 2). The same scale was also used in Studies II and III, but with the name of Emotional Distress due to Sexual harassment (EDSH; Anwar, 2016).

Table 2
Single Items and Cronbach's alphas for the Scale Measuring Immediate Distress in Studies I (N =543), II (N =280), III (N =591)

How did it make you feel?	Study I (6 items, α =.90)	Study II (6 items, α =.91)	Study III (6 items, α =.85)
Angry			
Humiliated			
Embarrassed			
Scared			
Afraid of what others might think of me			
Sad			

To measure the immediate reactions to sexual harassment, a scale of Immediate Defensive Reactions was created. Two items measuring immediate reactions (running away, showing no reaction) were not included in the scale since they did not increase the alpha value (see Table 3).

Table 3

Single Items of the Scale Measuring Immediate Defensive Reactions in Study I (N =543)

What was your immediate reaction? (3 items, α =.77)

I shouted or yelled at that person

I slapped that person

I complained to the boss

In order to measure how victimisation from sexual harassment affected the victims in the long run, a scale for the measurement of Long-Term Negative Consequences was created (see Table 4).

Table 4

Single Items of the Scale Measuring Long-Term Negative Consequences in Study I (N=543)

How did it affect you afterwards? (5 items, α =.85)

I lost self-confidence
It affected my studies negatively
It affected my work negatively
I thought of quitting my job or studies
I started feeling uncomfortable with males

A scale for the measurement of Sharing the Experience was constructed to assess the respondents' behaviour of sharing with someone after being victimised from sexual harassment. The scale was used in studies I and IV (see Table 5).

Table 5

Single Items and Cronbach's alphas for the Scale of Sharing the Experience in Study I (N =543) and Study IV (N =586)

Have you told anyone about it?	Study I	Study IV
	(7 items, α =.73)	(7 items, α =.76)
a friend		
a mother		
a father		
a sister		
a brother		
a relative		
a co-worker		

2.2.4 Measurement of Victimisation from Physical Punishment during Childhood

Victimisation from physical punishment during childhood was measured retrospectively using the Brief Physical Punishment Scale (BPPS; Österman & Björkqvist, 2007). The scale was used in Study II and Study III (see Table 6).

Table 6

Single Items and Cronbach's alphas for the Scale Measuring Physical Punishment during Childhood in Study II (N =280) and Study III (N = 591).

When you were a child, did an adult subject you to any of the following things?	Study II (4 items, α =.80)	Study III (4 items, α =.87)
Pulled your hair		
Pulled your ear		
Hit you with the hand		
Hit you with an object		

2.2.5 Measurement of Victimisation from Peer Aggression at School

Victimisation from aggressive behaviour by peers at school was measured in retrospect with the Mini Direct Indirect Aggression Inventory (Mini-DIA; Österman & Björkqvist, 2010) which included questions regarding physical, verbal, and indirect aggression (see Table 7). The scale was used in Study II and Study III

Table 7

Single Items and Cronbach's alphas for the Scale Measuring Peer Aggression at School in Study II (N=280) and Study III (N=591).

When you were a pupil at school, how often were you victimised from the following things by another pupil?	Study II (α =.79)	Study III (α =.81)
Physical aggression, 3 items		
Someone has for example hit you, kicked you, or shoved you		
Verbal aggression, 3 items		
Someone has, for example, yelled at you, called you bad names, or said hurtful things to you		
Indirect aggression, 3 items		
Someone has, for example, gossiped maliciously about you, spread harmful rumours about you, or tried to socially exclude you from others		

2.2.6 Measurement of Victimisation of Women from Verbal Intimate Partner Aggression

Victimisation from verbal intimate partner aggression as an adult was measured with the Direct Indirect Aggression Scale for Adults (DIAS-Adult; Österman & Björkqvist, 2009). The same scale was used in Studies II and III (see Table 8).

Table 8

Single Items and Cronbach's alphas for the Scale Measuring Victimisation from Verbal Intimate Partner Aggression in Study II (N=280) and Study III (N=591).

Has your present partner, or a previous partner, done any of the following things to you	*Study II (7 items, α =.87)*	*Study III (7 items, α =.93)*
Threatened to hurt me		
Yelled at me		
Quarreled with me		
Purposely said nasty or hurting things to me		
Called me bad names		
Interrupted me when I was talking		
Angrily nagged at me		

2.2.7 Measurement of Victimisation of Women from Physical Intimate Partner Aggression

Victimisation from physical intimate partner aggression as an adult was measured with the Direct Indirect Aggression Scale for Adults (DIAS-Adult; Österman & Björkqvist, 2009) in Studies II and III. For Study II conducted in Ghana, three items from the original scale were removed since they were considered not to fit in with the behaviour of IPA in Ghanian culture (see Table 9).

Table 9

Single Items and Cronbach's alphas for the Scale Measuring Victimisation from Physical Intimate Partner Aggression in Study II (N=280) and Study III (N=591).

Has your present partner, or a previous partner, done any of the following things to you	Study II (6 items, α =.86)	Study III (9 items, α =.91)
Hit you		
Locked you in		
Locked you out		
Shoved you		
Bit you*		
Scratched you*		
Spit at you*		
Thrown things at you		
Damaged something that belonged to you		

*) Items with an asterisk were removed from the original scale in Study II.

2.2.8 Measurement of Self Esteem of the Women Victimised from Sexual Harassment.

In order to measure self-esteem, an adapted version of the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965) was used in Study III (10 items, α = .81). A shortened version of the Self-Esteem Scale (7 items, α =.95) was used in Study IV. The item "*I wish I could have more respect for myself*" used in Study III was rephrased as "*I feel respect for myself*" in study IV. For single items of the scales and Cronbach's alpha see Table 10

Table 10

Single Items and Cronbach's alpha for the Scale Measuring Self-Esteem of the Women Victimised from Sexual Harassment in Study III (N=591) and Study IV (N=586)

Please indicate to what extent the following statements describe how you feel about yourself	Study III (10 items, α = .81).	Study IV (7 items, α =.95)
On the whole, I am satisfied with myself	III	IV
At times I think I am no good at all	III	-
I feel that I have a number of good qualities	III	IV
I am able to do things as well as most other people	III	IV
I feel I do not have much to be proud of	III	IV
I certainly feel useless at times	III	-
I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an	III	IV

equal plane with others

I wish I could have more respect for myself	III	IV
All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure	III	-
I take a positive attitude toward myself	III	IV

2.2.9 Measurement of Social Support Female Victims Receive on Disclosure of One's Victimisation from Sexual Harassment

To evaluate the level of social support one receives after sharing their experience of victimisation from sexual harassment with a close one, a short version of the Social Reactions Questionnaire (Ullman, 2000) was used, see Table 11.

Table 11

Single Items and Cronbach's alpha for the Scale Measuring Social Support Female Victims of Sexual Harassment Receive from a Close One in Study IV (N=586).

If you told someone about the harassment that happened to you, how did that person react? (10 items, α =.85)

Told you it was not your fault

Showed understanding of your experience

Reframed the experience as a clear case of victimisation

Saw your side of things and did not make judgments

Seemed to understand how you were feeling

Provided information and discussed options

Helped you get information of any kind about coping with the experience

Told you to stop thinking about it

Encouraged you to keep the experience a secret

Told you that you were not cautious enough

2.2.10 Measurement of Abuse-Related Shame in Female Victims of Sexual Harassment

To measure the emotion of shame that a victim feels after being victimised from sexual harassment, the Abuse-related Shame Questionnaire (Feiring & Taska, 2005) was used, see Table 12.

Table 12

Single Items and Cronbach's alpha for the Scale Measuring Abuse-Related Shame in Female Victims of Sexual Harassment in Study IV (N = 586).

How did you feel about it? (7 items, α =.86)

I feel ashamed because I think that people can tell from looking at me what happened

I am ashamed because I felt I am the only one whom this has happened to

What happened to me makes me feel dirty

I feel like covering my body

I wish I were invisible

I feel disgusted with myself

I feel exposed

2.2.11 Measurement of Fear of Being Harassed in the Female Victim of Sexual Harassment

The behavioural responses to the possibility of being harassed were measured with the short version of the Fear of Rape scale (Senn & Dzinas 1996), see Table 13.

Table 13

Single Items and Cronbach's alpha for the Scale Measuring Fear Fear of Being Harassed in Study IV (N = 586).

Due to fear of being harassed (5 items, α =.89)

I avoid going out alone at night

When I'm walking out alone at night, I am very cautious

If I am going out late at night, I avoid certain parts of town

In general, I am suspicious of men

I am afraid of men

2.2.12 Measurement of Mental Health Symptoms in Female Victims of Sexual Harassment

To measure the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder in the victims of sexual harassment, a scale of PTSD symptomatology (PCL-5; Weathers et al., 2013) was used (see Table 14).

Table 14

Single Items and Cronbach's alpha for the Scale Measuring Post-Traumatic
Stress Disorder in Female Victims of Sexual Harassment in Study IV (N=586)

In the past month, how much were you bothered by (6 items, α =.89)

Trouble falling or staying asleep?

Repeated, disturbing, and unwanted memories of the stressful experience?

Avoiding external reminders of the stressful experience (for example, people, places, conversations, activities, objects, or situations)?

Blaming yourself or someone else for the stressful experience or what happened after it?

Trouble experiencing positive feelings (for example, being unable to feel happiness or have loving feelings for people close to you)?

Irritable behavior, angry outbursts, or acting aggressively

Depressive symptoms in the victim of sexual harassment were measured using the depression subscale of the Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI) (Derogatis & Melisaratos, 1983) see Table 15.

Table 15

Single Items and Cronbach's alpha for the Scale Measuring Depressive Symptoms
in Female Victims of Sexual Harassment in Study IV (N = 586).

Please indicate to what extent the following statements describe how you generally feel
about yourself (6 items, α =.91)

Feeling hopeless about the future

Feelings of worthlessness

Feeling sad

Having no interest in things

Having thoughts of ending your life

Feeling lonely

2.3 Procedure

The online questionnaires were designed in a way that respondents could not submit it without answering all the mandatory questions. The confidentiality and anonymity of the questionnaire was ensured. Teachers in Pakistan and Finland were contacted to share the survey link with their students through WhatsApp and emails. For Study II conducted in Ghana, the approval of six heads of tertiary educational institutions was obtained. The researcher also reached out to the respondents through Facebook pages. For studies I and IV in Pakistan, students were asked to complete an online survey as part of their class activity, and the researcher was

updated by the teacher about the number of responses being submitted on a particular date and time. Thus, the researcher was able to keep track of the responses. Teachers in Finland allowed 15 minutes to everyone in the class willing to participate in the survey, almost every student took and complete the questionnaire. Students in Ghana had limited access to internet, the electronic questionnaire generated 120 responses. Additional paper questionnaire was completed by 160 respondents.

For the data analysis, the software of SPSS was used for all four studies. To identify group differences, multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVA) were conducted in studies I, II, III. A multiple regression analysis was carried out in study III to examine the relationships between the variables. In addition, the SPSS macro-PROCESS developed by Hayes (2013) was used to perform a conditional process analysis in Study IV, to assess the mediating and moderating effects of the variables on the relationship between the predictor and outcome variables.

2.4 Ethical Considerations

The studies adhere to the principles concerning human research ethics of the Declaration of Helsinki (World Medical Association, 2013), as well as the guidelines for the responsible conduct of research of the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity (2012). The collected data are stored according to the regulations for the protection of data by the European Commission (2016). Participation was voluntary without any form of economic or other incentive.

3. Overview of the Original Studies

3.1 Study I: Three Types of Sexual Harassment of Females in Public Places in Pakistan

In Pakistan, victimisation of women from sexual harassment at workplaces has been given relatively more academic attention than sexual harassment in public places. Pakistani women face a variety of different forms of sexual harassment while moving about in public places, especially when not accompanied by a male (ADB, 2014; Haider & Mashud, 2014). The perception of not being safe in public places has been shown to be based on fear of being sexually harassed or raped (Fairchild & Rudman, 2008; Ilahi, 2009; MacMillan et al., 2000). In the research on interpersonal aggression, aggressive behaviour is often categorised into three types: physical, verbal, and nonverbal. Since sexual harassment is a form of aggressive behaviour, the same categories were expected to be identifiable.

One aim of Study I was therefore to apply these three categories in Pakistan. A second aim was to investigate whether the educational level of the victims was related to the amount of victimisation they had been exposed to. The study also included measurements analysing women's immediate reactions to sexual harassment as well as long-term negative consequences.

The questionnaire was constructed including a scale for measuring physical, verbal, and nonverbal sexual harassment, and four other scales to measure reactions to victimisation from sexual harassment. A total of 543 female students in Pakistan (M = 22.3 years, SD = 4.3, age range = 16–47 years) completed the questionnaire. Only 2.8% of the respondents had never been victimised from any type of sexual harassment. Nonverbal sexual harassment (m = 1.36) was reported to be the most common type of sexual harassment; *to be stared at with dirty looks* (m = 2.40) was the most common single act of harassment, typically perpetrated by *a stranger* (m =1.61) and most frequently found to take place in *marketplaces* (m = 1.50). Age did not correlate with any of the three scales measuring victimisation from sexual harassment, neither was any difference found between how often married and unmarried women had been sexually harassed.

Victimisation from all three types of sexual harassment (physical, verbal, and nonverbal) was found to be highly correlated with immediate defensive reactions, immediate distress, and long-term negative consequences. Respondents who were more highly victimised from all

three types of harassment than others scored significantly higher on reactions to sexual harassment, including defensive reactions, immediate distress, sharing, and long-term negative concomitants. No significant association was found between the educational level of the victim and the amount of victimisation from any type of sexual harassment. However, respondents with a higher educational level (had a Master's degree or higher) scored significantly higher on immediate distress and long-term negative consequences.

The results further revealed that women with a higher level of education were more likely to share their experience with a close one. This finding can be seen as a way of coping with the experience of victimisation. However, the results of the present study showed that although respondents with a higher educational level communicated significantly more with their friends and relatives about their experience, their levels of immediate distress and long-term negative consequences were still significantly higher than those of less educated women.

3.2 Study II: Sexual Harassment and Victimisation from Four other Types of Interpersonal Aggression in Ghana: A Cycle of Victimisation

In Ghana, violence against women is widespread due to the socially accepted superior status of men and their right to assert power over women (Amoakohene, 2004); this includes both intimate partner aggression and sexual harassment (Ardayfio-Schandorf, 2005; Aryeetey, 2004, Sedziafa et al., 2016). In addition, victimisation from physical punishment during childhood is culturally accepted and commonly used (Kyei-Gyamfi, 2011; Twum-Danso Imoh, 2013) and children in Ghana perceive it as a normal and acceptable practice (Twum-Danso Imoh, 2013). Studies have also found peer victimisation to be prevalent among Ghanaian high school students (Antiri, 2016; Odumah, 2013).

Study II aimed at investigating to what degree victimisation from sexual harassment is associated with other types of victimisation, thus qualifying it as revictimisation or multiple victimisation, or both. Revictimisation was investigated by examining whether victimisation from sexual harassment as an adult was associated with previous victimisation from childhood, i.e. physical punishment and victimisation from peer aggression at school. Multiple victimisation was studied by examining whether there was an association between victimisation from sexual harassment and

victimisation from verbal and physical intimate partner aggression as an adult. Furthermore, it was also investigated if revictimisation and /or multiple victimisation is in any way associated with emotional vulnerability to sexual harassment. Ghana was selected since previous studies have shown that sexual harassment of women has been found to exist in educational institutions in Ghana (Aryeetey, 2004).

A questionnaire was created including scales measuring victimisation from sexual harassment in public places and four other types of aggression, as mentioned above. Physical punishment during childhood and victimisation from peer aggression at school were retrospective measures. A total of 280 female university students and lecturers in Ghana ($M = 26.7$ years, $SD = 6.2$) completed the questionnaire. The age span was between 17 and 64 years. Of the respondents, 6% had high school education, 49.1% had tertiary education, 36.7% had a Bachelor's degree, and 8.2% had a Master's degree.

The amount of sexual harassment was not found to correlate with the age of the victim. Unmarried females were harassed significantly more than married ones. The most common act of harassment was being stared at with dirty looks ($m = 2.4$); the most common place of harassment was found to be at university ($m = 1.0$), and the most common perpetrator was a friend or a fellow student ($m = 1.4$). Respondents with a higher level of education (had a Bachelor's or a Master's degree) underwent higher emotional distress due to sexual harassment than others. When the frequency of sexual harassment was controlled, the correlations were still significant between emotional distress due to sexual harassment, verbal intimate partner aggression, and victimisation from peer aggression at school. When the frequency of sexual harassment was controlled for, it was also shown that victimisation from physical punishment during childhood was not correlated with emotional distress due to sexual harassment. The results showed that respondents who have been victimised more than average from sexual harassment scored significantly higher on physical punishment during childhood, victimisation from peer aggression at school, and physical and verbal intimate partner aggression.

Thus, victimisation from sexual harassment was found to be associated with higher levels of both prior and concurrent victimisation, validating the principles of both repeat victimisation and multiple victimisation. Thus, victims of sexual harassment in the Ghanian sample had been subjected to both revictimisation and multiple victimisation. It may be noted that the effect was slightly higher in the case of childhood

adversities, including physical punishment and peer aggression, as compared to intimate partner aggression occurring during adulthood.

3.3 Study III: Risk Factors for Sexual Harassment in Public Places

Despite achievements towards gender equality, different forms of discrimination and aggression against females have been observed in Finland (Heikkinen, 2003; Husu, 2000; Mankkinen, 1995). An EU-wide survey revealed the presence of relatively high rates of aggression against women in Finland (EUAFR, 2014). Similarly, the prevalence of sexual harassment against women has also been identified (Piispa et al., 2006).

The aim of Study III was to investigate whether the victimisation from prior and simultaneous aggression can serve as risk factors for victimisation from sexual harassment in Finland, a country with a high level of gender equality and strong legislation to curb sexual harassment.

A questionnaire was designed including scales for measuring victimisation from physical, verbal, and nonverbal sexual harassment, physical punishment during childhood, victimisation from peer aggression at school, and victimisation from physical and verbal intimate partner aggression. Scales measuring self-esteem and distress due to sexual harassment were also included. Victimisation from physical punishment and peer aggression were retrospective measures. The questionnaire was completed by 591 Swedish and Finnish speaking female university students in Finland ($M = 25.2$ years, $SD = 7.1$). The age range was between 17 and 63 years of age.

The level of victimisation was found to be relatively low. The most common type of harassment was found to be nonverbal sexual harassment followed by physical harassment. The respondents reported that to be stared at with dirty looks ($m = 1.98$) was the most common act of harassment they encountered. A nightclub or bar was found to be the most common place ($m = 2.1$), and a stranger ($m = 2.1$) was the most common perpetrator. In addition, physical punishment during childhood, victimisation from peer aggression at school, and intimate partner aggression were found to be significant predictors of victimisation from sexual harassment. Those who had been more than average subjected to revictimisation and multiple victimisation and had lower self-esteem reported a higher level of emotional distress due to sexual harassment. When the frequency of being sexually harassed was controlled, the scores

for emotional distress when victimised from sexual harassment were still higher among those who had been victims of verbal intimate partner aggression, peer aggression at school, and who had lower self-esteem.

Overall, the level of victimisation from sexual harassment was found to be low. However, victimisation from different types of interpersonal aggression and low self-esteem were identified as significant predictors of sexual harassment at some public places in Finland. It is important to note that in Finland, the effect was slightly higher in case of adulthood adversities i.e. intimate partner aggression, in comparison with victimisation from childhood adversities such as physical punishment during childhood and peer aggression at school.

3.4. Study IV: Sexual Harassment and Psychological Wellbeing of the Victims: Role of Abuse-Related Shame, Fear of Being Harassed, and Social Support

Despite strict laws, a large-scale prevalence of sexual harassment against women has been observed in Pakistan (Hadi, 2017; Hoor-Ul-Ain, 2020; Lari, 2011). One obvious reason is the weak implementation of the law to curb the crime; another reason could be existing cultural barriers preventing women from reporting the gender-based aggression they face in public places. In Pakistan, patriarchal values and cultural norms determine the social status of an individual. People from collectivist societies like Pakistan endorse interdependence and give preference to in-group goals over their personal needs and aspirations (Triandis, 2001). Women are considered to have the responsibility of keeping up the respect and dignity of the family and being a victim of a sexual offense is seen as bringing disrespect to the whole family (Lari, 2011).

Women in Pakistan have reported emotional distress due to sexual harassment, especially on disclosure of their experience with close ones (Study I); this might be due to the fact that Pakistani women receive low levels of social support when sharing the experience of victimisation from sexual harassment. In Study IV, the mediating effect of different factors involved in the process, more precisely the fear of being harassed, and abuse-related shame, were investigated. The potentially moderating factors of sharing behavior of the victims of sexual harassment and the social support they receive on the disclosure of their experience were also examined.

An online questionnaire was constructed including scales measuring victimisation of women from sexual harassment, development of post-traumatic stress disorder and depressive symptoms, and the aforementioned contributing social factors. To measure the victimisation of women from sexual harassment in public places, the ten most common behaviours of sexual harassment reported by the respondents from Study I conducted in Pakistan (Anwar et al. 2019) were included in the shortened version of the modified Sexual Harassment Experience Questionnaire (Kamal & Tariq, 1997). The questionnaire was filled in by 586 female students from the cities of Lahore, Islamabad, and Rawalpindi in Pakistan. The mean age of the respondents was 22.3 years (SD = 4.3); the age range was 16–47 years. Of the respondents, 84.1% were single and 15.9% were married, whereas 62.1% of the respondents had a Bachelor's degree or less, and 37.9% had a Master's degree or higher.

The results revealed significant associations between all variables of the study, with the sole exception of being the relationship between self-esteem and other variables, victimisation from sexual harassment, abuse-related shame, and symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, respectively. The highest correlation was found between post-traumatic stress disorder and abuse-related shame (r = .68). The conditional process analysis found significant indirect effects suggesting that the total effect of victimisation from sexual harassment (β = 0.52 [0.44, 0.60]) on post-traumatic stress disorder among the victims was mediated by abuse-related shame (β = 0.30 [0.24, 0.37]) and fear of being harassed. The effect size of abuse-related shame was stronger than that of fear of being harassed (β = 0.05 [0.03, 0.09]). Similar results were observed with depressive symptoms as an outcome variable. The effect size of abuse-related shame was found to be larger than that of the fear of being harassed on the development of PTSD and depressive symptoms. However, the effect of sexual harassment through shame were relatively larger with PTSD as outcome variable (β = 0.30 [0.24, 0.37]) than with depressive symptoms as outcome variable (β = 0.24 [0.17, 0.30]). Thus, identifying abuse-related shame and fear of being harassed as some central factors explaining the negative well-being of the victims due to victimisation from sexual harassment. Sharing behavior of the respondents was not found to moderate the direct or indirect effects of victimisation from sexual harassment on the development of PTSD and depressive symptoms. The subsequent social support they received from people after sharing their experience was found to have moderated the indirect relationship between victimisation from sexual harassment and PTSD and

depressive symptoms via abuse-related shame. The indirect path was significant when social support was lower. It is worth noting that over 60% of the victims never shared their experience with their father or a brother. When sharing occurred, it was mostly with a friend ($m = 1.94$).

This emphasises the importance of social support, especially from close ones, to tackle the after-effects of victimisation from sexual harassment. It could be argued that lack of social support, in general, might induce the victims of sexual harassment with higher levels of abuse-related shame, and in an effort to avoid social shame, the victims develop various psychological health problems.

4. Discussion

4.1 Summary of the Findings

The overall aim of the thesis was to investigate the prevalence rate and risk factors of victimisation of women from sexual harassment in public places in countries with distinct cultural backgrounds. The countries selected for the study were Pakistan, Ghana, and Finland. A second aim was to investigate the relationship between the level of education of the victim and the amount of victimisation from sexual harassment they had been exposed to (Studies I and II) and the emotional distress due to it (Studies I, II, III). Studies in Ghana (Study II) and Finland (Study III) examined whether there was an association between victimisation from sexual harassment and the prior and/or simultaneous victimisation from other types of aggression, including physical punishment during childhood, peer aggression at school, and physical and verbal intimate partner aggression (Studies II, III), thus qualifying sexual harassment as revictimization, or multiple victimisations, or both. Victimisation from other types of aggression and the level of self-esteem were analyzed to understand whether they could serve as risk factors for sexual harassment of women in Finland (Study III). Study IV, conducted in Pakistan, was aimed at examining the relationship between victimisation from sexual harassment and the psychological well-being of the victims. In addition, the mediating and moderating role of abuse-related shame, fear of being harassed, sharing behaviour of the victims, and social support were studied. A summary of findings from the four studies are presented below.

Victimisation from Sexual Harassment and its Concomitants in Pakistan, Ghana, and Finland

The age of the female respondents did not correlate with victimisation from sexual harassment in any of the four studies. No correlation was found between marital status and the amount of victimisation experienced by the victims in Pakistan and Finland. However, in Ghana, single compared to married respondents were significantly more often victimised from sexual harassment than others. Respondents from Pakistan and Ghana, irrespective of educational level, reported equal amounts of victimisation from sexual harassment in public places. Nonverbal sexual harassment was found to be the most common type of harassment in Pakistan and Finland. Female respondents from Pakistan and Ghana reported high rates

of victimisation from sexual harassment whereas the level was found to be low in Finland. As for the perpetrators of sexual harassment, a stranger has been identified as the most common perpetrator in Pakistan and Finland whereas, in Ghana, it was found to be a friend or someone known to the victim. Respondents in Pakistan, Ghana, and Finland reported different public places to be the most common sights of sexual harassment. A marketplace in Pakistan, a university in Ghana, and a nightclub or bar in Finland were found to be the most common places of victimisation from sexual harassment in these samples, who consisted mostly of university students. Furthermore, *being stared at with dirty looks* was found to be the most common single act of harassment reported by respondents in all four studies. In addition, respondents from Pakistan, Ghana, and Finland reported some distinct single acts of sexual harassment. For example, followed by "staring at with dirty looks", the most common distinct act reported by the respondents in Pakistan was *"stood close to you in a crowded place"*, in Ghana it was *"having one's hand shaken or pinched in the palm"* and *"talked to in an unpleasant sexual way"* in Finland.

Victimisation from all three types of sexual harassment (physical, verbal, and nonverbal) was found to be highly correlated with immediate defensive reactions, immediate distress, and long-term negative consequences in Study I conducted in Pakistan.

Emotional Distress due to Sexual Harassment
Respondents with a higher level of education from Pakistan (Study I) and Ghana (Study II), experienced significantly stronger emotional distress due to sexual harassment than others. Results from Study II conducted in Ghana and Study III made in Finland showed that emotional distress due to sexual harassment correlated significantly and positively with the scales measuring victimisation from physical punishment during childhood, peer aggression at school, and verbal and physical intimate partner aggression. In the case of Study III made in Finland, emotional distress due to sexual harassment correlated negatively with self-esteem.

In studies II and III, when the *frequency* of sexual harassment was controlled for, the correlations were still significant between emotional distress due to sexual harassment and with all the five scales measuring victimisation from aggression and negatively with the scale measuring self-esteem in Study III. In Ghana (Study II) when the frequency of sexual harassment was controlled for, it was also shown that victimisation from physical punishment during childhood was not correlated with emotional

distress due to sexual harassment. This finding might be due to the fact that physical punishment of children is not illegal (Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, 2019b), and it is still socially supported in Ghana (Kyei-Gyamfi, 2011). Acceptance of aggression during childhood could thus explain why these women did not show increased sensitisation when confronted with emotional distress due to sexual harassment in later life.

Correlations between Victimisation from Sexual Harassment and Other Types of Aggression

In Ghana (Study II), respondents belonging to the high sexual harassment group scored significantly higher on physical punishment during childhood, victimisation from peer aggression at school, and victimisation from verbal and physical intimate partner aggression. Similar results were identified in Finland (Study III).

Sexual Harassment as a Form of Re/Multiple Victimisation

Respondents in Ghana (Study II), and Finland (Study III) who had been more than average victimised from sexual harassment scored significantly higher on victimisation from physical punishment during childhood and peer aggression at school. The finding suggests that victimisation from sexual harassment can be considered to be a form of revictimisation. The same respondents had also been significantly more victimised than others from both verbal and physical intimate partner aggression, which, in turn, could be interpreted as a form of multiple victimisation. Victims of sexual harassment from Ghana and Finland had thus been subjected to both revictimisation and multiple victimisations. It is important to note that in Ghana, the effect was slightly higher in the case of childhood adversities (physical punishment, and peer aggression), as compared to intimate partner aggression occurring during adulthood. However, in Finland, the effect was slightly higher in the case of adulthood adversities.

Risk Factors for Sexual Harassment

Results from Finland (Study III) revealed that victimisation from physical and verbal sexual harassment in public places was significantly predicted by physical punishment during childhood, victimisation from peer aggression at school, victimisation from verbal and physical intimate partner aggression, and low self-esteem. The pattern was the same for victimisation from nonverbal sexual harassment except that victimisation

from physical intimate partner aggression did not predict victimisation from it.

Association between Victimisation from Sexual Harassment and Self-esteem of the Victims

Results from study in Finland (Study III) found a negative association between victimisation from sexual harassment and self-esteem of the victims. Respondents belonging to the high sexual harassment group scored significantly low on self-esteem. In the case of Study IV conducted in Pakistan, no correlation was found between victimisation from sexual harassment and self-esteem of the victims.

Mediating and Moderating Social Factors

Results from study in Pakistan (Study IV) showed that of the total respondents, around 20% reported that they shared their experience of victimisation with a close one. When sharing occurred, it was mostly with a friend. Of the 20% of respondents who shared their experience, 56% received more than average social support from a close one that might have contributed to mitigate the negative effects of victimisation from sexual harassment. Abuse-related shame and fear of being harassed partially mediated the total effect of victimisation from sexual harassment. The significant indirect effects suggest that the effect of victimisation from sexual harassment on the development of symptoms of PTSD among the victims was mediated by abuse-related shame and fear of being harassed. The effect size of abuse-related shame was stronger than that of fear of being harassed. When the model was replicated with depression as an outcome variable, the results showed a similar trend. However, the effect of sexual harassment through shame was relatively larger with PTSD as an outcome variable than with depressive symptoms as an outcome variable.

As for moderation effects, sharing *of the experience with a close one* and the subsequent *social support* they received had no moderation effect on the direct effect of victimisation from sexual harassment on the development of PTSD and depressive symptoms. However, the subsequent social support they received on sharing significantly moderated the indirect effect of sexual harassment on PTSD via shame. However, the indirect effect of sexual harassment on PTSD through fear of being harassed was not moderated by social support. Similarly, a significant moderation effect of social support was observed on the indirect effect of victimisation of sexual harassment on depressive symptoms via shame but not via fear of

being harassed. In both models, with either PTSD or depressive symptoms as the outcome variable, sharing behaviour alone did not moderate any of the indirect effects.

4.2 Limitations of the Study

The studies have some limitations which must be taken into consideration. The first limitation is the small sample size of each study which covered only small areas in Pakistan, Ghana, and Finland, which means that generalisations to the whole country in question should be made carefully. Furthermore, the study had a cross-sectional design, not a longitudinal one, and inferences about cause and effect have to be made with caution. In addition, a psychometric research design was applied to all four studies in the thesis. Future research should include explicit measures of cultural dimensions to empirically measure the cultural differences in the victimisation of women. A limitation of studies II and III is that when victimisation from intimate partner aggression was measured, it is not known whether it occurred before, after, or parallel with victimisation from sexual harassment. It could thus be interpreted as multiple victimisations or/and revictimisation. Moreover, in Study IV, previous experiences of traumatic events including sexual assault and rape, which could have impacted PTSD and depressive symptom severity, were not examined.

4.3 Implications of the Study

The results of the studies suggest that sexual harassment is a serious problem in public places in Pakistan and Ghana. Although the level was found to be low in Finland, the prevalence of sexual harassment in some public places in Finland is still a problem. The findings highlight the importance of gender equality, social justice, and cultural norms to prevent aggression against women. The findings suggest that victimisation from sexual harassment could be considered to be a form of revictimisation and multiple victimisation. Furthermore, revictimisation and multiple victimisation might both be associated with higher vulnerability, which gives rise to higher levels of distress when confronted with sexual harassment. In addition, social support, especially from close ones, has been identified as a tool to tackle the after-effects of sexual harassment and to prevent the ongoing cycle of victimisation of women. A lack of social support, in general, might induce the victims with higher levels of abuse-

related shame, and in an effort to avoid social shame, the victims develop various psychological health problems.

A societal reform is strongly recommended to challenge the cultural norms that allow toxic masculinity and harm the dignity of women (Baptist & Coburn, 2019), especially in the case of Pakistan and Ghana. One step further toward the needed social changes could be the full implementation of strong legislation that safeguards women against sexual harassment in public places (Hoor-Ul-Ain, 2020).

Results from the studies in Pakistan and Ghana reveal that due to social pressure to comply with cultural norms, traditional education alone does not protect women from emotional distress caused by sexual harassment. In this regard, public discourse on the subject of social justice and gender equality could play a vital role in empowering women to repel the idea of victim-blaming. In addition, strong government policies are needed to change the social acceptability of sexual harassment through long-term public awareness campaigns targeted at parents and the male members of the society to get them on board in tackling the attitudes that underpin sexual harassment.

The policymakers are urged to introduce courses on gender equality and social justice as a mandatory part of education right from the elementary level, especially in Pakistan and Ghana, where sexual harassment is widespread. In addition, college and university students should be given anti-sexual harassment training and workshops providing community initiative ideas and tools. In this way, awareness of a patriarchal social system through education could assist women in framing their victimisation as a case of gender discrimination. Reforms in the law and enforcement services are recommended to empower women so that they feel safe and comfortable reporting their victimisation. In addition, municipalities should set out a plan of action for working in collaboration with other stakeholders like regulatory bodies of educational institutes, marketplaces, restaurants, bars, transportation, and other public places to ensure the implementation of laws and the safety of women in the vicinity.

4.4 Future Research

The present research has contributed to the literature on sexual harassment from different perspectives. The thesis has examined different behaviours of sexual harassment in three different cultures from the perspective of power relations (Fitzgerald, 1993; Luther & Luther, 2002). However, the current thesis did not include measures of cultural dimensions; future

research should examine the cultural values to empirically confirm the cultural interpretation of the victimisation of women from sexual harassment in public places. Examining other socio-cultural norms, including child-rearing practices and prevailing gender stereotypes in Pakistan, Ghana, and Finland could help explain why men in one culture perpetrate sexual harassment against women more often than in other ones.

The thesis has examined the victimisation from sexual harassment as part of the cycle of violence model and advances the research on revictimisation and multiple victimisation (Afifi et al., 2012; Baldry, 2003; Björkqvist & Österman, 2014; Söderberg et al., 2016). A cross-sectional research design has been applied to studies II and III; future research with longitudinal data could better explain the association between victimisation from other types of aggression and self-esteem and victimisation from sexual harassment in public places.

The present thesis has also advanced the findings of a previous research (Carretta & Szymanski, 2020) by examining the moderating effect of social support on the direct and indirect relationship between sexual harassment and PTSD and depressive symptoms in Study IV conducted in Pakistan. Future research should focus on examining the same relationship in an individualistic and more feminine society (according to Hofstede's [2001] criteria) like Finland. Moreover, negative social reactions to the disclosure of victims' experiences should be part of the scale measuring social support. It is recommended to examine the demographic information of the respondents to assess the moderating effects of the socio-economic situation of the individuals on the relationship between the frequency of sexual harassment and mental health outcomes. The current thesis used a scale measuring sharing behaviour of the victims that included items about the frequency of sharing the experience with a close one. Future research efforts should be geared towards the development of a more comprehensive and culture-specific scale measuring exactly how and how much information victims share with someone. It will give an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon and its effects on the subsequent social support they receive.

In addition, research on awareness among citizens regarding country-specific laws could help policymakers to plan intervention campaigns to curtail sexual harassment.

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Original Publications

I

Original Article / Orjinal Araştırma

Three types of sexual harassment of females in public places in Pakistan

Pakistan'da halka açık yerlerde kadınların maruz kaldığı üç tip cinsel taciz

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Abstract

Introduction: The study was aimed at investigating three types of sexual harassment in public places in Pakistan.

Methods: A questionnaire was completed by 543 female students in Pakistan (M=22.3 years, SD 4.3). The questionnaire included scales for measuring physical, verbal, and nonverbal sexual harassment, and four scales measuring reactions to sexual harassment.

Results: Sexual harassment was found to be most common in market places, and the perpetrator was typically a stranger. Nonverbal sexual harassment was the most frequent type. Only 2.8% of the respondents had never been victimised from any of the three types of sexual harassment. The most common reaction of the victims was to run away. Respondents highly victimised from physical, verbal or nonverbal harassment scored higher than others on defensive reactions, immediate distress, and long-term negative concomitants. Educational level was not associated with the amount of victimisation from any type of sexual harassment, but respondents with a high education scored significantly higher on negative reactions to sexual harassment.

Discussion and Conclusion: Sexual harassment was associated with negative psychological concomitants for the victims. It can be concluded that sexual harassment in public places in Pakistan is a huge social problem that needs to be addressed.

Keywords: Education; concomitants; public places; Pakistan; sexual harassment.

Özet

Amaç: Çalışma Pakistan'da halka açık yerlerde üç tür cinsel tacizi araştırmayı amaçladı.

Gereç ve Yöntem: Pakistan'da 543 kız öğrenci tarafından anket yanıtlandı (E=22.3, SD 4.3). Anket, fiziksel, sözel ve sözel olmayan cinsel tacizi ölçmek için ölçekler ve cinsel tacize tepkileri ölçen dört ölçek içermektedir.

Bulgular: Cinsel tacizin en yaygın pazar yerlerinde olduğu tespit edildi ve fail, genellikle yabancı biriydi. Sözsüz cinsel taciz en sık görülen türdü. Ankete katılanların yalnızca %2,8'i, bu üç tacizi türünden herhangi biri ile hiç bir zaman mağdur olmamıştır. Kurbanların en yaygın tepkisi kaçmak oldu. Fiziksel, sözel veya sözel olmayan tacizden yüksek oranda mağdur edilen katılımcılar, savunma reaksiyonları, acil sıkıntı ve uzun vadeli olumsuz sonuçlar ilgili olarak diğerlerinden daha yüksek puan aldı. Eğitim düzeyi, herhangi bir cinsel tacizden kaynaklanan mağduriyet miktarı ile ilişkili değildi, ancak yüksek eğitimli katılımcılar cinsel tacize olumsuz tepkiler konusunda önemli ölçüde daha yüksek puan aldı.

Sonuç: Cinsel taciz, mağdurlar için olumsuz psikolojik doğal sonuşlar ile ilişkiliydi. Pakistan'da halka açık yerlerde cinsel tacizin ele alınması gereken çok büyük bir sosyal sorun olduğu sonucuna varılabilir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Eğitim; doğal sonuç; halka açık yerler; Pakistan; cinsel taciz.

Sexual harassment in public places is a common yet understudied form of gender-based aggression directed against females.[1–4] The aim of the present study was to investigate three different forms of sexual harassment in public places against women in Pakistan, as well as reactions to the harassment.

Any physical, verbal, or nonverbal behaviour of a sexual nature that is not welcomed by the victim falls under the definition of sexual harassment.[1,5,6] Sexual harassment should be differentiated from flirting; sexual harassment is unwelcomed and unreciprocated, whereas flirting is based on mutual attraction.[5,7,8] Flirting, however, turns into sexual harassment if the act is

persistently carried out without the other person's consent.[9]

Sexual harassment is sometimes classified into three categories, as gender harassment, unwanted sexual attention, and sexual coercion. Gender harassment encompasses all behaviours that are degrading and hostile in nature towards one sex, at a group level[1,10,11] it may be regarded as a type of structural violence. Unwanted sexual attention refers to degrading behaviour at an individual level,[1] and it may include acts like staring, whistling, winks, catcalls, sexual jokes or comments, and unwanted body touch.[2,6,12] Sexual coercion involves direct or indirect requests or threats in order to get sexual benefits.[1,10]

In different cultures, victims of sexual harassment have reported experiencing a wide range of behaviours of sexual character. For example, catcalling, whistling, and staring, have been reported by American female students from diverse ethnic backgrounds.[1] In Iran, staring, shoving, eyeing women's bodies, and sexual comments on women's appearance were experienced by victims in public places.[2] Similarly, in Egypt, offensive acts like staring and touching by local males have been reported by female tourists.[13]

The perpetrator

In most studies, the perpetrators of sexual harassment against females have been found to be males.[14] In a variety of countries such as the US,[1] Canada,[3] Iran,[2] and India,[15] the perpetrators of sexual harassment in public places were usually strangers to the victims. Similarly, in Pakistan, sexual harassment by strangers, like fellow passengers, and bus conductors or drivers in public transports, has been reported.[16]

Concomitants of sexual harassment

A variety of negative psychological concomitants has been reported. Embarrassment, humiliation, and fear were experienced by young Nepalese females,[6] and American female students reported feeling intimidated, afraid, distressed, and threatened when targeted.[17] Feelings of being anxious, humiliated, depressed, confused, or fearful were expressed by female victims of harassment in Australia.[18] Frequent sexual harassment has also been shown to result in loss of self-confidence, interruption of studies, and substance abuse.[18,19]

Prevalence of sexual harassment in public places worldwide

Sexual harassment is a widespread form of aggression against women.[3,15,17,20–24] It is prevalent in many countries, both in workplaces and outside the occupational domain. In a study carried out in Iran, around 90 percent of the respondent reported that they had experienced sexual harassment in crowded public places.[2] In a study conducted in Nepal, 97 percent of the respondents reported sexual harassment in public transports.[6] Results of a study made in Delhi, India, showed that women were harassed between 50 to 100 percent of the times they visited public places.[15] Studies in developed countries like the US,[17] Australia,[18] and Canada[3] also show that women in these nations are not spared from every day sexual harassment.

Cultural aspects of sexual harassment

It has been argued that sexual harassment can be perceived differently based on the victims cultural background.[25,26] This can be seen in the light of Hofstede's categorisation of cultural dimensions, which makes distinctions between countries according to prevailing norms and values.[27] Some researchers have applied the cultural dimensions of (a) individualism-collectivism, (b) power distance, (c) uncertainty avoidance, and (d) masculinity-femininity, to shed light on the phenomenon of sexual harassment in various cultural contexts.[23,28]

Sexual harassment has also been seen as a tool to sustain gender hierarchies[17,20,29–31] in which women are the oppressed victims.[17,22,29,32,33] If acting against social roles attributed to them in a specific culture, females face social stigmatisation, derogatory remarks, and discrimination.[34,35] Additionally, powerlessness and sex role socialisation influence the reactions of females victimised from sexual harassment.[31] Thus, females from high power distance countries tend to restrain themselves from disobeying traditional norms, and accordingly they tend to tolerate acts of sexual harassment in order to maintain their status as respectable women. This, in turn, strengthens the acts of sexual harassment as an acceptable social custom.[36,37] In some collectivistic cultures, like Pakistan,[20] India,[15] and Bangladesh,[34] women hide their victimisation from sexual harassment and try to accept it as a part of their lives. It has also been argued that in order to avoid scenes in public, women prefer to ignore and accept sexually harassing behaviours rather to confront them.[28]

Research in the US has shown that young women mostly used passive strategies to cope with exposure to sexual harassment, while older women used more active strategies to confront the harasser, and some older women even questioned perpetrators who use sexist remarks.[1,38] However, around 60 percent of the American respondents from different ethnic groups used non-assertive strategies or did not respond at all.[12] Similarly, Nepalese young females mostly avoided situations where they were likely to be harassed, whereas married women with "sindoor", visible married identity markers, responded by scolding or staring at the perpetrators.[6] Women in India who could afford personal vehicles were found to avoid using public transportation due to sexual harassment.[15] They also reported that the most effective strategy to cope with sexual harassment in public places was to be accompanied by a male family member, or avoiding going out after nightfall. Similar behaviours were reported by female tourists in Egypt, who also asked to be accompanied by a male in order to avoid sexual harassment.[13]

The Pakistani context

In Pakistan, sexual harassment has been found to be a rampant form of gender-based aggression.[39] Many Pakistanis believe that women deserve to be harassed if they break the stereotype of staying within the premises of their homes and join the male dominated public domain.[40] Pakistani women face a

variety of different forms of sexual harassment while moving about in public places, especially when not accompanied by a man.[16,41] The perception of not being safe in public places has been shown to be based on fear of being sexually victimised or raped.[1,3,42] Stereotypes and attitudes towards women accentuate the subordinate role of women in the Pakistani society.[43] Moreover, the fear of being sexually harassed restrains females from progress, to get an education, to work, or to take part in politics,[42,44] which limits overall gender equality.

An increased awareness and acceptance of the concept of gender equality has made laws against sexual harassment possible also in Pakistan,[45] which is one of the 125 countries that have passed laws against sexual harassment.[46] In 2010, an amendment was made in section 509 of the Pakistan Penal Code of 1860, to declare sexual harassment a crime.[40] Still women in Pakistan are unacquainted with the procedure of workplace sexual harassment redress.[20] This is also reflected by the fact that sexual harassment has been the least reported crime in the province of Punjab.[47]

In research on interpersonal aggression, aggressive behaviour is often categorised into three types; physical, verbal, and nonverbal. Since sexual harassment is a form of aggressive behaviour, the same categories can be expected to be present. One aim of this study was therefore to apply these three categories in Pakistan, a country where sexual harassment of women in public places is common. A second aim was to investigate whether educational level of the victims was connected with the amount of victimisation they had been exposed to. The study also includes measurements of women's immediate reactions to sexual harassment as well as long-term negative consequences.

Method

Sample

A questionnaire was completed by 543 female university and college students from Islamabad, Lahore, and Rawalpindi in Pakistan. The mean age was 22.3 years (SD=4.3), and 65.6% were between 19 and 23 years old. Of the respondents, 481 were single and 55 married; 417 had a Bachelor's degree or less, and 125 had Master's degree or higher.

Instrument

A questionnaire including scales for measuring three types of sexual harassment, physical, verbal, and nonverbal, was used. The questionnaire consisted of a modified selection of items from the Sexual Harassment Experience Questionnaire for Workplaces (SHEQ) in Pakistan.[48] However, the authors of the SHEQ did not categorise the items into physical, verbal, and nonverbal forms of sexual harassment. Single items and reliabilities of the scales are presented in Table 1. Please note that nonverbal vocalisations (whistling and humming of filthy songs) fall into the category of nonverbal sexual harassment. Responses to all items were given on a five-point-scale (never=0, seldom=1, sometimes=2, often=3, very often=4).

The questionnaire also included four scales for measuring

Table 1. Single items and Cronbach's reliability coefficients of three scales measuring sexual harassment (n=543)

Has someone ...

Physical sexual harassment (6 items, α=.78)
- Touched your hand while giving you something.
- Stood close to you in a crowded place.
- Collided with you while passing by.
- Tried to have body touch with you while sitting.
- Tried to kiss you against your will.
- Tried to rape you.

Verbal sexual harassment (5 items, α=.72)
- Passed unwanted comments on your appearance.
- Said unwanted sexually oriented things to you.
- Offered you an unwanted lift in a vehicle.
- Threatened to spread rumours about you if you did not fulfill his sexual demands.
- Threatened to harm you physically if you did not fulfil his sexual demands.

Nonverbal sexual harassment (8 items, α=.81)
- Stared at you with dirty looks.
- Not let you pass by.
- Followed you in the street.
- Whistled while looking at you.
- Hummed filthy songs in your presence.
- Tried to give you an unwanted card or gift.
- Tried to give you a love letter you did not want.
- Tried to undress himself in front of you.

Table 2. Single items and Cronbach's reliability coefficients of four scales measuring reactions to sexual harassment (n=543)

Reactions to sexual harassment

Immediate distress (6 items, α=.90)
How did it make you feel?
Angry, humiliated, embarrassed, scared, afraid of what others might think of me, sad.

Defensive reactions (3 items, α=.77)
What was your immediate reaction?
I shouted or yelled at that person; I slapped that person; I complained.

Long-term negative consequences (5 items, α=.85)
How did it affect you afterwards?
I lost self-confidence; It affected my studies negatively; It affected my work negatively; I thought of quitting my job or studies; I started feeling uncomfortable with men.

Sharing the experience (7 items, α=.73)
Have you told anyone about it?
A friend, mother, father, sister, brother, relative, co-worker.

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different reactions to sexual harassment: immediate distress, defensive reactions, sharing the experience with someone, and long-term negative consequences. For single items and Cronbach's alphas, see Table 2. Two items measuring imme-

diate reactions, running away, and showing no reaction, were not included in the scale since they did not contribute to the alpha value.

Six questions measured the identity of the perpetrator (a stranger, a relative, a colleague, a friend, a student, an acquaintance). The location where the sexual harassment took place was measured with 12 questions (while waiting for a transportation, inside a public transportation, in the street, in a market place or shop, in a park, in a hospital, in a workplace, at the university, in an eating place, at a gathering, in someone else's home, in your own home). Responses to these questions were given on a five-point-scale (never=0, seldom=1, sometimes=2, often=3, very often=4).

Procedure

Data were collected between April and December 2016, using an online questionnaire that was sent to university and college students in Islamabad, Lahore, and Rawalpindi through university emails, Facebook, and WhatsApp. An online questionnaire was selected for collecting the data, since for sensitive issues, like sexual harassment, online questionnaires have proven suitable for obtaining reliable data.[49]

Ethical considerations

The study was anonymous and was carried out in accordance with the principles concerning human research ethics of the Declaration of Helsinki,[50] and guidelines for the responsible conduct of research of the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity.[51]

Results

A within-subject analysis of variance (WSMANOVA) revealed that the significantly most common perpetrator of sexual harassment was a stranger (1.61), followed by a student from one's university (.75), an acquaintance (.74), a friend (.71), a colleague at work (.56) and a relative (.51) (F(5,507)=57.76, p<.001, η2p=.363). Sexual harassment was found to be significantly most common in market places or shops (1.50), followed by in the streets (1.09) (F(11,532)=37.29, p<.001, η2p=.435). The most common immediate reactions were running away (1.32) and showing no reaction (1.41) [F(4, 539)=49.86, p<.001, ηp2=.270].

Three types of sexual harassment

The three scales measuring sexual harassment all correlated with each other at a p<.001-level, and the correlational coefficients were all above .70. Age did not correlate with any of the three scales, neither was any difference found between how often married and unmarried women had been sexually harassed on any of the three scales. A within-subject multivariate analysis of variance (WSMANOVA) showed that nonverbal sexual harassment was the most common type (1.36) followed by physical (1.28) and verbal harassment (1.03) [F(2, 541)=124.74, p<.001, ηp2=.316]. Of the respondents, only 3.7% reported that they had never been victimised from nonverbal sexual

harassment, 8.3% were never victimised from verbal sexual harassment, 5.3% were never victimised from physical sexual harassment, and 2.8% (n=15) of the respondents were never victimised from any of the tree types of sexual harassment.

Victimisation from sexual harassment, single items

A within-subjects multivariate analysis of variance (WSMANOVA) revealed that standing close in a crowded place, colliding while passing by, and touching the hand while giving something were the most common types of physical sexual harassment (F(6, 537)=174.63, p<.001, ηp2=.661). Mean values for the six single items of physical sexual harassment are presented in Fig. 1.

Passing unwanted comments on one's appearance was the most common form of verbal sexual harassment, followed by being exposed to sexually oriented statements and getting unwanted offers of a lift in a vehicle (F(5, 538)=197.68, p<.001, ηp2=.648) (Fig. 2). Being stared at with dirty looks was the most common form of victimisation from nonverbal sexual harassment, followed by the humming of filthy songs, whistling, and being followed in the street (F(7, 536)=137.96, p<.001, ηp2=.643) (Fig. 3).

Correlations between the sexual harassment scales and four concomitants

The correlations between the three scales measuring sexual
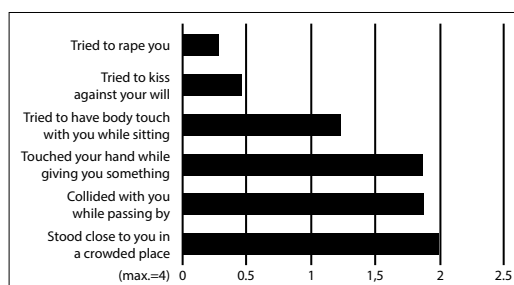

Figure 1. Mean values of six single items measuring victimisation from physical sexual harassment (n=543).
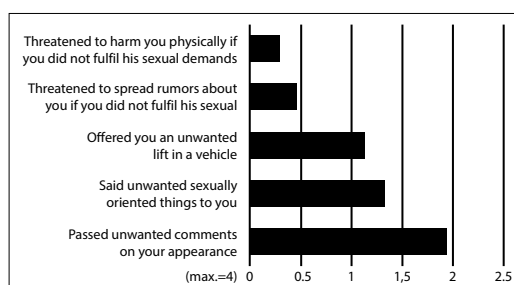
Figure 2. Mean values of five single items measuring victimisation from verbal sexual harassment (n=543).
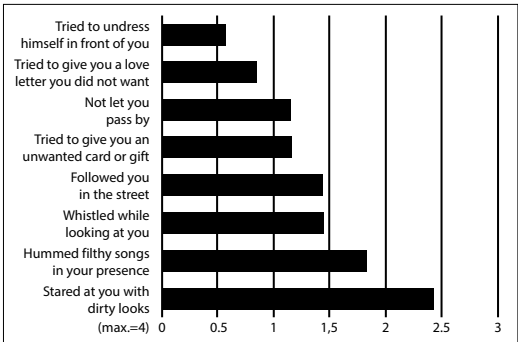
Figure 3. Mean values of six single items measuring victimisation from sexual harassment (n=543).

Table 3. Correlations between victimisation from three types of sexual harassment and four concomitants (n=543)

	Victimisation from physical	Sexual verbal	Harassment nonverbal
Immediate defensive reactions	.12**.	.17***	.14***
Immediate distress	.29***	.25***	.31***
Long-term negative consequences	.19***	.20***	.22***
Sharing	.22***	.20***	.27***

p≤.001***; p<.01**.

harassment and the four scales measuring concomitants are presented in Table 3. All the harassment scales were significantly correlated with all the concomitants, with all correlations except one being at the p<.001-level.

Concomitants of victimisation from sexual harassment

Scores for physical sexual harassment were converted to z-s-cores. Respondents with scores equal to or higher than zero were assigned to the high physical sexual harassment group, and respondents with scores lower than zero were assigned to the low physical harassment group. The same procedure was applied for verbal and nonverbal sexual harassment. Three multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVA) were conducted with belonging to a) physical sexual harassment group, b) verbal sexual harassment group, and c) nonverbal sexual harassment group respectively as independent variables, and immediate distress, immediate defensive reactions, long-term negative consequences, and sharing as dependent variables. The multivariate analysis was significant for belonging to the physical sexual harassment group (Table 4). The univariate analyses showed that respondents in the high physical harassment group scored significantly higher on all four variables. The multivariate analysis was significant for belonging to the verbal sexual harassment group (Table 5). The univariate analyses showed that respondents in the high verbal sexual harassment group scored significantly higher on immediate distress, long-term negative consequences and sharing, but not on immediate defensive reactions. The multivariate analysis was significant for belonging to the nonverbal sexual harassment group (Table 6). The univariate analyses were significant for immediate distress, long-term negative consequences, and sharing, and a tendency was also found for immediate defensive reactions. Respondents from the high nonverbal harassment group scored higher on all variables.

Educational level and sexual harassment

A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted with educational level (Bachelor's or less vs. Master's or more) as independent variable, and victimisation from physical, verbal, and nonverbal sexual harassment as dependent variables. The multivariate analysis was not significant for educational level [F(3, 538)=1.69, ns, ηp2=.009] (mean values are presented in Fig. 4).

Another multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted with educational level (Bachelor's or less vs. Master's or more) as independent variable, immediate distress, imme-

Table 4. Results for physical sexual harassment (high vs. low) in a Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) with four concomitants as dependent variables (n=543)

					Low SH		High SH	
	F	df	p≤	η_p^2	M	SD	M	SD
Effect of physical sexual harassment								
Multivariate analysis	10.69	4, 538	.001	.074				
Univariate analyses								
Immediate defensive reactions	4.38	1, 541	.037	.008	0.45	0.92	0.83	0.97
Immediate distress	40.03	"	.001	.069	0.42	0.79	1.80	1.16
Long-term negative consequences	15.70	"	.001	.028	0.32	0.45	0.86	0.72
Sharing	13.53	"	.001	.024	0.36	0.60	0.87	0.72

SH: Sexual harassment; df: Degrees of freedom; M: Mean; SD: Standard deviation.

Table 5. Results for verbal sexual harassment (high vs. low) in a Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) with four concomitants as dependent variables (n=543)

	F	df	p≤	η_p^2	Low SH		High SH	
					M	SD	M	SD
Effect of verbal sexual harassment								
Multivariate analysis	5.49	4, 538	.001	.039				
Univariate analyses								
Immediate defensive reactions	.002	1, 541	ns		0.81	1.29	0.81	0.94
Immediate distress	15.59	"	.001		1.07	1.40	1.79	1.15
Long-term negative consequences	7.14	"	.008		0.56	0.75	0.86	0.71
Sharing	9.73	"	.002		0.52	0.68	0.87	0.72

SH: Sexual harassment; df: Degrees of freedom; M: Mean; SD: Standard deviation.

Table 6. Results for nonverbal sexual harassment (high vs. low) in a Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) with four concomitants as dependent variables (n=543)

	F	df	p≤	η_p^2	High SH		Low SH	
					M	SD	M	SD
Effect of nonverbal sexual harassment								
Multivariate analysis	8.62	4, 538	.001	.060				
Univariate analyses								
Immediate defensive reactions	3.69	1, 541	.055	.007	0.73	1.03	0.90	0.90
Immediate distress	23.02	"	.001	.041	1.49	1.22	1.97	1.11
Long-term negative consequences	6.09	"	.014	.011	0.76	0.73	0.91	0.70
Sharing	23.16	"	.001	.041	0.70	0.64	0.99	0.78

SH: Sexual harassment; df: Degrees of freedom; M: Mean; SD: Standard deviation.
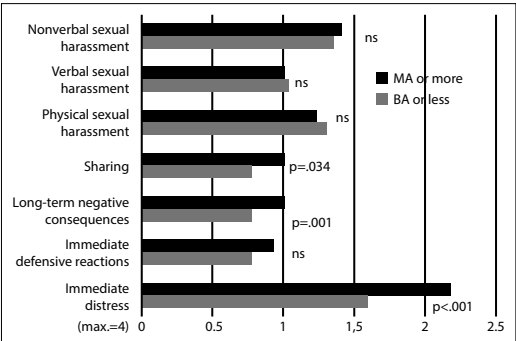
Figure 4. Mean values of three types of sexual harassment and four reactions for respondents on two educational levels (n=543) (c.f. Table 7 and the text).

diate defensive reactions, long-term negative consequences, and sharing as dependent variables, and total amount of victimisation from sexual harassment (the three types of sexual harassment added together) as covariate (Table 7, Fig. 4). The multivariate analysis was significant for level of educa-

tion. The univariate analyses were significant for immediate distress, long-term negative consequences, and sharing; respondents with a high level of education scored significantly higher on these three. There was no significant difference between the groups regarding immediate defensive reactions (Table 7, Fig. 4).

Discussion

The study investigated female victimisation from three types of sexual harassment in public places in Pakistan as well as reported consequences for the victims. The results showed that a stranger was the significantly most common perpetrator of sexual harassment. The result is consistent with previous studies from the US[1,14] and Nepal.[6] Sexual harassment was found to occur most frequently in market places, shops, and in the streets. A previous study has shown that market places and shops are common places for sexual harassment in Pakistan.[41] In the present study, the most common immediate reactions by the respondents were to run away or show no reaction. This is in line with the results from the US, where victims tried not to confront the unknown perpetrator due to the possible danger of humiliation and emotional distress.[12,14]

Table 7. Results from a Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) with level of education (BA or less/MA or higher) as independent variable, four concomitants as dependent variables, and total amount of victimisation from sexual harassment as covariate (n=542)								
					BA or less		MA or higher	
	F	df	p≤	η_p^2	M	SD	M	SD
Covariant: Victimisation from sexual harassment	19.94	4, 536	.001	.130				
Effect of level of education								
Multivariate analysis	7.34	4, 536	.001	.052				
Univariate analyses								
Immediate defensive reactions	2.28	1, 539	ns	.004	0.78	0.98	0.93	0.93
Immediate distress	28.14	"	.001	.050	1.59	1.17	2.18	1.14
Long-term negative consequences	11.35	"	.001	.021	0.78	0.69	1.01	0.78
Sharing	4.54	"	.034	.008	0.80	0.73	0.96	0.71

BA: Bachelor's degree; MA: Master's degree; df: Degrees of freedom; M: Mean; SD: Standard deviation.

Three types ofsSexual harassment

The most common type of sexual harassment in public places was nonverbal. Being stared at with dirty looks was, in turn, the most common form of nonverbal sexual harassment, followed by the humming of filthy songs, whistling, and being followed in the street. In a study from Iran[2] and in one from Egypt,[13] being stared at was also reported to be the most common form. This finding might be explained by the fact that social interaction between males and females in Pakistan is limited. Physical contact and sexually oriented statements to women in public is not acceptable.[41] This could be one of the reasons why perpetrators prefer to use nonverbal forms. Moreover, perpetrators can easily get away with nonverbal harassment.

Physical harassment was the second most common type. Standing close in a crowded place, colliding while passing by, and touching the hand of a woman while giving her something were the most common types of physical sexual harassment. Yet again, due to limited interaction between males and females in Pakistan, crowded areas are places where perpetrators can easily carry out offensive acts without being caught. Moreover, the crowdedness in public spaces could make their actions look like a gaffe.

Verbal sexual harassment was less common than nonverbal or physical harassment. Passing unwanted comments on a woman's appearance was the most common verbal form, followed by being exposed to sexually oriented statements and getting unwanted offers of a lift in a vehicle. In public places, verbal comments can easily be overheard by others standing close to the perpetrator, and might thus lead to negative social reactions.

The study showed that 3.7% of the respondents had never been victimised from nonverbal sexual harassment; 8.3% were never victimised from verbal, and 5.3% never victimised from physical sexual harassment. Most respondents (97%) had been victims of one or several forms. This finding reveals that sexual harassment is indeed utterly common in public places in Pakistan.

No difference was found between how often married and unmarried women had been victimised from any of the three types of sexual harassment in public places. The finding differs from results of two previous studies, where young unmarried females in Nepal[6] and in Latin America[24] were found to be more vulnerable to sexual harassment than married ones.

Concomitants of victimisation from sexual harassment

Victimisation from all three types of sexual harassment (physical, verbal, and nonverbal) were found to be highly correlated with immediate defensive reactions, immediate distress, and long term negative consequences. Sexual harassment has also in previous studies been associated with anxiety, depression, negative physical health,[52] and poor mental health.[53]

Sexual harassment and educational level of the victim

Female respondents, irrespectively of educational level (Bachelor's or less vs. Master's or more), had experienced equal amounts of physical, verbal, and nonverbal sexual harassment in public places. The finding is in line with results from a study made in Iran, where no significant relationship was found between educational level and the amount of victimisation from sexual harassment.[2] However, in contrast to these findings, a study from Latin America[28] found that females with higher levels of education reported more victimisation from sexual harassment than less educated ones.

In the present study, respondents with a higher education scored significantly higher on immediate distress and long-term negative consequences. One explanation for this might be that females with a higher level of education are more aware of their rights and are therefore better able to distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. In Pakistan, women generally tend to conform with cultural norms which tell them to avoid certain situations and potential perpetrators, in order to minimise the risk of sexual harassment. Although women with a higher education are more

likely to know that sexual harassment should not be tolerated, they might still use avoidance to cope with the harassment. Knowing that they should not accept being harassed might in turn create cognitive dissonance leading to higher immediate distress and more long-term negative effects.

In a study from different cultural spheres, based on an American and a Turkish sample, it was found that women with a high education used more assertive coping strategies to deal with sexual harassment.[37] The impact of culture thus seems to be crucial.

The results further revealed that women with a higher education were more likely to share their experience with someone. This finding can be seen as a way of coping with the experience. However, the results of the present study showed that although respondents with a higher education communicated significantly more with their friends and relatives about their experience, their levels of immediate distress and long-term negative consequences were still significantly higher than those of less educated women, although the amount of victimisation was the same. Thus, it may be concluded that sharing with a close person did not help the victims in overcoming their distress, although it might have other benefits. One explanation for why sharing did not relieve stress could be that women in Pakistan, like those in India,[15] typically receive advice of non-confrontation from the people with whom they share the experience, in order to save the victim from stigmatisation and further harm.

Limitations of the study

Some limitations of the study are the small sample size and the limited age range. It is also difficult to assess the representativity of the sample. Accordingly, the findings should be generalised from with caution. Future research with a larger sample and a wider age range could explain age trends in female victimisation from sexual harassment in public places with more certainty.

Conclusions

Sexual harassment in public places in Pakistan is a huge social problem. Almost all females in the study, irrespectively of educational level or marital status, reported themselves to have been victimised from sexual harassment in public places. Lack of adequate social support and conforming with cultural norms put women into additional distress. Education plays a vital role in increasing awareness about the problem. Additional social and legal support is required to enable women to move freely and take part in the social and economic development of the country.

Conflict of interest: There are no relevant conflicts of interest to disclose.

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II

Sexual Harassment and Victimization from Four Other Types of Interpersonal Aggression in Ghana:
A Cycle of Victimization

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Abstract

The aim of the study was to investigate victimization from sexual harassment, and level of emotional distress due to it, are associated with four other types of victimization. A questionnaire was completed by 280 female university students and lecturers in Ghana. The mean age was 26.7 years (SD = 6.2). The questionnaire included scales for measuring frequency of sexual harassment, emotional distress due to sexual harassment, physical punishment during childhood, victimization from peer aggression at school, and victimization from intimate partner aggression. Respondents who were more than average victimized from sexual harassment scored significantly higher on physical punishment during childhood, victimization from peer aggression at school (revictimization), and victimization from intimate partner aggression (multiple victimization). When frequency of sexual harassment was controlled for, emotional distress caused by sexual harassment correlated positively with victimization from peer aggression at school, and victimization from verbal intimate partner aggression, thus suggesting sensitization to aggression. Victimization from sexual harassment was associated with higher levels of both previous and simultaneous victimization from other types of aggression, thus corroborating the principles of both revictimization and multiple victimization. The finding does not suggest that sexual harassment in all cases is associated with other types of victimization.

Keywords: sexual harassment, revictimization, emotional distress, Ghana

Introduction

Victimization from one or multiple types of aggression has been found to be associated with a higher risk of being victimized again by the same or some other type of aggression; this reoccurrence of victimization has been termed revictimization (Finkelhor, Ormrod, & Turner, 2007;

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Henriksen, Mattick, & Fisher, 2015). The term 'cycle of violence' is often used to suggest that abuse or maltreatment during childhood leads to victimization and/or perpetration of aggression later in life (Tomsich, Jennings, Richards, Gover, & Powers, 2015).

Exposure to multiple types of aggression in adults has been associated with emotional distress (Palm, Danielsson, Skalkidou, Olofsson, & Högberg, 2016) and poor mental and physical health in female victims (Campbell, Greeson, Bybee, & Raja, 2008). It has been linked to higher levels of psychological distress in other situations, thus implying sensitization to aggression (Holt, Finkelhor, & Kantor, 2007). Multiple victimization has been found to predict levels of trauma symptoms (Finkelhor et al., 2007).

The aim of this study was to investigate to what degree victimization from sexual harassment is associated with other types of victimization, thus qualifying as revictimization or multiple victimization, or both. Revictimization was, in the present study, investigated by examining whether victimization from sexual harassment as an adult is associated with previous victimization from childhood physical punishment, and victimization from peer aggression at school. Multiple victimization was studied by examining whether there was an association between victimization from sexual harassment and victimization from verbal and physical intimate partner aggression as an adult. A further aim of the study was to investigate whether a heightened emotional vulnerability to sexual harassment is associated with revictimization and/or multiple victimization.

Sexual Harassment
Sexual harassment hinders the freedom and mobility of women (Ilahi, 2009), and it impairs the psychological and physical well-being of the victims (Avina & O'Donohue, 2002). Single or unmarried females have been found to be more vulnerable to sexual harassment than others (Neupane & Chesney-Lind, 2014; Madan &Nalla, 2016; Merkin, 2012). Sexual harassment of women has in previous studies been associated with other types of victimization, such as victimization from childhood abuse (Campbell et al., 2008; Wyatt & Riederle, 1994), from peer aggression at school (Pellegrini, 2001), and from intimate partner aggression (Campbell et al., 2008).

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Childhood Physical Punishment

By 2019, 56 countries have by law banned physical punishment of children in all settings (Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, 2019a). Physical punishment during childhood has been associated with psychological, physical, and social negative outcomes later in life. Several psychological concomitants of physical punishment have been identified including depression, mental health problems (Afifi, Mota, Dasiewicz, MacMillan, & Sareen, 2012), alcohol abuse, depression, mental health problems, and schizotypal personality (Österman, Björkqvist, & Wahlbeck, 2014). Respondents who have been victimized from physical punishment during childhood have also been found to be at a higher risk for developing physical health problems such as asthma, cancer, and cardiovascular diseases (Hyland, Alkhalaf, & Whalley, 2013). It has been suggested that childhood physical punishment might lead to the development of a victim personality (Björkqvist & Österman, 2014). It has furthermore been found that respondents who were abused or maltreated during childhood became involved in criminal activities and became offenders in adulthood more often than others (Widom & Maxfield, 2001). In Sweden, a decline in the involvement of adolescents in criminal activities has been observed 21 years after the ban on physical punishment of children (Durrant, 2000). Non-aggressive methods of childrearing have been found to be more effective than physical punishment in order to develop prosocial behaviours in children (Petrovic, Vasic, Petrovic, & Santric-Milicevic, 2016).

Peer Victimization at School

Victimization from peer aggression has been defined as being targeted by children of the same age other than siblings (Finkelhor & Dziuba-Leatherman, 1994). Peer victimization is a broader concept than bullying, since it also includes single episodes of aggression whereas bullying per definition is a repeated activity. Victimization from peer aggression has been associated with serious physical and psychological health problems including anxiety, depression, and loneliness (Iyer-Eimerbrink, Scielzo, & Jensen-Campbell, 2015), social phobia and agoraphobia (Gladstone, Parker, & Malhi, 2006), and suicide (Klomek et al., 2009).Victims of peer aggression have been found to develop internalisation problems like anxiety, depression, and loneliness later in life (Iyer-Eimerbrink et al., 2015).

Correlations have been found between maltreatment during childhood and revictimization in the form of peer aggression and intimate partner aggression later in life (Baldry, 2003). In western

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countries, physical punishment during childhood has been found to be a predictor of perpetration and victimization from peer aggression in school (Duong, Schwartz, Chang, Kelly, & Tom, 2009; Dussich & Maekoya, 2007; Zottis, Salum, Isolan, Manfro, & Heldt, 2014). Studies in several countries including Finland (Björkqvist, Österman, & Berg, 2011; Söderberg, Björkqvist, & Österman, 2016), the US (Afifi et al., 2012), Afghanistan (Corboz, Hemat, Siddiq, & Jewkes, 2018), and Iran (Jaghoory, Björkqvist, & Österman, 2013) have shown that children who were physically punished at home became victims of peer aggression at school more often than others.

Intimate Partner Aggression

Intimate partner aggression is one of the most common forms of aggression against women (World Health Organization, 2012). It may be a question of different types of aggression, such as psychological, physical, or sexual, perpetrated by a current or former partner or spouse (Coker et al., 2002). Aggressive intimate partner relations have been shown to give rise to poor health, physical injuries, depressive symptoms, and chronic mental illness (ibid.). A number of studies have shown that women who had been physically punished during childhood also reported subsequent victimization from domestic aggression later in life (Coid et al., 2001; Zamir, Szepsenwol, Englund, & Simpson, 2018). Exposure to multiple types of aggression has been shown to be associated with a decreased ability of escaping victimization in later abusive relationships (Auerbach Walker & Browne, 1985).

The Context of the Study

Ghana has committed to legally prohibit physical punishment of children in all settings including homes and schools (Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, 2019b). Still, the Children's Act 1998, article 13, and the Criminal Offences Act 1960, article 41 in Ghana support the "reasonable" correction of children (ibid.) The Ghanaian society includes many ethnic groups with various child rearing customs (MacCaskie, 2003). Physical punishment is culturally accepted and commonly used (Kyei-Gyamfi, 2011; Twum-Dansolmoh, 2013). Children in Ghana have been found to perceive physical punishment as normal and acceptable (ibid.). Studies have also found peer victimization to be prevalent among Ghanaian high school students (Antiri, 2016; Odumah, 2013).

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According to Hofstede's cultural dimension theory, Ghana is a high power distance country and a collectivist society (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010). In Ghana, males have an advantage over females in domestic and social matters (Mahama, 2004). Violence against women is widespread due to the socially accepted superior status of men and their right to assert power over females (Amoakohene, 2004). Cultural norms support male dominance and violence against women, this includes both intimate partner aggression and sexual harassment (Ardayfio-Schandorf, 2005; Aryeetey, 2004; Sedziafa, Tenkorang, & Owusu, 2016). Ghanaian women have reported victimization from emotional aggression (i.e. name-calling, accusations of witchcraft, stalking, husband's extramarital affairs) physical aggression (hitting, slapping, kicking, pushing, and beating), and sexual aggression (forced sexual intercourse and rape) by their husbands (Sedziafa et al., 2016). Female victims of intimate partner violence in Ghana have been found to suffer from depression, stress, fear, and loss of control (Asante & Andoh-Arthur, 2015). Still, intimate partner violence is perceived as normal and accepted by women (Doku & Asante, 2015).

Sexual harassment has been found in work places and public places in Ghana (Andoh, 2001) as well as in homes and in educational institutions (Aryeetey, 2004). According to the results of a study conducted in Ghana, females had been sexually harassed both by males known to them and by male relatives (Aniwa, 1999). This fact could be one of the reasons why sexual harassment is seldom made public in Ghana (ibid.), despite high awareness of its existence among the victims (Aryeetey, 2004). Under the Domestic Violence Act-732 (2007), sexual harassment has been declared an offensive act against females. However, no formal law against sexual harassment exists in Ghana (US Department of State, 2017) although Ghana is a signatory state to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 1979). No noticeable decline has, however, been observed in aggression against women in Ghana (Civil Society Coalition, 2014). Even though the Domestic Violence Act (2007) has criminalised violence against women in Ghana, married women still report lack of information regarding the law (Sedziafa et al., 2016).

Originality of the Study
It has not previously been investigated whether victimization from sexual harassment among women in Ghana and the level of emotional distress caused by it could be associated with past

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victimization from childhood physical punishment, peer aggression at school, and intimate partner aggression.

Method

Participants

A questionnaire was filled in by 280 female university students and lecturers in Ghana. The mean age was 26.7 years (*SD* = 6.2). The age span was between 17 and 64 years of age. Of the respondents 6% had high school education, 49.1% had tertiary education, 36.7% had a Bachelor's degree, and 8.2% a Master's degree.

Instrument

A questionnaire was created including scales measuring victimization from sexual harassment in public places, physical punishment during childhood, victimization from peer aggression at school, and victimization from intimate partner verbal and physical aggression. The two first ones were retrospective measures. A scale measuring emotional distress due to sexual harassment was also included. Responses were given on a four point scale (0 = never, 1 = seldom, 2 = sometimes, 3 = often, 4 = very often) for all scales.

The scale measuring frequency of victimization from sexual harassment was based on a scale by Kamal & Tariq (1997), it was shortened and slightly adapted for Ghana. Victimization from sexual harassment was measured with 15 items: Has a man done any of the following things to you? a) stared at you with dirty looks, b) told dirty jokes in your presence, c) shaked or pinched your palms, d) tried to have bodily touch with you while sitting, e) tried to stand too close to you in a crowded place, f) followed you in the street, g) offered you an unwanted lift in a vehicle, h) tried to give you an unwanted card or gift, i) tried to kiss you against your will, j) tried to rape you, k) tried to give or send you a text with sexual content, l) passed unwanted comments on your appearance, m) tried to undress himself in front of you, n) threatened to spread rumors about you if you did not fulfill his sexual demands, and o) threatened to harm you physically if you did not fulfill his immoral sexual demands. The Cronbach's alpha was .86.

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Victimization from verbal and physical intimate partner aggression was measured with two scales from the Direct Indirect Aggression Scales for Adults (DIAS-Adult; Österman, & Björkqvist, 2009). Victimization from verbal intimate partner aggression was measured with the following seven items: Has your present partner, or a previous partner, done any of the following things to you? a) threatened to hurt me, b) yelled at me, c) quarreled with me, d) purposely said nasty or hurting things to me, e) called me bad names, f) interrupted me when I was talking, and g) angrily nagged at me. Victimization from physical aggression was measured with six items: a) hit me, b) locked me in, c) locked me out, d) shoved me, e) thrown objects at me, and f) damaged something that was mine. The Cronbach's alpha was .87 for the scale of verbal aggression, and .86 for the scale of physical aggression.

Victimization from aggressive behaviour by peers at school was measured in retrospect with The Mini Direct Indirect Aggression Inventory (Mini-DIA; Österman, & Björkqvist, 2010) which includes three questions: When you were a pupil at school, how often were you victimized from the following things by another pupil:a) Physical aggression: Someone has for example hit you, kicked you, or shoved you, b) Verbal aggression: Someone has for example yelled at you, called you bad names, or said hurtful things to you, and c) Indirect aggression: Someone has for example gossiped maliciously about you, spread harmful rumours about you, or tried to socially exclude you from others. The Cronbach's alpha of the scale was .79.

Victimization from physical punishment during childhood was measured with The Brief Physical Punishment Scale (BPPS; Österman, & Björkqvist, 2007) which includes four questions: When you were a child, did an adult subject you to any of the following things? a) pulled your hair, b) pulled your ear, c) hit you with the hand, and d) hit you with an object. Responses were given on a four point scale. The Cronbach's alpha was .80.

Emotional distress due to sexual harassment was measured with the Emotional Distress due to Sexual Harassment Scale (EDSH; Anwar, 2016) with the question "If any of the previously mentioned things happened to you, how did it make you feel?" for the following six items: a) angry, b) humiliated, c) embarrassed, d) scared, e) afraid of what others might think of me, and f) sad. The

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Cronbach's alpha of the scale was .91. Educational level was measured on a four point scale (high school, tertiary education, Bachellor's degree, and Master's degree).

Procedure

The approval of six heads of tertiary educational institutions in Ghana was obtained. A link to an online questionnaire was sent to the institutions and were administered to female students and workers within the institutions. The link was active for three months in 2017. The electronic questionnaire generated 120 responses. Additional paper versions of the questionnaire were collected in Accra and Cape Coast in Ghana. The paper version was completed by 160 respondents.

Ethical Considerations

Data were collected with informed consent and under strict anonymity. The study adheres to the principles concerning human research ethics of the Declaration of Helsinki (World Medical Association, 2013), guidelines for the responsible conduct of research of the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity (2012), as well as the general data protection regulation of the European Union (European Commission, 2016).

Results

Correlations between the Victimization Scales

All four scales measuring victimization correlated with victimization from sexual harassment, all except one correlation, at a $p < .001$-level (Table 1). The highest correlation was found between victimization from physical and verbal intimate partner aggression ($r = .54$), and the second highest between physical punishment during childhood and victimization from peer aggression at school ($r = .50$).

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Table 1

Correlations between the Scales Measuring Victimization (N = 280)

Victimization from	1.	2.	3.	4.
1. Sexual Harassment in Public Places				
2. Verbal Intimate Partner Aggression	.27 ***			
3. Physical Intimate Partner Aggression	.15 *	.54 ***		
4. Victimization from Peer Aggression at School	.34 ***	.37 ***	.24 ***	
5. Physical Punishment during Childhood	.34 ***	.34 ***	.23 ***	.50 ***

*** $p < .001$; * $p < .05$

Victimization from Sexual Harassment

The most common places where the victimization occurred were: the university ($m = 1.0$), in the street ($m = 0.8$), while waiting for a transportation ($m = 0.6$), inside a public transportation ($m = 0.6$), and in a market place or shop ($m = 0.5$) [$F_{(4, 277)} = 15.80$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .186$]. The most common perpetrator was a friend ($m = 1.4$), followed by an acquaintance ($m = 0.97$), a student ($m = 0.96$), and a colleague ($m = 0.95$) ($F_{(5, 276)} = 28.15$, $p < .001$). The most common single behaviours, that the respondents were victimized from, were being stared at with dirty looks ($m = 2.4$), having one's hand shaken or pinched in the palm ($m = 2.3$), and being told dirty jokes ($m = 2.2$) [$F_{(16, 265)} = 49.68$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .750$].

No correlation was found between the amount of sexual harassment and age of the respondents. An univariate analysis of variance, with age as covariate, showed that respondents who were single ($m = 1.7$) were significantly more often victimized from sexual harassment compared to married respondents ($m = 1.5$) [$F_{(1, 273)} = 9.61$, $p = .002$, $\eta_p^2 = .034$].

Levels of Victimization from Sexual Harassment and Four Other Types of Victimization

Z-scores were created for the scale measuring sexual harassment. Respondents were then divided in two groups; high vs. low sexual harassment group. A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted with high/low sexual harassment group as independent variable and the four scales as dependent variables. The multivariate analysis was significant (Table 2). The univariate analyses

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showed that respondents belonging to the high sexual harassment group scored significantly higher on physical punishment during childhood victimization from peer aggression at school, and victimization from verbal and physical intimate partner aggression (Fig. 1). The highest *F*-values were found for victimization from aggression at school and physical punishment during childhood.

Table 2
Results of a Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) with Sexual
Harassment Group as Independent Variable and the Four Scales Measuring
Victimization as Dependent Variables (N = 280)

	F	*df*	*p* ≤	η^2_p
Effect of Sexual Harassment Group				
Multivariate Analysis	9.69	4, 276	.001	.123
Univariate Analyses				
Verbal Intimate Partner Aggression	9.81	1, 279	.002	.034
Physical Intimate Partner Aggression	6.30	”	.013	.022
Victimization from Peer Aggression at School	26.87	"	.001	.088
Physical Punishment during Childhood	28.56	”	.001	.093

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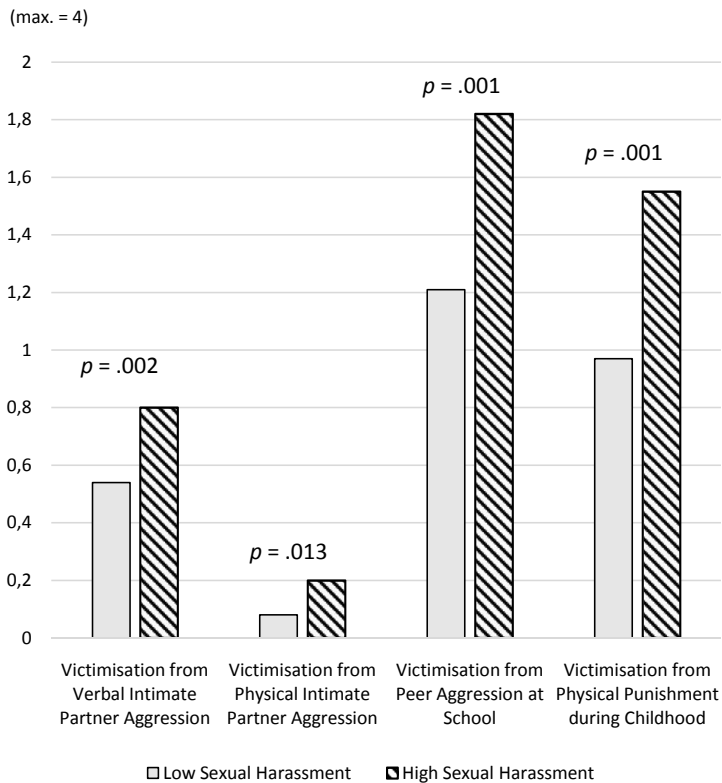
Figure 1. Means for victimization from verbal and physical intimate partner aggression, peer aggression at school, and physical punishment during childhood for respondents belonging the high vs. low sexual harassment groups (N = 280).

Level of Education

A univariate analysis of variance was conducted with educational level as independent variable and the scale for sexual harassment as dependent variable. The differences between educational levels were not significant. When different educational groups were compared it was found that respondents with higher educational levels underwent significantly stronger emotional distress due to sexual harassment [$F_{(3, 277)}$ = 6.57, p< .001, η_p^2 = .066]. Scheffé's test revealed that respondents with only high school education scored significantly lower than respondents on all the other

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educational levels (all $p < .010$) on emotional distress. No significant differences were found between the other three educational levels.

Emotional Distress Due to Sexual Harassment
Level of emotional distress due to sexual harassment correlated significantly positively with all the five scales measuring victimization from aggression (Table 3). When the frequency of sexual harassment was controlled for, the correlations were still significant for verbal intimate partner aggression and victimization from peer aggression at school.

Table 3
Correlations between Emotional Distress due to Sexual Harassment and Scales Measuring Victimization from Other Types of Aggression (N = 280)

| | Emotional Distress due to Sexual Harassment | | | |
| | Bivariate Correlations | | Partial Correlations[a] | |
	r	p ≤	r	p ≤
Sexual Harassment	.48	.001	-	-
Verbal Intimate Partner Aggression	.24	.001	.14	.021
Physical Intimate Partner Aggression	.15	.013	.09	ns
Victimization from Aggression at School	.30	.001	.17	.005
Physical Punishment during Childhood	.18	.003	.02	ns

[a] Controlled for frequency of sexual harassment

Discussion
The aim of the study was to investigate whether victimization from sexual harassment could be associated with previous victimization from physical punishment during childhood, and victimization from peer aggression at school, as well as with victimization from verbal and physical intimate partner aggression as an adult. Ghana was selected since previous studies have shown that sexual harassment of females has been found in educational institutions in Ghana (Aryeetey, 2004). Ghana is also a country with high power distance according to Hofstede's categories (Hofstede et al.,

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2010) which explains the prevailing inequalities and the subordinated status of women. Social norms have been found to encourage males to openly perpetrate sexual harassment in public places against females (Aryeetey, 2004).

It was shown that the most common place where the female students were victimized from sexual harassment was the university, and the most common perpetrator was a friend. The most common behaviours were being stared at with dirty looks, and having one's palm pinched. It is hardly surprising that the university was the most common place, since this is a place where female students spend much of their time. Still, it is alarming since the victimization interferes with their studies and might in some cases even lead to the discontinuation of them. Many studies on sexual harassment in public places in different countries have identified strangers as the most common perpetrator (Ilahi, 2009; Neupane & Chesney-Lind, 2014). The results of the present study are, however, in line with previous research in Ghana where the offender was found to be a relative, a friend, or a person known to the victim (Aniwa, 1999; Aryeetey, 2004).

Single female students were significantly more sexually harassed than married ones. Similar results have been found in studies carried out in Nepal (Neupane & Chesney-Lind, 2014), India (Madan &Nalla, 2016), and Latin American countries (Merkin, 2012).

Respondents at different educational levels did not differ regarding the amount of sexual harassment they had been subjected to. Nevertheless, respondents with a higher education underwent significantly stronger emotional distress due to the sexual harassment they were exposed to. Awareness due to education could explain this result. Educated females could be expected to be more aware of their rights and recognise sexual harassment as an offensive and a discriminatory behaviour.

Re- and Multiple Victimization
Respondents who had been more than average victimized from sexual harassment scored significantly higher on victimization from physical punishment during childhood and peer aggression at school. The finding suggests that victimization from sexual harassment can be considered to be a form of revictimization. The same respondents had also been significantly more victimized from

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both verbal and physical intimate partner aggression, which, in turn, could be interpreted as multiple victimization. Victims of sexual harassment in this sample had thus been subjected to both revictimization and multiple victimization. It can also be noted that the effect was slightly higher in the case of childhood adversities, physical punishment and peer aggression, as compared to intimate partner aggression occurring during adulthood.

The Sensitization Model
A previous study has shown that multiple victimizations contributed to post-traumatic symptoms, anxiety symptoms, and suicidal ideation (Palm et al., 2016). Multiple victimization increases the emotional distress among the victims, thus making them psychologically more vulnerable to further victimization.

In the present study, physical punishment and victimization at school, as well as intimate partner aggression, were all significantly associated with higher levels of emotional distress when victimized from sexual harassment as an adult. Sensitisation due to previous victimization might serve as a mediating variable for higher levels of emotional distress when victimized from sexual harassment as an adult.

After controlling for the frequency of being sexually harassed, it was shown that the emotional distress when victimized from sexual harassment still gave rise to heightened distress reactions in women who had been highly victimized from peer aggression at school, as well as from physical intimate partner aggression as adults. The finding supports the sensitisation model. Revictimization and multiple victimization might both be associated with higher vulnerability, which gives rise to higher levels of distress when confronted with sexual harassment.

When frequency of sexual harassment was controlled for, it was also shown that victimization from physical punishment during childhood was not correlated with emotional distress due to sexual harassment. This unexpected finding might be due to the fact that physical punishment of children is not illegal (Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, 2019b) and still socially supported in Ghana (Kyei-Gyamfi, 2011). Acceptance of aggression during childhood could thus

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explain why these women did not show increased sensitisation when confronted with emotional distress due to sexual harassment in later life.

Limitations of the Study

A limitation of the study is that when victimization from intimate partner aggression was measured it is not known whether it occurred before, after, or parallel with victimization from sexual harassment. It could thus be interpreted as multiple victimization or/and revictimization. Victimization from sexual harassment during adulthood preceded by victimization from physical punishment during childhood can, however, clearly be categorised as revictimization. The small sample size and the fact that the sample was not representative are also limitations. Future research with larger samples from different regions in Ghana would enable a better understanding of the association between victimization from sexual harassment and other types of aggression.

Conclusions

The findings suggests that victimization from sexual harassment can in some cases be considered to be a form of revictimization and/or multiple victimization. It can also be noted that the effect of of childhood adversties was slightly higher than the effect of victimization as an adult. It is suggested that sensitisation due to previous victimization might serve as a mediating variable for higher levels of emotional distress when victimized from sexual harassment as an adult. Even though respondents at different educational levels did not differ regarding the amount of sexual harassment they had been subjected to, respondents with a higher education underwent significantly stronger emotional distress by being sexually harassed. Due to social pressure to comply with cultural norms, education alone does not safeguard women from emotional distress caused by sexual harassment. There is a need to implement laws protecting women form sexual harassment. The findings emphasize the need to provide social support for women in Ghanain order to prevent the ongoing cycle of victimization.

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III

Risk Factors for Sexual Harassment in Public Places

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Abstract. The aim of the study was to investigate risk factors for victimisation from sexual harassment in public places. A questionnaire was completed by 591 female university students in Finland. The mean age was 25.2 years (SD = 7.1). Nonverbal sexual harassment was found to be the most common type of sexual harassment, followed by physical. The most common place of victimisation was in a nightclub or bar, and the most common perpetrator was a stranger. The most common single acts of victimisation were to be stared at with filthy looks and talked to in an unpleasant sexual way. Victimisation from sexual harassment in public places was significantly predicted by physical punishment during childhood, victimisation from peer aggression at school, victimisation from verbal and physical intimate partner aggression, and low self-esteem. When frequency of sexual harassment was controlled for, emotional distress caused by sexual harassment correlated significantly with victimisation from verbal intimate partner aggression, victimisation from peer aggression at school, and a low self-esteem, suggesting sensitisation to aggression. In this sample of Finnish university students, the levels of victimisation from sexual harassment were low. Victimisation from other types of aggression and low self-esteem were identified as possible risk factors for victimisation from sexual harassment.

Keywords. Risk factors, physical, verbal and nonverbal sexual harassment, public places.

1. Introduction

Female victimisation from sexual harassment in public places has been shown to constitute a form of revictimisation and/or multiple victimisation from other types of aggression. A study conducted in Ghana found that victimisation from sexual harassment in public places was associated with higher levels of victimisation during childhood from physical punishment and peer aggression at school, as well as with victimisation from verbal and physical intimate partner aggression during adulthood (Anwar, Österman, Afari-Korkor, & Björkqvist, 2020). The present study was undertaken in order to investigate whether the same risk factors for victimisation from sexual harassment could be identified in a Nordic country, Finland, which has a high level of gender equality and strict legislation against sexual harassment.

1.1 Social Status and Sexual Harassment of Women in Finland
In the year 1906, Finland became the second country in world to establish full political rights for females (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, 2019). Since then, the gender gap has

continued to be reduced in many fields of life. This has been particularly effective in labour force participation (OECD Labour Force Statistics, 2010), education, childcare, domestic responsibilities, and political representation (Statistics Finland, 2018). Gender equality and non-discrimination have been declared as important principles in the Constitution of Finland (Ministry of Justice, 1999). Sexual and gender-based harassment are declared as discrimination and prohibited under the Equality Act, which is applicable to all areas of life, including workplaces and educational institutions (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, 2019). Finland is today one of the top-ranking countries on the Gender Equality Index (World Economic Forum, 2020) and among the safest countries for women, according to the Women, Peace, and Security Index (Klugman, Dahl, & Bakken, 2018).

Despite achievements towards gender equality, different forms of discrimination against females have still been observed in Finland (Husu, 2000). Gender discrimination and aggression against females still exist (Heikkinen, 2003: Mankkinen, 1995). A survey found that 37.8 % of female respondents had been sexually harassed by men, and that 17.1% of the male respondents had been sexually harassed by women in Finland (Statistics Finland, 2018). Inappropriate remarks about the body and the sexuality of women, including ambiguous jokes and offensive remarks, have been reported by every tenth woman (Piispa, Heiskanen, Kääriäinen, & Sirén, 2006). Adolescent females in Finland who were victimised from sexual harassment have on the other hand reported high levels of self-esteem (Apell, Marttunen, Fröjd, & Kaltiala, 2019). This finding suggests that teenage girls in Finland might to some extent consider sexual harassment as a compliment about their physical attractiveness.

1.2 Victimisation of Children and Women from Other Types of Aggression in Finland

A law to end all forms of physical punishment directed against children in all settings including the home was implemented in Finland in 1983 (Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, 2017). Physical punishment during childhood has been found to have a variety of adverse effects on psychological and physical health of the victims later in life (Afifi, Mota, Dasiewicz, MacMillan, & Sareen, 2012; Hyland, Alkhalaf, & Whalley, 2013; Österman, Björkqvist, & Wahlbeck, 2014). Victimisation from peer aggression has also been observed in Finnish schools (Kaltiala-Heino, Fröjd, & Marttunen, 2016). A stronger relationship between physical punishment at home and victimisation from peer aggression at school has been found among Finnish girls than boys (Söderberg, Björkqvist, & Österman, 2016).

According to Finnish police records, 69 % of the victims of domestic and intimate partner violence were women (Statistics Finland, 2015). In another study, 30–32% of Finnish females reported victimisation from physical intimate partner violence (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2014). Between 1997 and 2005, a slight increase was observed of cases when females were victimised from physical or sexual aggression, or threats of such, by males (Piispa et al., 2006). When the prevalence of physical and/or sexual violence against women by intimate partners was compared in the Nordic countries, it was found that it was highest in Finland (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2014). Significant rates of stalking by male ex-partners, acquaintances, and strangers have been reported by Finnish university students (Björklund, Häkkänen-Nyholm, Sheridan, & Roberts, 2010). This is an example of the so-called Nordic paradox: the coexistence of contradictory conditions of high gender equality and prevalence of aggression against women (Gracia, & Merlo, 2016). The Nordic paradox could be explained by the fact that females in Finland are highly aware of their rights and therefore also ready to report that they have been victimised.

1.3 Adverse Outcomes of Sexual Harassment

Sexual name-calling has been found to be associated with later somatic and negative affective symptoms in female victims (Dahlqvist, Landstedt, Young, & Gådin, 2016). Victimisation from sexual harassment has also been found to be associated with a risk for negative psychological outcomes such as emotional distress (Gruber & Fineran, 2008). Discrimination of women has been found to result in psychological distress and low self-esteem (Corning, 2002). Furthermore, it has been shown that women perceive sexual harassment as more harmful than men (Hand, & Sanchez, 2000). It has been argued that victimisation from sexual harassment has more notable adverse health outcomes than bullying (Gruber, & Fineran, 2008). Victimisation from sexual harassment at the beginning of high school has been found to predict two other types of victimisation; victimisation by peers and intimate partners later in life (Chiodo, Wolfe, Crooks, Hughes, & Jaffe, 2009). This phenomenon is often referred to as multiple victimisation, or re-victimisation.

1.4 Risk Factors for Sexual Harassment

It has been argued that great power distance in a society between males and female is a risk factor for sexual harassment of women, both at workplaces and in public places (Fitzgerald, 1993; Gardner, 1995). The effect of alcohol consumption has also been identified as a risk factor for sexual harassment, when intoxicated males assume that a woman who has been drinking is available for sexual contact (Abbey, 2002). In comparison to the European standards, alcohol consumption has been found to be high among young people in Finland (UN Human Rights Council, 2012). Studies conducted in western countries has identified bars and nightclubs as the most common places where sexual harassment of women occurs (Graham, Bernards, Abbey, Dumas, & Wells, 2017).

1.5 Self-esteem and Victimisation

Victimisation from sexual harassment has been found to be associated with low self-esteem among females both in Norway (Bendixen, Daveronis, & Kennair, 2018) and in the US (Gruber & Fineran, 2008). In Pakistan, victimsation from sexual harassment has also been found to be positively correlated with low self-esteem among adult females (Muazzam, Qayyum, & Cheng, 2016). Victimisation from sexual harassment has also been found to be a predictor of low self-esteem among females (Malik, Malik, Qureshi, & Atta, 2014). However, the effect of sexual harassment on self-esteem has been shown to be smaller than the effect on the physical and psychological health of the victims (Gruber & Fineran, 2008).

Associations between low self-esteem and other types of victimisation have also been reported. Results of a longitudinal study showed that harsh physical punishment during childhood predicted low self-esteem (Amato & Fowler, 2002). It has been suggested that low self-esteem due to physical punishment might explain the association between victimisation from childhood punishment and later vulnerability to intimate partner aggression (Aucoin, Frick, & Bodin, 2006; Papadakaki, Tzamalouka, Chatzifotiou, & Chliaoutakis, 2009). Female adolescents who had been victimised from peer aggression at school have also been shown to have internalisation problems and low self-esteem (Özdemir & Stattin, 2011). It has been argued that a low level of self-esteem contributes to a continuous cycle of victimisation (Egan & Perry, 1998).

A meta-analysis has identified a bidirectional relationship between low self-esteem and peer victimisation suggesting peer victimisation to predict low self-esteem and vice versa (Van Geel, Goemans, Zwaanswijk, Gini, & Vedder, 2018). Similarly, self-esteem could have a bidirectional relationship with victimisation from sexual harassment.

2. Objectives of the Study

The present study examines different types of victimisation as possible risk factors for victimisation from sexual harassment in public places, and whether low self-esteem could serve as a predictor for victimisation from sexual harassment.

3. Methodology

3.1 Subjects

A questionnaire was completed by 591 female university students in Finland. Of the respondents, 175 were Finnish-speaking and 416 were Swedish-speaking. The mean age was 25.2 years (*SD* = 7.1). The age range was between 17 and 63 years of age. The Swedish-speaking students lived along the west and south coast of Finland, while the Finnish speaking lived in university cities spread out in the rest of Finland.

3.2 Instrument

A questionnaire was created including scales for measuring victimisation from three types of sexual harassment, physical punishment during childhood, victimisation from peer aggression at school, and two types of victimisation from intimate partner aggression. Scales measuring self-esteem and distress due to sexual harassment were also included. Victimisation from physical punishment and peer aggression were retrospective measures. The response alternatives were on a five-point scale for all measures (for all victimisation scales: 0 = never, 1 = seldom, 2 = sometimes, 3 = often, 4 = very often; for self-esteem and emotional distress due to sexual harassment: 0 = completely disagree, 1 = slightly disagree, 2 = neutral, 3 = slightly agree, 4 = completely agree).

The scale measuring victimisation from sexual harassment was based on the Sexual Harassment Experience Scale (Kamal & Tariq, 1997) and adopted for Finland. Three sub-scales were constructed for measuring victimisation from physical, verbal, and nonverbal sexual harassment. Individual items in the scales and Cronbach's alphas are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Single Items and Cronbach's Alphas of Three Scales Measuring
Victimisation from Sexual Harassment (*N* = 591)

Has a man done any of the following things to you?
Physical Sexual Harassment (7 items, α = .89)
Touched you inappropriately while giving you something.
Tried to put his hand on yours, for example in computer teaching.
Tried to stand too close to you in a crowded place (eg. in an elevator).
Collided with you while passing by.
Tried to have body contact with you while sitting.
Tried to kiss you against your will.
Tried to rape you.
Verbal Sexual Harassment (6 items, α = .79)
Passed unwanted comments on your appearance with sexual allusions that you did not like.
Said unwanted sexually oriented things to you.
Offered you an unwanted lift in a vehicle.
Promised to promote you, or give you some other compensation, if you would agree to his sexual demands.

Threatened to spread false rumours about you if you did not fulfil his sexual demands.

Threatened to harm you physically if you did not fulfil his sexual demands.

Nonverbal Sexual Harassment (7 items, α = .84)

Stared at you with dirty looks.

Did not let you pass by.

Followed you in the street.

Whistled while looking at you.

Tried to give you an unwanted card or gift.

Tried to give you a love letter you did not want.

Tried to undress himself in front of you.

Victimisation from physical punishment during childhood was measured using the Brief Physical Punishment Scale (Österman, & Björkqvist, 2007). The scale includes four questions: "When you were a child, did an adult at home subject you to any of the following things? "(a) pulled your hair, (b) pulled your ear, (c) hit you with the hand, and (d) hit you with an object. The Cronbach's alpha of the scale was .87.

Victimisation from aggressive behaviour by peers at school was measured with the Mini Direct Indirect Aggression Inventory (Österman, & Björkqvist, 2010). The scale includes three items: "When as child you were a pupil at school, how often were you victimised from the following things by another pupil": a) Physical aggression: Someone has for example hit you, kicked you, or shoved you, b) Verbal aggression: Someone has for example yelled at you, called you bad names, or said hurtful things to you, and c) Indirect aggression: Someone has for example gossiped maliciously about you, spread harmful rumors about you, or tried to socially exclude you from others. The Cronbach's alpha of the scale was .81.

Victimisation from intimate partner aggression as an adult was measured with the Direct Indirect Aggression Scales for Adults (Österman, & Björkqvist, 2009). Victimisation from verbal intimate partner aggression was measured with the following seven items: "Has your present partner, or a previous partner, done any of the following things against you?": (a) threatened to hurt you, (b) yelled at you, (c) quarreled with you, (d) purposely said nasty or hurting things to you, (e) called you bad names, (f) interrupted you when you were talking, and (g) angrily nagged at you. Cronbach's alpha for the scale was .93. Victimisation from physical intimate partner aggression was measured with nine items: (a) hit you, (b) locked you in, (c) locked you out, (d) shoved you, (e) bit you, (f) scratched you, (g) spit at you, (h) thrown things at you, and (i) damaged something that belonged to you. Cronbach's alpha for the scale was .91.

In order to measure self-esteem, the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965) was used. The scale includes 10 items: 1) On the whole, I am satisfied with myself, 2) At times I think I am no good at all, 3) I feel that I have a number of good qualities, 4) I am able to do things as well as most other people, 5) I feel I do not have much to be proud of, 6) I certainly feel useless at times, 7) I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others, 8) I wish I could have more respect for myself, 9 All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure, and 10) I take a positive attitude toward myself. The Cronbach's alpha of the scale was .81.

Emotional distress due to sexual harassment was measured with the Emotional Distress due to Sexual Harassment Scale (Anwar, 2016). The scale includes six items: "If any of the previously mentioned things happened to you, how did it make you feel?" (a) angry, (b)

humiliated, (c) embarrassed, (d) scared, (e) afraid of what others might think of me, and (f) sad. The Cronbach's alpha of the scale was .85.

3.3 Procedure
The data was collected using online questionnaires sent to female students by university email and social media. A paper-and-pencil questionnaire was also administered to female students within a university in Western Finland. The data were collected between April 2017 and March 2019.

4. Results

4.1 Correlations between the Scales
Victimisation from the three measured types of sexual harassment correlated significantly with all four potential risk factors at a p < .001-level (Table 2). Self-esteem correlated significantly negatively with all three types of sexual harassment. The highest correlations were found between physical intimate partner aggression and all three types of sexual harassment.

Table 2. Correlations between Victimisation from Three Types of Sexual Harassment, Four Scales Measuring Other Types of Victimisation, and Self-esteem ($N = 591$)

	Victimisation from Sexual Harassment		
	Physical	Verbal	Nonverbal
Physical Punishment during Childhood	.32***	.33***	.26***
Victimisation from Peer Aggression at School	.43***	.46***	.40***
Physical Intimate Partner Aggression	.49***	.51***	.49***
Verbal Intimate Partner Aggression	.41***	.45***	.38***
Self-esteem	-.27***	-.29***	-.23***

*** $p < .001$

4.2 Victimisation from Sexual Harassment
Nonverbal sexual harassment was found to be the most common type of harassment ($m = 1.10$, $SD = 0.78$), followed by physical harassment ($m = 0.90$, $SD = 0.82$); verbal sexual harassment ($m = 0.76$) was the least frequent type [$F_{(2,589)} = 174.09$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .372$]. The most common place of victimisation from sexual harassment was in a nightclub or bar ($m = 2.1$), followed by in the street ($m = 1.4$) [$F_{(11,568)} = 118.12$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .696$]. The most common perpetrator of sexual harassment was a stranger ($m = 2.1$), followed by an acquaintance ($m = 1.1$) [$F_{(4,573)} = 330.66$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .698$]. The most common single acts of victimisation from sexual harassment was to be stared at with filthy looks ($m = 1.98$), followed by talked to in an unpleasant sexual way ($m = 1.77$), getting sexual comment on one's appearance ($m = 1.67$), being whistled at ($m = 1.60$), and being touched in an inappropriate manner ($m = 1.2$) [$F_{(19,572)} = 91.45$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .752$]. No correlations were found between age of the respondents and frequency of the three types of victimisation from sexual harassment. A variable for total victimisation from sexual harassment was created by adding the three types of victimisation together and dividing the sum with three. The Swedish speaking women ($m = 0.99$, $SD = .62$) had been significantly more victimised from sexual harassment than the Finnish speaking ones ($m = 0.75$, $SD = .83$) [$t_{(589)} = 3.78$, $p < .001$].

4.3 Frequency of Victimisation from Sexual Harassment, Four Other Types of Victimisation, and Self-Esteem

On the basis of the total victimisation scores from sexual harassment (when the scores of the three subscales were added together) two groups were formed (high vs. low) with the mean as demarcation point. A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted with sexual harassment group (high/low) as independent variable and the four scales measuring other types of victimisation and self-esteem as dependent variables. The multivariate analysis was significant (Table 3). The univariate analyses showed that respondents belonging to the high sexual harassment group scored significantly higher on physical punishment during childhood, victimisation from peer aggression at school, and victimisation from verbal and physical intimate partner aggression, and lower on self-esteem (Fig. 1). The highest *F*-values were found for victimisation from verbal intimate partner aggression, and victimisation from peer aggression at school.

Table 3. Results of a Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) with Sexual Harassment Group (High/Low) as Independent Variable and Four Scales Measuring Other Types of Victimisation, and Self-Esteem as Dependent Variables ($N = 591$), cf. Fig. 1

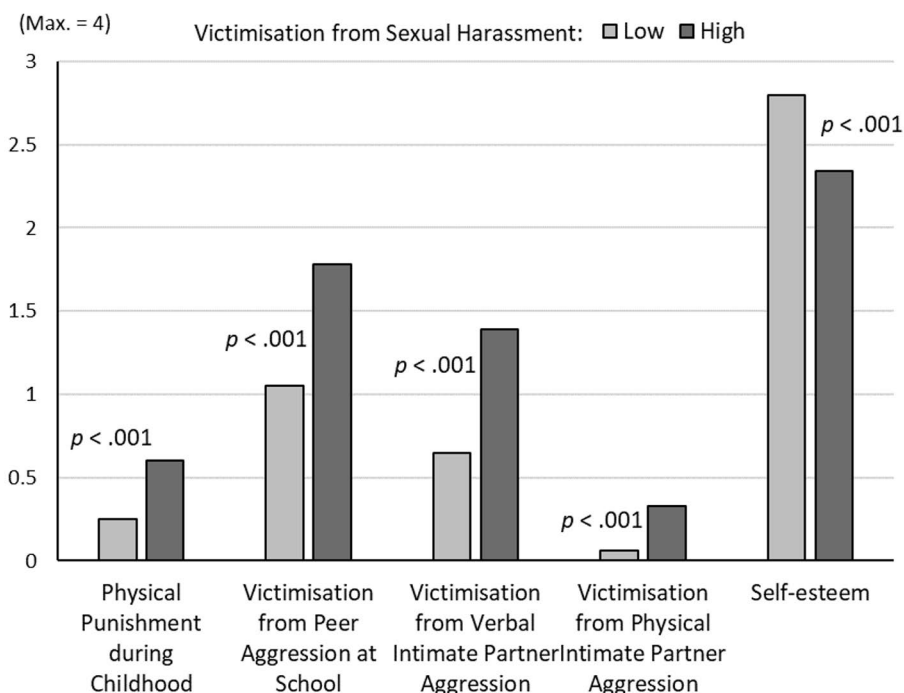|	*F*	*df*	*p* ≤	η_p^2
Effect of Sexual Harassment Group				
Multivariate analysis	38.12	5, 580	.001	.247
Univariate analyses				
Physical Punishment during Childhood	36.59	1, 584	.001	.059
Victimisation from Peer Aggression at School	96.19	”	.001	.141
Verbal Intimate Partner Aggression	108.99	”	.001	.157
Physical Intimate Partner Aggression	51.09	“	.001	.080
Self-esteem	40.48	”	.001	.065

Figure 1. Mean values for four types of victimisation and self-esteem for women in the high vs. low victimisation group ($N = 591$), cf. Table 3.

4.4 Predictors of Victimisation from Sexual Harassment

Victimisation from physical and verbal sexual harassment in public places was significantly predicted by physical punishment during childhood, victimisation from peer aggression at school, victimisation from verbal and physical intimate partner aggression, and low self-esteem (Table 4). The pattern was the same for victimisation from nonverbal sexual harassment, with the exception that victimisation from physical intimate partner aggression did not predict victimisation from nonverbal sexual harassment.

Table 4. Results from a Regression Analysis with Five Predictors of Victimisation from Sexual Harassment ($N = 591$)

	Victimisation from Sexual Harassment					
	in Public Places					
	Physical		Verbal		Nonverbal	
R	.60		.63		.56	
R^2	.36		.40		.32	
F	65.73		77.67		54.15	
$p \leq$	.001		.001		.001	
Predictors	β	$p \leq$	β	$p \leq$	β	$p \leq$
Physical Punishment during Childhood	.12	.001	.12	.001	.06	.080
Victimisation from Peer Aggression at School	.23	.001	.25	.001	.22	.001

Victimisation from Verbal Intimate Partner Aggression	.30	.001	.28	.001	.34	.001
Victimisation from Physical Intimate Partner Aggression	.10	.023	.15	.001	.06	*ns*
Self-esteem	-.12	.001	-.13	.001	-.10	.007

4.5 Emotional Distress Due to Sexual Harassment

The mean value for emotional distress due to sexual harassment was 0.72 (*SD* 0.71). On a scale from zero to four this is equivalent to less often than seldom. Emotional distress due to sexual harassment correlated significantly positively with frequency of victimisation from sexual harassment and the four scales measuring victimisation from aggression, and negatively with the scale measuring self-esteem (Table 5). When frequency of sexual harassment was controlled for with partial correlation analysis, the correlations were still significant for victimisation from verbal intimate partner aggression, victimisation from peer aggression at school, and significant but negative with self-esteem.

Table 5. Correlations between Emotional Distress due to Sexual Harassment, Four Scales Measuring Victimisation from Other Types of Aggression, and Self-Esteem (*N* = 591)

	Emotional Distress due to Sexual Harassment			
	Bivariate Correlations		Partial Correlations [a]	
	r	$p \leq$	r	$p \leq$
Sexual Harassment	.67	.001	-	-
Physical Punishment during Childhood	. 25	.001	.05	*ns*
Victimisation from Aggression at School	. 45	.001	.22	.001
Verbal Intimate Partner Aggression	.41	.001	.09	.032
Physical Intimate Partner Aggression	.29	.001	.00	*ns*
Self-esteem	-.27	.001	-.12	.003

[a] Controlled for frequency of sexual harassment

5. Discussion

The results of the study showed that sexual harassment of women occurs in Finland, although the reported levels were in general very low. The mean frequency of victimisation was "seldom" (1.10) for nonverbal sexual harassment, and less often than seldom for physical (0.90) and verbal harassment (0.76). Finland has one of the highest levels of gender equality in the world (World Economic Forum, 2020), and it is one of the safest for women to live in (Klugman et al., 2018).

In the present study, nonverbal sexual harassment was found to be the most common form, followed by physical and verbal forms. The most common single types of sexual harassing behaviours were to be stared at with filthy looks, talked to in an unpleasant sexual way, getting sexual comment about one's appearance, and being touched in an inappropriate manner. Female respondents of another study conducted in Finland have reported victimisation from similar acts of sexual harassment (Piispa et al., 2006).

The results showed that not all public places are completely free from sexual harassment of women in Finland. Nightclubs and bars were the most common places for sexual harassment to take place. Similar results have been found in other western countries (Graham et al., 2017). It

has been argued that intoxicated males at social drinking gatherings consider a female easily available for sexual contact if she is intoxicated (Abbey, 2002). Excessive alcohol consumption could be a risk factor contributing to victimisation of sexual harassment of women.

A significant difference in the frequency of victimisation from sexual harassment was found between Swedish- and Finnish-speaking respondents with Swedish-speakers having higher means. This might have a geographical explanation since the Swedish-speaking respondents live in the coastal region of Finland, while the Finnish-speaking ones live in the central regions. The coastal region is closer to the rest of Europe and might be more influenced by other cultures.

5.1 Predictors of Victimisation from Sexual Harassment

It was found that physical punishment during childhood, victimisation from peer aggression at school, and victimisation from verbal and physical intimate partner aggression all significantly predicted victimisation from physical and verbal sexual harassment in public places. The pattern was the same for victimisation from nonverbal sexual harassment, with the exception that victimisation from physical intimate partner aggression did not predict victimisation from nonverbal sexual harassment. Respondents who had been victimised from physical punishment during childhood, and peer aggression at school, were found to have been victimised from sexual harassment more than the average. Sexual harassment could thus qualify as a type of revictimisation. Respondents victimised from physical and verbal intimate partner aggression were also victimised from sexual harassment more than the average. In this case, victimisation from sexual harassment could constitute a form of multiple victimisation. Similar patterns of revictimisation and multiple victimisation have previously been found in Ghana, with the same research instruments (Anwar et al., 2020). The effect was the highest for victimisation from verbal intimate partner aggression, and for victimisation from peer aggression at school, and somewhat smaller for victimisation from physical punishment during childhood and physical intimate partner aggression.

The results also showed that respondents who had been more than average victimised from sexual harassment had a lower self-esteem than others. Thus, low self-esteem could be considered a risk factor for victimisation from sexual harassment. Low self-esteem was also identified as one of the significant predictors for all three forms of sexual harassment. It has been argued that low self-esteem contributes to a continuous cycle of victimisation from different types of aggression (Egan & Perry, 1998). A bidirectional relationship between self-esteem and victimisation from sexual harassment is also possible.

In contrast to the adult females in the present study, a previous study found that adolescent Finnish females who had been subjected to sexual harassment reported high levels of self-esteem (Apell et al., 2019). This could be due to the fact that adult who has reached a certain level mental maturity are better able to differentiate between a compliment and an act of sexual harassment. The women in the study by Apell et al. (2019) were considerably younger than the women in the current study.

5.2 Emotional Distress Due to Sexual Harassment

Scores of emotional distress due to experiences of sexual harassment was also very low, at an average between 0 and 1, meaning that they had experienced emotional stress less often than "seldom". After controlling for frequency of sexual harassment, it was found that the correlations between emotional distress due to sexual harassment and victimisation from verbal intimate partner aggression, and victimisation from peer aggression at school, were significant. The finding suggests a sensitisation towards aggression in the victims, and it is in accordance

with previous findings from Ghana obtained with the same method (Anwar et al., 2020). Victimisation from peer aggression in schools has been found to be predictive of other types of aggression later in life (Chiodo et al., 2009). Consequently, this continuous cycle of victimisation or revictimisation might increase the vulnerability to emotional distress due to sexual harassment as an adult. When controlling for frequency of sexual harassment, it was also found that victimisation from physical punishment during childhood was not correlated with emotional distress due to sexual harassment in adulthood. This could be explained by the fact that physical punishment of children is illegal and relatively rare in Finland (Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, 2017).

5.3 Limitations of the Study
Since the study was not longitudinal, it was not possible to ascertain whether victimisation from sexual harassment had occurred prior to, at the same time, or after the victimisation from intimate partner aggression. The correlations only show an association between the phenomena. However, it is possible to conclude that childhood victimisation in the form of physical punishment at home and peer victimisation at school took place prior to victimisation from sexual harassment as an adult and could thus be regarded as risk factors for sexual harassment.

5.4 Conclusions
Victimisation from different types of aggression and low self-esteem have been identified as possible risk factors for victimisation of females from sexual harassment in public places in Finland. Sexual harassment of females in Finland still occurs in some public places, but in this sample of university students, the problem did not seem to be huge.

Ethical Considerations
Data were collected with informed consent and under strict anonymity. The study adheres to the principles concerning human research ethics of the Declaration of Helsinki (World Medical Association, 2013), guidelines for the responsible conduct of research of the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity (2012), as well as the general data protection regulation of the European Union (European Commission, 2016).

Competing Interests
The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

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IV

Research Article

Sexual Harassment and Psychological Well-Being of the Victims: The Role of Abuse-Related Shame, Fear of Being Harassed, and Social Support

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Abstract

Objectives: The aim of the study was to investigate the association between victimisation from sexual harassment and the development of PTSD and depressive symptoms among victims, and in addition, to examine potentially contributing mediating and moderating social factors involved in the process.

Methods: A questionnaire was completed by 586 female university students in three cities in Pakistan. The mean age was 22.3 years (SD = 4.3). The questionnaire included scales for measuring the frequency of sexual harassment, the victim's sharing of the incident with a close one, social support, abuse-related shame, fear of being harassed, self-esteem, symptoms of PTSD, and depression.

Results: Abuse-related shame and fear of being harassed were found to serve as mediators between exposure to sexual harassment and PTSD and depression respectively. Social support, but not simply sharing the experience with a close one, had a moderating effect. The indirect effect of abuse-related shame was weaker among females who received social support after being victimised. No association was found between victimisation from sexual harassment and the level of self-esteem of the victims.

Conclusion: The results emphasise the importance of mediating social factors for the negative well-being of female victims of sexual harassment. Furthermore, social support seems to moderate the negative effect of sexual harassment. There is a grave need to change the prevailing mindset where conformity with social norms and integrity is prioritised over the well-being of the individuals.

Keywords: Abuse-related shame, depression, fear of being harassed, PTSD, sexual harassment, social support

Cite This Article: Anwar F, Osterman K, Björkqvist K. Sexual Harassment and Psychological Well-being of the Victims: The Role of Abuse-related Shame, Fear of Being Harassed, and Social Support. EJMI 2022;6(2):227–239.

Gender-based aggression is a form of aggression with the inherent purpose of oppressing women, consciously or unconsciously, while at the same time displaying male dominance.[1] According to article 40 of the Istanbul Convention, sexual harassment has been declared as one such form of aggression against women.[2] Pakistan is one among 125 countries that has established laws to address this problem. There are two legal provisions that

govern sexual harassment throughout Pakistan: section 509 of the Pakistan Criminal Penal Code and the Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act of 2010. According to section 509 of the Pakistan Penal Code,[3] whoever intend to insult the modesty of a woman through verbal, physical, and nonverbal intrusion into the privacy of a woman in public places shall be punished with imprisonment of three years and given a fine of up to five

thousand rupees, or both. Despite the strict laws and the fact that sexual harassment has been declared a criminal offence,[4] a large-scale prevalence of sexual harassment against women has been observed in Pakistan.[5-7] One obvious reason is the weak implementation of the law to curb the crime; another reason could be existing cultural barriers preventing women from reporting the gender-based aggression they face in public places.

People from collectivist societies like Pakistan endorse interdependence and prefer in-group goals over personal needs and aspirations.[8] In addition, the patriarchal values and cultural norms determine the social status of an individual. Women are considered to have the responsibility of keeping up the respect and dignity of the family, and being a victim of sexual offence means bringing disrespect to the whole family.[7] It has been argued that the victimisation of females from sexual harassment is not only about male sexual desires, but also about power distance and gender dynamics in a given culture.[9] It is such a common phenomenon in many patriarchal societies that women accept it as a part of their daily life[10,11] to such an extent that it is mostly overlooked by bystanders who fail to perceive it as objectionable behavior.[12,13] Similarly, the witnessing of different forms of sexual harassment against other females on a daily basis makes women accustomed and desensitized to these discriminatory behaviors. Therefore, when they themselves encounter victimisation from sexual harassment, they find it less disturbing and shameful.[14]

It has been argued that the main motive behind perpetration of sexual harassment is to protect the males' social status and dominance, thus to uphold the gender hierarchy[15,16] especially in high power distant countries like Pakistan. Despite legal protection, placing a complaint is a costly process for women; here they will again encounter the patriarchal system, social shame, and victim-blaming. Thus, the primary issue is the weak implementation of the law[6] which includes a deficient judicial system and poor law enforcement services to protect women in public places. Women in Pakistan have reported emotional distress due to sexual harassment, especially on disclosure of their experience to close ones;[17] this might be due to the fact that Pakistani women receive poor, or even discouraging, social support when sharing the experience of victimisation from sexual harassment with others. In the present study, the mediating effect of different factors involved in the process, more precisely the fear of being harassed, and abuse-related shame, were investigated. The potentially moderating factors of sharing behavior of the victims of sexual harassment and the social support they receive on the disclosure of their experience were also examined.

Social Support

Social support has been found to moderate the relationship between social stressors and mental health issues.[18] Results of a meta-analysis identified a correlation between social support and positive mental health effects in individuals who encountered stressful situations.[19] According to the theoretical stress and coping perspective on social support, reassurance by close ones or social networks protects people from the harmful effects of a stressor and promotes coping, thus contributing to their positive mental health.[20] Similarly, less perceived social support was found to be predictive of depression in survivors of a traumatic life event.[21] It has been argued that social support from social networks buffers distress caused by victimisation from bullying[22] thus moderating the association between victimisation from dating violence and psychological well-being[23] and the relationship between intimate partner violence and depression. [24] However, the moderating effect of social support on the association between victimisation from sexual harassment and the psychological well-being of the victims has not been extensively studied, especially in the Pakistani context.

Rigid social beliefs about masculinity and femininity have been argued to be risk factors for aggression against individuals in a given society.[25] In present-day Pakistan, the younger generation is more flexible about gender roles than previous ones[26] however, women are still scrutinized and stigmatized for not conforming with the gender norms set by the society.[27] Even those who follow the norms become victims of "girl watching" behavior by men.[28] In such situations, the lack of social support provided to the victims could contribute to prevailing gender inequality in the culture. For example, mothers abiding by traditional norms are more concerned about the cultural imperatives of shame, stigma, and embarrassment related to sexual assault rather than the well-being of their daughters.[29] Similarly, females who raise their voices against discrimination are labeled as bad women, since silence is the socially accepted and expected behavior from a woman in traditional cultures like Pakistan.[26] In addition, the negative social reactions the victim is met with disregard the fact that sexual assault of females is in fact outlawed[30] and the victimisation keeps going on because people at large fail to realize that it is indeed a crime and a form of sexism and aggression against females.[31] In such circumstances, the provision of emotional and material support could help victims deal with sexual harassment.[32]

Abuse-Related Shame

Post-trauma social support plays an important role in the positive well-being of victims of sexual harassment. Emotional sensitivity to criticism or fear of negative evaluation

by others develops negative emotions such as shame and depression.[33] The emotion of shame involves feelings of embarrassment, inferiority, and fear of social rejection in social or private interactions.[34,35] Victims of sexual assault develop psychological distress due to negative social reactions where shame has been found to mediate the relationship.[36] In Pakistan, conformity with social norms and social integrity is more important than the well-being of individuals.[37] The witnessing of the victimisation of others has been found to have an indirect effect on well-being via shame.[14] Sexual harassment by a stranger has been shown to leave females feeling exposed and induced with shame.[38] The shame emerges from a societal belief system that blames the women, not the men, for being victimised from sexual assault.[39,40] The continuous fear of being blamed for the victimisation makes the victim prone to feeling shame, which is a risk factor for the development of PTSD.[41]

Depressive Symptoms

Proneness to feelings of shame might serve as a risk factor for the development of depression.[42] A significant association between victimisation from sexual harassment and depressive symptoms has been found, where shame mediated the process.[43,14] Another study identified a bidirectional relationship or a reciprocal effect between sexual harassment and depression among female victims.[44] The development of depression, anxiety, and substance abuse due to chronic victimisation from sexual harassment has been reported.[45] Another study reported increased feelings of anger and depression in women who had been victimised from sexual objectification and harassment.[46] Similarly, Pakistani women working in the private sector reported severe depression and anxiety due to sexual harassment.[47]

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

Repeated memories of traumatic events are a common factor among patients suffering from PTSD and depression, where depression is mostly associated with anxiety and PTSD with the arousal of feelings of fear and helplessness.[48] Females have been found to be at a higher risk for developing PTSD than males[49] since they face negative social reactions more often than males in cases of aggressive crime.[50] Women who are victims of sexual harassment also receive negative social reactions[51] although it is considered a less violent or serious crime.[52]

A meta-analysis of studies on PTSD showed that gender, severity of the traumatic event, post-trauma lack of social support, and subsequent stress were found to be the strongest risk factors in the development of PTSD.[49] An association has been found between victimisation from sexual harassment and negative mental health issues and

PTSD symptoms among females[53] beyond the effects of prior victimisation.[54] Similarly, a recent study found both a direct and an indirect link between being harassed by a stranger and PTSD symptoms. Shame, fear of rape, and safety concerns have been found to mediate the relationship between sexual harassment and PTSD symptoms.[55]

Self-esteem

Self-esteem is a sociometer that measures the value or worth of an individual as a member of a desirable group or relationship. Thus, low social support or social rejection could impact one's self-esteem negatively[56] and lead to other psychological issues. It has been argued that the victimisation of women from sexual objectification, degrading comments, and demeaning behavior have profound effects on women's emotional well-being by lowering their state self-esteem.[46] On the other hand, individuals with high self-esteem are less likely to feel demoralized by being victimised from sexual harassment.[57] Although the effect of victimisation from sexual harassment on self-esteem has been shown to be smaller than other health outcomes[58] sexual harassment was still found to be a significant predictor of low self-esteem among a Pakistani sample of in-training nurses.[59] Moreover, a recent study from Finland identified low self-esteem as a possible risk factor for sexual harassment of females in public places.[60]

Fear of Being Harassed

Female victims of sexual harassment in public places develop a fear of men in general, of travelling alone, and become cautious about certain parts of the city while moving out alone after dark.[61] It has been reported that they feel uncomfortable at certain places even during the daytime.[62] The fear of being harassed or raped[63] subsequently leads to the development of PTSD symptoms among victims of sexual harassment.[55] Moreover, the sense of insecurity, especially at nighttime, is also associated with the female body, making females more careful about their looks in order to avoid discomfort or intrusion by males while out alone at night.[64] Being cautious and the use of self-protective measures like avoiding walking in the vicinity of males, not going out alone, or not using public transportation in the evening further induce fear from stranger harassment among females.[65] Thus, stress restricts the free movement of women in public places.[66]

The present study was designed to examine the association between sexual harassment and the well-being of the victims, and the aforementioned potentially contributing mediating and moderating social factors involved in the process, in a sample from Pakistan.

Methods

Sample

The sample consisted of female students from the cities of Islamabad, Rawalpindi, and Lahore in Pakistan. They were approached via university email and social media. Thus, the sample was a convenience sample rather than a representative one; however, it should be regarded as relatively well representative for female university students from these cities. The questionnaire was distributed online. The questionnaire was completed by 599 respondents; of the total responses, 13 questionnaires which were filled in by males were eliminated from the data set. The final sample of 586 female respondents had a mean age of 22.3 years (SD=4.3); the age range was 16-47 years. Of the respondents, 84.1% were single, 15.9% were married, 62.1% had a Bachelor's degree or lower, and 37.9% had Master's degree or higher.

Instrument

The questionnaire was designed to collect data based on scales measuring (a) victimisation of females from sexual harassment, (b) abuse-related shame, (c) fear of being harassed, (d) social reactions on disclosure of the abuse, (e) level of positive self-esteem, (f) depressive symptoms, (g) symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder and (h) sharing behavior of the respondents (telling others about the incident) after being victimised from sexual harassment.

To measure victimisation of females from sexual harassment in public places, a shortened version of a scale inspired by the Sexual Harassment Experience Questionnaire[67] was used. The scale included the ten most common behaviors of sexual harassment reported by the respondents from a previous study in Pakistan.[17] The included items were (a) stared at you with dirty looks, (b) not let you pass by, (c) followed you in the street, (d) whistled while looking at you, (e) hummed filthy songs in your presence, (f) touched your hand while giving you something, (g) stood close to you in a crowded place, (h) collided with you while passing by, (i) passed unwanted comments on your appearance, and (j) offered you an unwanted lift in a vehicle. Responses were given on a five-point-scale (never=0, seldom=1, sometimes=2, often=3, very often=4). The Cronbach's alpha of the scale was 0.90.

A scale was constructed to assess the respondents' behavior of sharing with someone after being victimised from sexual harassment. The scale included seven items: If any form of the harassment mentioned in section one has happened to you, have you told anyone about it? (a) A friend, (b) mother, (c) father, (d) sister, (e) brother, (f) relative, (g) no one. The Cronbach's alpha of the scale was found to be 0.76.

To evaluate the level of social support on disclosure of ones' abuse from sexual harassment, a short version of the Social Reactions Questionnaire[68] was used. The scale included ten items: (a) told you it was not your fault, (b) showed understanding of your experience, (c) reframed the experience as a clear case of victimisation, (d) saw your side of things and did not make judgments, (e) seemed to understand how you were feeling, (f) provided information and discussed options, (g) helped you get information of any kind about coping with the experience, (h) told you to stop thinking about it, (i) encouraged you to keep the experience a secret, and (j) told you that you were not cautious enough. Items (i) and (j) were reversely coded for the analysis. The Cronbach's alpha of the scale was 0.85.

To measure the emotion of shame that a victim feels after being victimised from sexual harassment, the Abuse-Related Shame Questionnaire[69] was used. The scale included seven items: When I think about what happened: (a) I feel ashamed because I think that people can tell from looking at me what happened, (b) I am ashamed because I fell I am the only one whom this has happened to, (c) what happened to me makes me feel dirty, (d) I feel like covering my body, (e) I wish I were invisible, (f) I feel disgusted with myself, and (g) I feel exposed. The Cronbach's alpha of the scale was 0.86.

To measure the behavioral responses to the possibility of being harassed, the short version of the Fear of Rape scale[70] was used. The scale included five items: (a) I avoid going out alone at night, (b) when I'm walking out alone at night, I am very cautious, (c) if I am going out late at night, I avoid certain parts of town (d), in general, I am suspicious of men, and (e) I am afraid of men. The Cronbach's alpha of the scale was 0.89.

To measure the self-esteem of the respondents, a shortened version of the Self-Esteem Scale[71] was used. The scale includes seven items : (a) I feel respect for myself, (b) I feel that I am as worthy as anybody else, (c) I feel that I have a number of good qualities, (d) I feel that I have much to be proud of, (e) I am able to do things as well as most other people, (f) I have a positive attitude towards myself, and (g) on the whole, I am satisfied with myself. The Cronbach's alpha of the scale was 0.95.

In order to measure the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder among the victims of sexual harassment, a scale of PTSD symptomatology (PCL-5)[72] was used. The scale included six items: In the past month, how much were you bothered by (a) trouble falling or staying asleep? (b) repeated, disturbing, and unwanted memories of the stressful experience? (c) avoiding external reminders of the stressful experience (for example, people, places, conversations, activities, objects, or situations)? (d) blaming yourself

or someone else for the stressful experience or what happened after it? (e) trouble experiencing positive feelings (for example, being unable to feel happiness or have loving feelings for people close to you)?, and (f) irritable behavior, angry outbursts, or acting aggressively. The Cronbach's alpha of the scale was 0.89.

To assess the depressive symptoms among the victims, the depression subscale of the Brief Symptom Inventory[73] was used. The scale included six items: (a) feeling hopeless about the future, (b) feelings of worthlessness, (c) feeling sad, (d) having no interest in things, (e) having thoughts of ending your life, and (f) feeling lonely. The Cronbach's alpha of the scale was 0.91.

Statistical Analysis

The SPSS macro-PROCESS developed by Hayes[74] was used to perform a conditional process analysis. The model was run with victimisation from sexual harassment as predictor of post-traumatic stress disorder among the victims. Victimisation from sexual harassment was assumed to also lead to (a) feelings of abuse-related shame and (b) fear of being harassed. Symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder were assumed to be the outcome of victimisatoin, stemming either directly from sexual harassment or indirectly through abuse-related shame and fear of being harassed. Several mediators in one model not only permits to compare competing theories at a time, but also helps to determine the effect size associated with all mediators involved.[75] A bootstrapping procedure was used to obtain the estimates and to test significance of the indirect effects by using confidence intervals set at 95%. The ratio between direct and indirect effects was used as a measure of the effect size of mediational paths, in accordance with the recommendation by Wen and Fan.[76] The moderated mediational analysis tests the conditional indirect effect of a moderating variable on the relationship between the predictor and an outcome variable. The PROCESS macro (modle-8 v4.0 in SPSSv.26) with 95% confidence interval was used to test the significance of indirect (mediated) ef-

fects moderated by sharing of the experience with a close one, and the subsequent social support they received on sharing. In order to compare the development of different psychological health problems as a result of victimisation from sexual harassment, the same model was then replicated with depressive symptoms as the outcome variable.

Ethical Considerations

Data were collected with informed consent and under strict anonymity. The study adheres to the principles concerning human research ethics of the Declaration of Helsinki,[77] guidelines for the responsible conduct of research of the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity,[78] as well as the general data protection regulation of the European Union.[79]

Results

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations between the Scales

Screening of the data for the 586 respondents showed only 1 % missing data for one of the variables. All the variables of the study were normally distributed where values of skewness (range=0.99 – -0.27) and kurtosis (range=-0.95-0.02) suggested adequate normality (i.e., skewness <2, kurtosis <7).[80] Fifteen multivariate outliers were observed (Mahalanobis' distance p<0.001) which were retained since they had no significant influence (Cook's Distance (0.31) <1)[81] on the model. Of the respondents, 1.9% reported that they had never been victimised from sexual harassment. Over 60% of the respondents never shared their experience of victimisation with their father or a brother. Of the respondents, around 20% reported that they shared their experience of victimisation with a close one.

A within-subject multivariate analysis of variance (WS-MANOVA) showed that respondents most frequently shared their experience after being victimised from sexual harassment with a friend (1.94) followed by a sister (1.59) and a mother (1.51) [F(6, 580)=137.19, p<0.001, ηp2=0.587]. Of the respondents who shared their experience, 56% re-

Table 1. Descriptives and correlations between the scales (n=586)

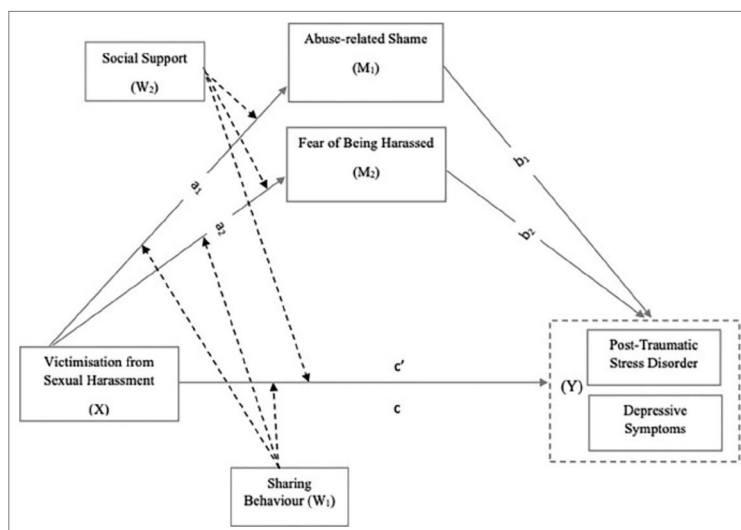|	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	M	SD
1. Victmisation from sexual harassment									1.54	0.90
2. Sharing	0.28***								1.14	0.83
3. Social support	0.30***	0.47***							2.16	0.92
4. Abuse-related shame	0.48***	0.14***	0.18***						1.34	0.96
5. Fear of being harassed	0.32***	0.24***	0.39***	0.44***					2.40	1.11
6. Post-traumatic stress disorder	0.46***	0.20***	0.23***	0.68***	0.43***				1.46	1.02
7. Depressive symptoms	0.36***	0.08*	0.14***	0.56***	0.36***	0.55***			1.16	0.98

***p<0.001; **p<0.01; *p<0.05

Figure 1. A conditional process model of the effect of victimisation from sexual harassment on the development of PTSD and depressive symptoms, with abuse-related shame and fear of being harassed as mediators, and sharing behavior of the victims and subsequent social support as moderators (n=586).

ceived more than average social support from a close one.

All seven scales measuring outcomes correlated with victimisation from sexual harassment, in all cases except one at a p<0.001-level (Table 1). The highest correlation was found between post-traumatic stress disorder and abuse-related shame (r=0.68), and the second highest between depressive symptoms and abuse-related shame (r=0.56). Moreover, a significant and moderate correlation between victimisation from sexual harassment and PTSD (r=0.46) and depression (r=0.36) indicates that those who were more harassed than others were at greater risk for developing PTSD and depressive symptoms. The scale measuring self-esteem did not correlate with victimisation from sexual harassment. Therefore, self-esteem was not included in the conditional process models.

Conditional Process Analysis

A conditional process model was applied using PROCESS[74] with victimisation from sexual harassment as the predictor (X), symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder as the outcome variable (Y), the variables of abuse-related shame (M1), and fear of being harassed (M2) as mediators (Fig. 1), and sharing of the experience with a close one (W1) and social support after sharing (W2) as moderators. The same model was then replicated with depressive symptoms as the outcome variable (Y). The results of the models are described below.

The Model with PTSD as Outcome Variable

The results of the mediation analysis showed that the total effect of victimisation from sexual harassment (β=0.52 [0.44, 0.60]) on the development of post-traumatic stress disorder was partially mediated by abuse-related shame (β=0.30 [0.24, 0.37]) and fear of being harassed (β=0.05 [0.03, 0.09]). The model found significant indirect effects suggesting that the effect of victimisation from sexual harassment on post-traumatic stress disorder among the victims was mediated by abuse-related shame and fear of being harassed (Table 2). The effect sizes, estimated as the ratio between the indirect and direct effect[76] were considerable. The effect size of abuse-related shame was stronger than that of fear of being harassed.

The results showed that the interaction between victimisation from sexual harassment and social support respondents received on sharing their experience with a close one significantly contributed to abuse-related shame (β=-0.10, p<0.04; Table 2). The interactions were plotted at +1/−1 SD from the mean of social support.[82] With low social support (-1 SD), a significant and positive relationship was found between victimisation from sexual harassment and the development of PTSD (simple slope=0.59, t=10.11, p<0.001). However, under high social support (+1 SD), the relationship between victimisation from sexual harassment and PTSD became weaker (simple slope=0.43, t=6.78, p<0.001). This finding indicates that respondents who received low

Table 2. Conditional process model of victimisation from sexual harassment on post-traumatic stress disorder: direct effect and indirect effects through abuse-related shame and fear of being harassed and moderated by social support (n=586)

						R²
Model 1: Mediator variable	Outcome: Assault-related shame					0.01
					Bootstrapped CI (95%)	
	Coeff. (β)	SE	t	p	LL	UL
Victmisation from Sexual Harassment	0.51	0.05	11.29	0.001	0.42	0.59
Social support	0.02	0.04	0.42	0.673	-0.06	0.09
Sexual Harassment x Social Support	-0.10	0.04	-2.06	0.040	-0.179	-0.004
Model 2: Mediator variable	Outcome: Fear of Being Harassed					0.00
					Bootstrapped CI (95%)	
	Coeff. (β)	SE	t	p	LL	UL
Vcitimisation from Sexual Harassment	0.28	0.05	5.20	0.001	0.175	0.387
Social support	0.37	0.05	6.98	0.001	0.271	0.483
Sexual Harassment x Social Support	-0.06	0.05	-1.05	0.295	-0.162	0.049
Model 3: Mediator variable	Outcome: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder					0.00
					Bootstrapped CI (95%)	
	Coeff. (β)	SE	t	p	LL	UL
Vcitimisation from Sexual Harassment	0.15	0.05	3.22	0.001	0.058	0.242
Abuse-related Shame	0.59	0.04	15.15	0.001	0.516	0.670
Fear of Being Harassed	0.12	0.03	3.93	0.001	0.058	0.175
Social support	0.06	0.04	1.38	0.168	-0.023	0.134
Sexual Harassment x Social Support	0.05	0.04	1.04	0.298	-0.042	0.138
	Conditional indirect effect (via Abuse-related Shame)					
					Bootstrapped CI (95%)	
	Coeff. (β)				LL	UL
Social Support (−1 SD)	0.35				0.275	0.434
Social Support (+1 SD)	0.25				0.176	0.335
	Index	SE			LL	UL
Index of moderated mediation	-0.05	0.03			-0.105	-0.003

CI: Confidence interval; SE: Standard error; t: t-value; LL: Lower limit; UL: Upper limit

social support underwent greater assault-related shame due to victimisation from sexual harassment than those who received more social support.

However, the interaction between victimisation from sexual harassment and social support did not contribute to the fear of being harassed. In addition, the direct effect between victimisation from sexual harassment and PTSD was not moderated by social support; thus, the interaction did not contribute to the development of post-traumatic stress disorder.

The results further indicated that social support significantly moderated the indirect effect of victimisation from sexual harassment on PTSD through assault-related shame (Index of Moderation Mediation=-0.05, SE [boot]=0.03, 95% CI [-0.11,-0.00]). The indirect path was significant when social support was low (-1 SD; β=0.35; (95% CI [0.275, 0.434]), at the mean (β=0.30; (95% CI [0.239, 0.369]), and high (+1 SD; β=0.25; (95% CI [0.176, 0.335]), indicating that those who received less social support on sharing their experience with a close one were at higher risk of developing PTSD due to victimisation from sexual harassment than those who received more social support.

However, the indirect effect of sexual harassment on PTSD

Table 3. Conditional process model of victimisation from sexual harassment on depressive symptoms: direct effect and indirect effects through abuse-related shame and fear of being harassed and moderated by social support (n=586)

							R²
Model 1: Mediator variable	Outcome: Assault-related shame						0.01
					Bootstrapped CI (95%)		
	Coeff.(β)	**SE**	**t**	**p**	**LL**	**UL**	
Victmisation from Sexual Harassment	0.51	0.05	11.30	0.001	0.42	0.59	
Social support	0.02	0.04	0.43	0.665	-0.06	0.09	
Sexual Harassment x Social Support	-0.10	0.04	-2.06	0.040	-0.178	-0.004	
Model 2: Mediator variable	Outcome: Fear of Being Harassed						0.00
					Bootstrapped CI (95%)		
	Coeff. (β)	**SE**	**t**	**p**	**LL**	**UL**	
Vcitimisation from Sexual Harassment	0.28	0.05	5.23	0.001	0.176	0.388	
Social support	0.38	0.05	6.96	0.001	0.269	0.481	
Sexual Harassment x Social Support	-0.06	0.05	-1.08	0.282	-0.164	0.048	
Model 3: Mediator variable	Outcome: Depressive Symptoms						0.00
					Bootstrapped CI (95%)		
	Coeff. (β)	**SE**	**t**	**p**	**LL**	**UL**	
Vcitimisation from Sexual Harassment	0.13	0.05	2.66	0.008	0.033	0.217	
Abuse-related Shame	0.46	0.05	9.51	0.001	0.364	0.553	
Fear of Being Harassed	0.12	0.04	3.28	0.001	0.047	0.187	
Social support	-0.03	0.04	-0.75	0.445	-0.116	0.052	
Sexual Harassment x Social Support	-0.02	0.04	-0.404	0.687	-0.086	0.057	
	Conditional indirect effect (via Abuse-related Shame)						
					Bootstrapped CI (95%)		
	Coeff. (β)				**LL**	**UL**	
Social Support (−1 SD)	0.27				0.197	0.355	
Social Support (+1 SD)	0.20				0.127	0.274	
	Index	**SE**			**LL**	**UL**	
Index of moderated mediation	-0.04	0.02			-0.082	-0.003	

CI: Confidence interval; SE: Standard error; t: t-value; LL: Lower limit; UL: Upper limit

via fear of being harassed was not moderated by social support (Index of Moderation Mediation=-0.01, SE [boot]=0.01, 95% CI [-0.02, 0.01]).

The Model with Depressive Symptoms as Outcome Variable

When the model was replicated with depression as outcome variable, the results showed a similar trend where the total effect of victimisation from sexual harassment (β=0.39 [0.31, 0.47]) was again partially mediated by abuse-related shame (β=0.24 [0.17, 0.30]) and fear of being harassed (β=0.04 [0.01, 0.07]). The model found significant media-

tional effects of abuse-related shame (β=0.51 [0.43, 0.59]), β=0.46 [0.38, 0.56])) and fear of being harassed (β=0.30 [0.40, 0.39]), β=0.11 [0.4, 0.18]) in the path between victimisation from sexual harassment and depressive symptoms. However, the effect of sexual harassment through shame were relatively larger with PTSD as outcome variable (β=0.30 [0.24, 0.37]) than with depressive symptoms as outcome variable (β=0.24 [0.17, 0.30]).

The interaction between victimisation from sexual harassment and social support significantly contributed to abuse-related shame (β=-0.10, p<0.04; Table 3). A significant and positive relationship was observed between

victimisation from sexual harassment and development of depressive symptoms with low levels of social support (-1 SD), (simple slope=0.59, t=10.12, p<0.001). However, with high social support (+1 SD) the relationship became weaker (simple slope=0.43, t=6.79, p < 0.001). Thus, indicating that respondents who received low social support felt greater assault related shame due to victimisation from sexual harassment than others.

The interaction between victimisation from sexual harassment and social support did not contribute to the fear of being harassed. In addition, the direct effect between victimisation from sexual harassment and depressive symptoms was not moderated by social support.

In addition, social support significantly moderated the indirect effect of victimisation from sexual harassment on depressive symptoms through assault-related shame (Index of Moderation Mediation=-0.04, SE [boot]=0.02, 95% CI [-0.08,-0.00]). The indirect path was significant when social support was low (-1 SD; β=0.27; (95% CI [0.197, 0.355]), at the mean (β=0.23; (95% CI [0.170, 0.304]), and high (+1 SD; β=0.20; (95% CI [0.127, 0.274]). This finding suggested a higher risk of developing depressive symptoms among those who receive less social support on sharing their experience of victimisation from sexual harassment.

However, the indirect effect of sexual harassment on depressive symptoms via fear of being harassed was not moderated by social support (Index of Moderation Mediation=-0.01, SE [boot]=0.01, 95% CI [-0.02, 0.01]). In both the models, with PTSD and depressive symptoms as the outcome variables, sharing behavior alone (without social support) moderated neither direct nor indirect effects.

Discussion

Despite the existence of laws to safeguard women from sexual harassment, the problem is still very much prevalent in public places in Pakistan.[3,6] In the present study, only 1.9% of the respondents reported that they had never been victimised from sexual harassment. Moreover, in another study, Pakistani women reported feeling emotional distressed due to victimisation from sexual harassment.[17]

The conditional process analysis in the study identified both abuse-related shame and fear of being harassed to partially mediate the path between victimisation from sexual harassment and PTSD and depressive symptoms. The effect size of abuse-related shame was found to be larger than that of the fear of being harassed. The results are in line with the findings of previous studies conducted in the U.S.[43,55] and Canada.[14] Thus, the identification of abuse-related shame and fear of being harassed can be identified as central factors explaining the development of PTSD and

depression among victims of sexual harassment.

The results revealed significant associations between all variables of the study, with the sole exception being the relationship between self-esteem and victimisation from sexual harassment. This finding is in contrast with findings from a study conducted in Finland, where a significant negative correlation between self-esteem and victimisation from sexual harassment was observed.[60] This opposite result may reflect cultural differences and the fact that females in Pakistan, like in many other patriarchal societies, have accepted sexual harassment as a part of their daily lives.[10,11] However, a previous study conducted in Pakistan revealed that sexual harassment was associated with low self-esteem among working women.[59] Here, it can be argued that victimisation from sexual harassment at a workplace by a known person and in a closed environment has different consequences than victimisation by a stranger in a public place. The difference might be due to the fact that unexpected harassment from a colleague and fear of losing one's job might place working women under continuous stress, affecting their self-esteem more than the case is when women are being harassed by strangers in public places.

Sexual harassment has been found to be commonplace in Pakistan. To avoid any uncomfortable situation in public places, women might opt for different self-protective measures, and this continuous psychological pressure might further induce fear of being harassed.[46,65] It has been argued that women witnessing other women being sexually harassed on a regular basis become accustomed to the situation to such an extent that they find it less disturbing when being victimised themselves.[14]

In the current study, it was shown that the fear of being harassed had a relatively weaker effect than abuse-related shame on the development of PTSD and depressive symptoms. This finding could indicate that the women in the sample might have been more concerned about being negatively evaluated by others than about their own fear. Victimisation from sexual harassment leaves women feeling exposed and induced with shame.[38] This, again, highlights the significance of social norms in collectivist societies such as Pakistan, since shame is the byproduct of a societal belief system which blames women for their victimisation.[39,40] The continuous fear of being blamed and feelings of being exposed might serve as major risk factors for the development of PTSD[41] and depressive symptoms.[14,43]

Sharing behavior of the respondents was not found to moderate the direct or indirect effects of victimisation from sexual harassment on the development of PTSD and depressive symptoms. This finding, which is in contrast to find-

ings made in studies conducted in Western countries[20,22-24] might be due to the fact that the scale measuring sharing behavior included items about the frequency of sharing the experience with a mother, a father, a sister, a friend, a brother, or a relative. The subsequent social support they received from these people after sharing their experience was found to have moderated the indirect relationship between victimisation from sexual harassment and PTSD and depressive symptoms via abuse-related shame. The indirect path was significant when social support was lower.

It is worth noting that over 60% of the victims never shared their experience with their father or a brother. When sharing occurred, it was mostly with a friend. This stresses another key cultural aspect that individuals from a collectivist society like Pakistan believe in a collective self, interdependence, and saving relationships during conflict situations. [8] Thus, women victimised from sexual assault try to hide their experiences from male members of the family in order to keep the dignity of themselves and the family in general,[7] also avoiding potential aggressive reactions towards the perpetrator from male members of the family.

The results emphasize the importance of social support, especially from close ones, to tackle the after-effects of victimisation from sexual harassment. It could be argued that lack of social support, in general, might induce the victims with higher levels of abuse-related shame. Due to social shame, the victims might develop various psychological health issues. It has been argued that mothers from a traditional culture are more concerned about the social shame induced by sexual assault than the psychological well-being of their daughters.[29] Future examinations of the role of social support could further explain the impact of social support in the well-being of victims, and also in curtailing sexual harassment.

Limitations of the Study

One limitation of the study is the small sample size, and that the respondents were from only three cities in Pakistan, which means that the data are not representative enough to be generalized to the country as a whole. Furthermore, the study had a cross-sectional design, not a longitudinal one, and inferences about cause and effect should be made with caution.

Conclusion

The study has identified abuse-related shame and fear of being sexually harassed as significant risk factors for the development of symptoms of negative mental health in victimised women. There is a grave need to change the mindset of a society where conformity with social norms and integrity is prioritized over the well-being of the individuals.[37] Women stay under continuous pressure to safeguard themselves from uncomfortable situations in public places in Pakistan. This continuous pressure is making them vulnerable to the development of PTSD and depressive symptoms. As long as sexual harassment continues to be ignored and is not regarded as a form of discrimination against women, the vicious cycle will go on.[31]

A societal reform is strongly recommended to challenge the cultural norms that allow toxic masculinity and harm the dignity of women. The efforts of human rights activists have resulted in laws against sexual harassment in the country. Furthermore, a recent court order to ban virginity tests of rape survivors is a sign of hope that the violation of women's rights could be challenged. One step further toward the needed social change could be the full implementation of strong legislation that protects women against sexual harassment in public places.[6] Moreover, education and public awareness campaigns could play a vital role in repelling the idea of victim-blaming.

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Farida Anwar

Victimisation of Women in Public Places: Sexual Harassment in Pakistan, Ghana, and Finland

Victimisation from sexual harassment in public places has adverse impacts on the daily life of women, which has not been given a thorough academic attention. The prevalence rate and risk factors of victimisation of women from sexual harassment in Pakistan, Ghana, and Finland, countries with distinct cultural backgrounds, were investigated. It was also examined whether there is an association between victimisation from sexual harassment and the prior and/or simultaneous victimisation from other types of aggression. In addition, the mediating and moderating role of social factors on the relationship between victimisation from sexual harassment and the mental health of the victims were studied. Victimisation from sexual harassment was found to be common in Pakistan and Ghana, while the level was found to be relatively low in Finland. Sexual harassment was found to be associated with higher levels of both prior and concurrent victimisation, validating the principles of both repeat and multiple victimisation. Victimisation from other types of aggression and the level of self-esteem were identified as possible risk factors for sexual harassment of women. Abuse-related shame and fear of being harassed were found to serve as mediators between exposure to sexual harassment and PTSD and depression, respectively. The indirect effect of abuse-related shame was weaker among women who received social support after being victimised. This emphasizes the importance of social support, especially from close ones, to tackle the after-effects of victimisation from sexual harassment. The findings highlight the importance of gender equality, social justice, and cultural norms to prevent aggression against women in public places.