

GENDER DIFFERENCES IN AWARENESS AND KNOWLEDGE ABOUT SEXUAL HARASSMENT AT WORKPLACE AND RELEVANT LAWS AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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This study explored gender differences in awareness and knowledge of workplace sexual harassment and related laws among young university students. Using a cross-sectional survey design, data were collected from 265 BS and MS students from public and private universities through a self-structured questionnaire addressing sexual harassment and The Protection against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act 2010. Statistical analyses (t-test and ANOVA) revealed no significant gender differences, though awareness varied across age groups. Public university students demonstrated higher awareness than those from private institutions. Overall, findings indicate limited awareness among young students. The study highlights the need for academic initiatives to promote knowledge of workplace harassment laws and better prepare students for professional life.

Keywords: Sexual Harassment experience, Workplace harassment, Women, Discrimination, Awareness of the law

INTRODUCTION

Harassment at the workplace has been identified as one of the most significant barriers to women entering the workforce around the world. Several studies have explored the prevalence of sexual harassment in workplaces, and research consistently shows that women in working environments are often unaware of the preventive measures implemented by governments and organizations. Many women have reported changing jobs or leaving entire professions simply to avoid harassment (Dawn Media Group, 2018). Yet, despite growing attention to the issue, there has been limited research conducted globally on students' awareness and knowledge of sexual harassment laws, particularly in the context of Pakistan (Ilyas, 2021). Raising awareness among young graduates about harassment laws and regulations is therefore crucial, as it may help reduce the incidence of sexual harassment in their future workplaces.

The United Nations defines harassment broadly as any behavior, whether physical or verbal, that adversely impacts working conditions or creates a hostile work environment (UN, 2012). However, there remains little clarity on an objective and universal definition of sexual harassment. Scholars argue that sexual harassment, like many other forms of violence, is driven

primarily by power, control, and dominance (Kapila, 2017). The International Labour Organization (ILO) in 2001 defined sexual harassment as sex-based conduct that is undesired and insulting to the victim, underscoring that harassment is not only a health and safety issue but also a form of gender-based violence directed particularly at women (Kapila, 2017). Similarly, Pradhan-Malla (2005) outlined sexual harassment as encompassing physical contact and approaches, the presentation of pornography, demands for sexual exploitation, abusive sexual jokes, and other unwanted verbal or nonverbal behaviors.

In Pakistan, the Protection against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act 2010 provides the legal framework to address workplace harassment. Section 2(h) of the Act defines harassment as “any unwanted sexual approach, inappropriate request, sexually suggestive physical behavior, offensive jokes, or sexually demeaning attitudes that interfere with work performance or create a hostile, offensive, or intimidating work environment, or that are made a condition of employment or are used to punish the complainant for refusing to comply with such a request” (Pakistan: Act No. IV of 2010). Despite the existence of this legislation, harassment continues to affect individuals across sectors and age groups (Sohail, 2022).

Sexual harassment is a form of gender-based violence that affects individuals regardless of age, race, or cultural background, and it can occur in workplaces, schools, public spaces, and even online platforms (World Bank Group, 2021). The impacts of harassment are wide-ranging, from psychological and physical harm to strained personal and professional relationships, and broader organizational consequences such as decreased productivity and toxic workplace cultures (Hersch, 2015). The consequences of workplace harassment are far-reaching. Research shows that one in every four workers who reported harassment in the past five years suffered negative consequences in their employment or career, including job loss, missed opportunities for advancement, and reliance on sick or annual leave to avoid hostile work environments (Salman, 2016). Women in particular experience hindered career progression and diminished job satisfaction due to harassment (Sethna, 2018). According to a national survey (Dawn Media Group, 2018), one in ten employees who reported sexual harassment at work also faced financial repercussions as a result of the incident.

Findings also suggest differences across workplace structures. Parker (2018, as cited in Hersch, 2015) reported that 49% of women in patriarchal organizations experienced harassment compared to 33% in female-dominated workplaces. Data from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission revealed that men also reported thousands of incidents, though men were more frequently the perpetrators, often holding positions of authority that enabled them to exert power over subordinates (Hersch, 2015). International studies further underscore the prevalence of harassment. European data show that up to 50% of female workers in EU member states report experiencing sexual harassment (UNISON, 2008). (Aman, 2016) documented particularly high prevalence rates in Austria (80%), Germany (72%), and Luxembourg (80%). A 2023 report by the Trade Union Congress revealed that three in five women had faced workplace harassment, with 57% reporting three or more incidents, 45% noting a negative impact on mental health, and 18% eventually leaving their jobs (Hersch, 2015).

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Within Pakistan, the situation is equally concerning. Research conducted by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) found that nearly 91% of women working as domestic helpers experience violence in the form of physical assault, verbal abuse, and unsafe working conditions (Khan, 2016). Similarly, a Lahore-based study revealed that more than 58% of doctors and nurses reported harassment from colleagues, attendants, patients, or visitors (Lubna Khan, 2016). High-profile cases have also been reported in higher education institutions (Croxford, 2019). At the legislative level, over 155 governments worldwide have enacted workplace harassment laws, but their implementation remains inconsistent and often fails to meet international standards (World Bank Group, 2021). In Pakistan, stigma, fear of job loss, and cultural barriers continue to discourage women from filing complaints. A DAWN News poll revealed that 46.1% of women were unaware that sexual harassment constitutes a legal violation under the 2010 Act, and 48% reported never receiving training about the law or its penalties (Sohail, 2022). Reports from FOSPAH highlight the growing scale of the issue. Complaints of workplace harassment rose from 432 in 2019 to 535 in 2020, and between 2018 and 2022, the Secretariat recorded 2,169 complaints (FOSPAH, n.d.).

This research therefore focuses on assessing the awareness and knowledge of the 2010 Act among university students in Pakistan. Given that more than 64% of Pakistan's population is under 30, understanding young people's knowledge about their legal rights and protections is important. Addressing gaps in awareness among students is crucial not only for their personal well-being and future professional experiences but also for broader goals of workplace safety, gender equality, and social justice.

Objectives of the Study

1. To evaluate university students' awareness and knowledge of sexual harassment at the workplace and the legislation pertaining to it.
2. To explore whether young students are aware of their rights, legal protections, and reporting procedures under the Act against workplace sexual harassment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to (Cantor et al., 2015) sexual harassment is any sexually suggestive behavior that is offensive to the one receiving it. (Bondestam et al., 2020) highlighted examples such as kissing, taunting, sexually suggestive comments, requests for sex, insults, and bullying. (Klein & Martin, 2019) further explained it as unwanted advances, sex-related favors, or verbal and physical interactions linked with sex, while (Wambui et al., 2021) included mocking, embracing, and unwelcome physical contact with breasts and buttocks. Polls in 11 northern European nations suggested that 30–50% of women and nearly 10% of men experience workplace sexual harassment. In Austria, 81% of women reported harassment, while in Sweden only 2% reported the same. Another Swedish study found 17% of women had been harassed, showing the gap between survey methods: a behavioral questionnaire yielded higher rates, while a single direct question produced lower rates (Hersch, 2015).

In Italy, the National Institute of Statistics reported that 43.6% of women aged 14–65

experienced harassment at some point, and 15.4% within the last three years. For the first time, men were also included: 6.4% reported harassment in the last three years and 18.8% overall. Women considered harassment more severe than men (76.4% vs. 47.2%), but in most cases (80.9%) victims did not report incidents due to fear of being seen as weak or unprepared (Acquadro Maran & Veretto, 2021). Globally, sexual harassment is the most common form of gender-based violence at workplaces. In patriarchal societies, men often use harassment to exert dominance and restrict women's mobility (Hadi, 2022).

In Pakistan, women face additional cultural and social constraints. Many are compelled to work for financial reasons but are often considered vulnerable or blamed for inviting harassment. With only 22% female labor force participation—one of the lowest in South Asia—reporting is further limited due to fear of losing jobs and damaging family honor (Khurshid, 2022; Sethna, 2018). One case reported by Women in Struggle for Empowerment in 2014 involved a female clerk in the Punjab agriculture department who faced months of harassment from colleagues, eventually leading to disciplinary action against eleven individuals (2018 Report). A study in Peshawar found harassment prevalent in workplaces, but only half of respondents knew about the Workplace Harassment Act 2010, and just 16.34% reported its display at their workplace. Fear of family honor was the main reason women avoided reporting (Aman, 2016). Similarly, research in Multan showed many university girls were unaware of sexual harassment laws, leading to acceptance of unethical behavior and failure to recognize harassment signals (Naz, 2021).

Further, (Ghassan et al., 2021) found that students in higher education are aware harassment exists, with verbal harassment most common. Gender and age shaped perceptions, with both male and female students believing women face more harassment. In another study, harassment was found to increase turnover intentions in the educational sector of Peshawar, with sexual harassment reducing job satisfaction and raising costs for institutions that failed to enforce Higher Education Commission (HEC) policies (Salman, 2016). Likewise, a study in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa identified root causes such as patriarchy, underreporting, male-dominated organizations, and lack of awareness. It also highlighted flaws in the legislative framework, such as weak powers for the Ombudsperson and exclusion of transgender persons (Hamida et al., 2021). According to the literature, women and men remain hesitant to report harassment due to fear of stigma and lack of awareness of their rights. Although research exists on experiences and perceptions, fewer studies examine student awareness and knowledge of sexual harassment laws, especially in Pakistan. Addressing this gap is essential for reducing workplace harassment and creating safer environments for both men and women.

Theoretical Framework

Situational Awareness (SA) is defined by Endsley (1995) as perception, comprehension, and projection of the environment, influencing individual responses and decision-making. The application of SA Theory can help students identify, understand, and address instances of workplace sexual harassment, contributing to safer environments.

Perception: Improves students' ability to recognize early indicators of harassment by observing

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behaviors and dynamics.

Comprehension: Enhances understanding of harassment and relevant laws, enabling students to evaluate situations and respond effectively.

Projection: Helps anticipate outcomes of actions and responses, supporting preventive strategies and informed decision-making.

By developing these components, students can strengthen their ability to handle harassment, improve decision-making, and contribute to respectful, harassment-free workplaces.

Hypotheses

There is a significant difference between male and female university students in their awareness and knowledge of the Sexual Harassment Act 2010.

There is a significant difference between public and private university students in their awareness and knowledge of the Sexual Harassment Act 2010.

There is a significant difference among university students of different education levels and age groups in their awareness and knowledge of the Sexual Harassment Act 2010.

There is a significant difference among university students of different academic disciplines in their awareness and knowledge of the Sexual Harassment Act 2010.

There is a significant difference in the working status of university students regarding their awareness and knowledge of the Sexual Harassment Act 2010.

METHODS

The study used a quantitative research design to investigate gender disparities in awareness and knowledge of the Sexual Harassment at Workplace Act 2010 among university students. Data were collected through a structured online survey. A quantitative survey design was applied to collect and analyze numerical data from a large sample of university students. The target population was BS and MS university students. A total of 265 students (118 males, 44.5%; 147 females, 55.5%) participated from public and private universities in Lahore.

Table 1: Demographics characteristics of participants

Sample Characteristics	<i>n</i>	%
Gender		
Male	118	44.5
Female	147	55.5
Age		
18-20	55	20.8

21-23	100	37.7
24-26	110	41.5
Education		
BS	122	46.0
MS	143	54.0
Discipline		
Natural Sciences	70	26.4
Social Science	120	45.3
IT/Computer	75	28.3
University status		
Public	149	56.2
Private	116	43.8
Working status		
Working	117	44.2
Non-working	148	55.8

Inclusion Criteria

BS and MS students of public and private universities.

Exclusion Criteria

Students of Matric, Intermediate, and PhD.

Sampling Strategy

Purposive sampling was used to ensure representation across gender, age, and disciplines.

Data Collection Methods

A self-structured questionnaire was developed to measure awareness and knowledge of the Act. It consisted of demographic items and closed-ended questions.

The questionnaire was based on workplace harassment law, pilot-tested for clarity, and showed reliability ($\alpha = .85$). Google Forms were distributed through WhatsApp, with two months provided for responses. Participants received invitations with study details, voluntary participation, and anonymity assurances. Reminders were sent. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, means, percentages) and inferential tests (independent t-test, one-way ANOVA) were applied using SPSS.

Ethical Considerations

Informed consent was obtained. Participation was voluntary. Data confidentiality and anonymity were ensured.

RESULTS

This section of the study discusses students' awareness and knowledge of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act 2010. The collected data was analyzed using SPSS, with independent sample t-tests and one-way analysis of variance ANOVA.

Table 2: Frequency and percentages about sources regarding sexual harassment Act 2010

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Source to know about sexual harassment Act	<i>N</i>	%
Media (Newspaper, TV, etc.)	47	17.7
Friends or Family	54	20.4
Internet or social media	101	38.1
University or educational institution	63	23.8

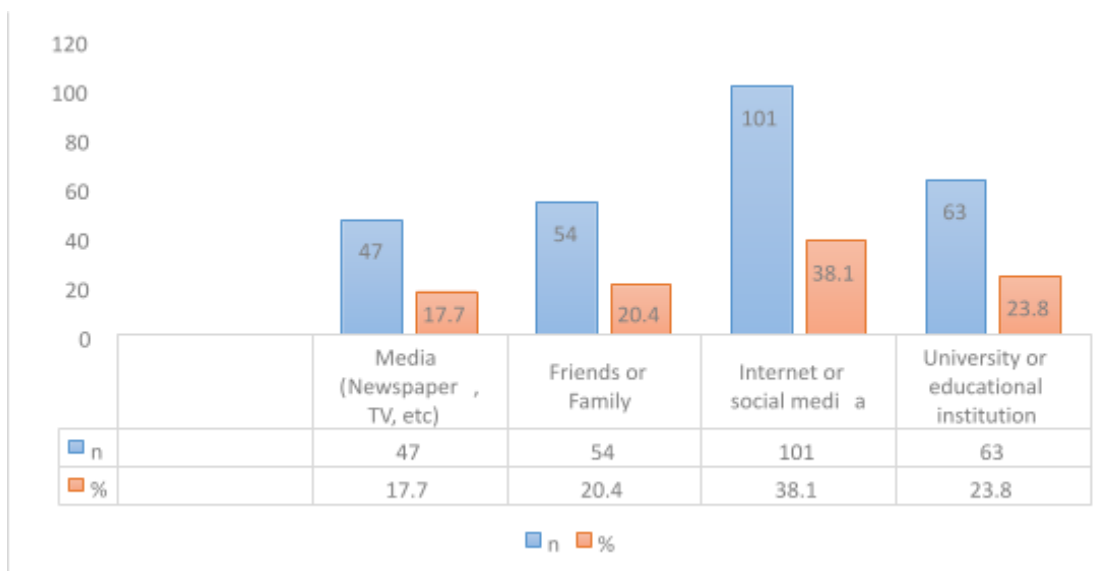


Table 3: Independent sample *t*-test score of male and female university students Awareness on sexual harassment Act 2010.

Variables	Male Students		Female Students		<i>t</i> (263)	<i>P</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Awareness	3.12	1.30	3.09	1.40	-.19	.84	-.02

Table 3 shows that mean score indicated that both female and male student have similar level of awareness about sexual harassment at workplace Act 2010 with minimal variation in their responses. The *t*-test result is $t(263) = -.19$, with a *p*-value of .84. The *p*-value of .84 is much higher than the significance level 0.05 suggesting that there is non-significant difference. Cohen's

value of -.02 suggests a negligible effect size.

Table 4: Independent sample t-test score of male and female university students' knowledge on sexual harassment Act 2010.

Variables	Male		Female		<i>t</i> (263)	<i>P</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	Students		Students				
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Knowledge	9.27	4.70	10.39	5.23	1.83	.06	.22

Table 4 shows that mean scores indicated that females, on average, had slightly higher knowledge about sexual harassment Act 2010 compared to males. The t-test result is $t(263) = 1.83$, with a *p*-value of .06. The *p*-value of .06 is just above the significance level 0.05, indicating that the difference in knowledge between male and female students is statistically non-significant. Cohen's *d* value of .22 suggests a small effect size.

Table 5: Independent sample t-test score of university status of students on awareness of sexual harassment Act 2010.

Variables	Public		Private		<i>t</i> (263)	<i>P</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	University		University				
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Awareness	3.26	1.35	2.90	1.33	2.17	.03	.26

Table 5 shows that mean scores indicated that students from public universities had slightly higher awareness about sexual harassment Act 2010 compared to students of private universities. The t-test result is $t(263) = 2.17$, with a *p*-value of .03. The *p*-value of .03 indicates that difference in awareness between public and private university students is significant. Cohen's *d* value of .26 suggests a small effect size.

Table 6: Independent sample t-test score of university status of students on knowledge of sexual harassment Act 2010.

	Public	Private
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Variables	University		University		<i>t</i> (263)	<i>P</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Knowledge	10.58	5.32	9.00	4.49	2.61	.01	.31

Table 6 revealed that mean scores indicated that students from public universities had higher knowledge about sexual harassment ACT 2010 compared to students of private universities. The t-test result is $t(263) = 2.61$, with a *p*-value of .01, The *p*-value of .01 indicates the difference in knowledge between public and private university students is significant. Cohen's *d* value of .31 suggests a small effect size.

Table 7: Independent sample t-test score of Education of students on awareness of sexual harassment Act 2010.

Variables	BS Students		MS Students		<i>t</i> (263)	<i>P</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Awareness	2.87	1.29	3.38	1.38	3.08	.00	.38

Table 7 shows that mean scores indicated that, on average, MS students had higher awareness about sexual harassment Act compared to BS students. The t-test result is $t(263) = 3.08$, with a *p*-value of .00, The *p*-value of .00 is much lower than the significance level 0.05 indicates the difference in awareness between MS and BS students is significant. Cohen's *d* value of .38 suggests a small effect size

Table 8: Independent sample t-test score of education of students on Knowledge of sexual harassment Act 2010.

Variables	BS Students		MS Students		<i>t</i> (263)	<i>P</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Knowledge	9.93	4.81	9.84	5.28	-.14	.88	-.01

Table 8 shows that mean scores are very close indicating that both groups have similar level of knowledge about sexual harassment Act. The t-test result is $t(263) = -.14$, with a *p*-value of .88, The *p*-value of .88 indicates that the difference in knowledge between MS and BS students is non-significant. Cohen's *d* value of -.01 shows a negligible effect size.

Table 9: One way ANOVA scores on age of university students on awareness and knowledge about sexual harassment Act 2010.

Variables	Age (18-20)		Age (21-23)		Age (24-26)		F (2,262)	η^2
	1		2		3			
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
Awareness	2.52	1.45	3.03	1.38	3.47	1.17	9.74	.00
Knowledge	11.9	5.41	9.17	4.60	9.54	4.98	5.92	.00

Table 9 shows the difference in awareness and knowledge about sexual harassment Act across different age groups (18-20, 21-23, 24-26). The result for awareness showed a significant difference among age groups, $f(2,262) = 9.74, p < .001$ with a moderate effect size $\eta^2 = .00$. The analysis for knowledge also showed a significant effect of age, $f(2,262) = 5.92, p < .01$ with small effect size, $\eta^2 = .00$.

Table 9.1: Multiple comparison of age of university students on Knowledge and Awareness about sexual harassment Act 2010.

Variables	Age (18-20)		Age (21-23)		Age (24-26)		Post Hoc
	(1)		(2)		(3)		
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	
Awareness	2.52	1.45	3.03	1.38	3.47	1.17	3>2>1
Knowledge	11.9	5.41	9.17	4.60	9.54	4.98	1>3>2

Table 10: One way ANOVA scores on disciplines of university students on awareness and knowledge about sexual harassment Act 2010.

Variables	Natural		Social		IT/Computer	
	Science		Science		(3)	
	(1)	(2)	(2)	(2)	(3)	(3)

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	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i> (2,262)	η^2
Awareness	3.00	1.35	3.22	1.34	2.86	1.34	2.97	.05
Knowledge	9.50	5.02	9.26	4.66	11.26	5.38	4.03	.01

Table 10

shows the difference in awareness and knowledge about sexual harassment ACT across different academic disciplines (Natural science, social science and IT/Computer). The results for awareness show non-significant difference between the disciplines, $f(2,262) = 2.97$, $p > .05$ with a small effect size, $\eta^2 = .05$. However, the analysis for knowledge revealed a significant difference, $f(2,262) = 4.03$, $p > .05$ with small effect size, $\eta^2 = .01$.

Table 10.1: Multiple comparison of disciplines of university students on knowledge about sexual harassment Act 2010.

Variables	Natural Science (1)		Social Science (2)		IT/Computer (3)		Post Hoc
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Knowledge	9.50	5.02	9.26	4.66	11.26	5.38	3>1>2

Table 10.1 shows a significant difference in knowledge among different academic disciplines of university students. Post-hoc analysis indicated Students of IT/Computer discipline reported high knowledge scores compared to natural science and social science. $3 > 1 > 2$.

Table 11: Independent sample t-test score of working status of university students on awareness of sexual harassment Act 2010.

Variables	Working Students		Non- working Students		T (263)	P	Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			
Awareness	3.34	1.39	2.92	1.30	2.48	.01	.30

Table 11 shows a significant difference in awareness score between working and non-working students. The t-test result is $t(263) = 2.48$ with p -value of .0. This result reveals that working students have higher awareness than non-working students. Cohen's d value of 0.30 indicates a small effect size.

Table 12: Independent sample t-test score of working status of university students on knowledge of sexual harassment Act 2010.

Variables	Working Students		Non-working Students		T (263)	P	Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			
Knowledge	10.45	5.36	9.45	4.72	1.58	.11	.19

Table 12 shows the knowledge scores of working and non-working students with a slight mean difference. The t-test result is $t(263) = 1.58$ with a p -value of .11 which is higher than significance value of 0.05. The p -value of .11 indicates that there is nonsignificant difference between working and non-working students. Cohen's d value of 0.19 suggests a small effect size.

DISCUSSION

The present quantitative research was conducted to assess the awareness and knowledge of university students about the Protection against Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act 2010. A purposive sampling method was employed, and data were collected through a self-structured questionnaire. The responses were analyzed using independent sample t-tests and one-way ANOVA, which helped to identify group differences across demographic categories such as gender, university status, education, age, discipline, and working status.

The first hypothesis proposed that there is a difference between male and female students in awareness of the Act. Findings revealed a non-significant difference, though male students scored slightly higher on awareness. This suggests that while gender did not

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strongly influence awareness levels, patterns of media consumption could account for the slight variation. Previous literature supports that men tend to engage more with news and political content, while women often prefer lifestyle or social networking material, which may provide less exposure to legal and policy matters. Hence, although both genders demonstrate similar awareness, the type of information they consume may shape their levels differently.

The second hypothesis tested gender differences in knowledge of the Act. Results also showed no significant difference, but this time female students had slightly higher knowledge scores compared to males. This finding is notable because it contrasts with the first hypothesis results, where males had slightly greater awareness. It suggests that males may be more generally aware of the existence of the Act, but females possess a deeper understanding of its provisions and protections. This pattern is consistent with previous studies (Aman, 2016), which reported that females often display greater legal knowledge about harassment laws. One explanation is that women, being more vulnerable to workplace harassment, may feel a stronger need to understand the Act's protections in detail.

The third hypothesis investigated the role of university status in shaping awareness. Results indicated that public university students had significantly higher awareness than private university students. This may be due to the greater access to law-related resources, campaigns, and debates in public universities. Public institutions often promote activism, legal literacy, and civic engagement, which expose students to awareness campaigns on rights and workplace protections. Such institutional culture could explain the heightened awareness among students from public universities.

The fourth hypothesis, focusing on university status and knowledge, also revealed a significant difference. Public university students demonstrated higher knowledge of the Act compared to private students. Public universities are often larger, more diverse, and better integrated into national awareness initiatives. They may conduct mandatory seminars, training sessions, or advocacy programs, which strengthen students' understanding of the Act. Furthermore, public universities tend to emphasize social advocacy and legal literacy in their curricula and extracurricular activities. These factors likely contribute to the deeper knowledge levels observed among public university students.

The fifth hypothesis examined the influence of education on awareness. Results showed that MS students scored significantly higher than BS students, indicating that educational attainment plays a crucial role. Postgraduate students are generally exposed to advanced academic settings, more specialized coursework, and greater opportunities for research and professional development. These experiences can foster a heightened sensitivity to workplace ethics, law, and rights. The result highlights that advanced education does not only expand academic expertise but also cultivates broader awareness about workplace legislation and protections.

The sixth hypothesis tested whether education influences knowledge. Results showed no significant difference between BS and MS students. This suggests that knowledge about the Sexual Harassment Act may be equally accessible at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. It may also imply that current university curricula and awareness resources do not differentiate substantially between levels of education. Thus, while postgraduate students demonstrate higher awareness, their detailed knowledge does not differ significantly from undergraduates. This finding indicates that factors beyond formal education—such as media exposure, personal interest, or targeted awareness campaigns—may play a greater role in shaping knowledge levels.

The seventh hypothesis addressed the effect of age on awareness and knowledge. Findings showed significant differences. Awareness increased with age, with students in the 24–26 age group reporting the highest scores, suggesting that older students may acquire more exposure to professional environments, peer discussions, and life experiences that enhance their understanding of workplace issues. However, knowledge scores were higher among younger students (18–20 years), likely due to their recent engagement with academic material and updated curriculum. This contrast indicates that younger students may be more familiar with specific details of the Act, while older students have a broader awareness of its implications.

The eighth hypothesis examined academic disciplines. Results showed no significant difference in awareness across disciplines (Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, and IT/Computer). However, differences in knowledge were significant. IT/Computer students scored higher than those in natural and social sciences. This may be due to their exposure to training on ethics, cyber law, and workplace conduct, which often accompany technology-related education. The findings imply that while awareness is uniformly distributed, depth of knowledge may depend on disciplinary focus. This emphasizes the need to integrate legal and ethical education into all academic fields, not just technology-focused disciplines.

The ninth hypothesis proposed differences in awareness by working status. Results showed that working students had significantly higher awareness than non-working students. This can be explained by their direct exposure to workplace dynamics, training programs, and HR policies. Workplace environments often require discussions around harassment policies and legal protections, which naturally enhance awareness levels among working students.

The tenth hypothesis tested working status and knowledge. Results showed no significant difference between working and non-working students. This suggests that practical workplace exposure may raise awareness but does not necessarily increase detailed legal knowledge. Knowledge of the Act may rely more heavily on structured educational efforts, awareness campaigns, and social discourse rather than workplace experience alone.

In summary, this research shows that demographic factors such as gender, age,

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education, discipline, and working status influence awareness and knowledge of the Sexual Harassment at Workplace Act 2010 in different ways. Awareness tends to vary more with factors like age, education, and working status, while knowledge differences are shaped by gender, university status, and discipline. These findings emphasize the need for universities to design targeted awareness campaigns and integrate legal education into curricula to ensure students across all demographics are equally informed and equipped with both awareness and detailed knowledge of workplace protections.

CONCLUSION

This study analyzed university students' awareness and knowledge of the Sexual Harassment at Workplace Act 2010 and their understanding of rights and protections. Results showed that public university students demonstrated higher awareness and knowledge compared to private university students, highlighting the stronger role of public institutions in promoting legal literacy. Although gender differences were statistically non-significant, women often remain more vulnerable to harassment but less likely to report due to cultural and social constraints. Despite the presence of policies in universities, many students still lack proper awareness because of weak implementation. Addressing these gaps through awareness programs and integrating harassment-related education into curricula is essential. Such initiatives would enable students to recognize their rights, report cases confidently, and contribute to building safer and more equitable workplaces in the future.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Combine qualitative and quantitative approaches together for more comprehensive data.
2. Investigate how gender identities for example gender, sex, race, interact and impact experiencing of sexual harassment Act 2010.
3. Provide workshops and training programs to enhance student's awareness and knowledge on sexual harassment Act.
4. Information about sexual harassment should be included in school's curriculum so that students can understand about sexual harassment at early stage.
5. This research is recommended for future usage so that researchers can explore changes in awareness and knowledge of students over time.

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