

Changes in Knowledge and Attitudes of School Girls Towards Sexual Harassment and its Incidence: an Impact Assessment of the MEJNIN Programme

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Abstract

Gender Justice and Diversity unit of BRAC had a project on sensitizing young people especially girls and community people about sexual harassment in selected areas in Dhaka city in 2011 so that they might act as an individual and collective change-maker and protect, protest and resist such incidence. This study aimed to look into the changes in knowledge and attitudes of those school girls regarding sexual harassment and the changes in reporting rate about the issue as mentioned. Findings show that most of the girls in the intervention areas had better knowledge and appropriate attitudes about sexual harassment compared to the girls in control area. Besides, the reporting rate of the incidence of harassment in the project area was reported much higher compared to the area where there was no project. Different measures were suggested by the girls to combat sexual harassment at school, on the way to school, at home, at workplace and at other places.

1. Introduction

Many of the behaviours that constitute sexual harassment¹ are not new. The forms and contexts of harassment today must be historicized. There is growing concern at national and international levels about preventing and combating sexual harassment, especially in schools. However, according to research and media coverage harassment has increased in Bangladesh in the recent past (Siddiqi 2003).

Sexual harassment in Bangladesh is so intensive, so pervasive (91% of the girls aged 10-18 years have experienced sexual harassment), and so overwhelming that young girls are committing suicide to escape it (BNWLA 2010). It does not matter whether females/girls at work, in school, on the street, they in Bangladesh are often grouped, flashed, taunted, rubbed, beaten, and raped.

This is a silent but awful crime. Due to social stigma and lack of awareness, the victims of this crime do not raise their voice against it. But sexual harassment happens to be such a debilitating crime which eats up the very core of a human being. It hurts her dignity, makes her feel powerless, helpless and often she may think herself responsible and deserving of such treatment (Democracy Watch 2009).

It is a matter of great concern that sexual harassment encompasses the society constantly through different routes or practices. Sexual harassment is a kind of harassment which abuses/exploits women of all ages, races, ethnicity, religion, economic status, etc. It not only hurts the person or her life or family; it put obstacles in the way of equality, development and peace. So, it is the high time to prevent its occurrence as well as improve the existing situation of women. Understanding the worst effects of sexual harassment, BRAC has started a project named *Meyeder Janna Nirapad Nagorikatta* (MEJNIN) (Safe citizenship for girls and women) on a pilot basis in some areas in Dhaka city. Some girls' schools were selected for intervention. This study aimed to measure whether the MEJNIN programme had been able to increase the knowledge level of the girls, to change their attitudes towards harassment and to increase reporting of any kind of harassment they experienced in their life.

Overview of MEJNIN programme

The overall objective of MEJNIN programme is to raise awareness, especially of young people, against sexual harassment of girls/students in public places so that they act as an individual and collective change-maker and protect, protest and resist such incidence. The specific objectives are to:

¹ Sexual harassment known locally as 'eve teasing' where boys intercept girls on the street, and shout obscenities, laugh at them, pull or touch them or worse. Female students and female teachers are at present not safe on streets or in schools in Bangladesh. Schools have been shut down and exams delayed because of sexual harassment.

- Aware and sensitize girls and other stakeholders to recognize that teasing and sexual harassment against girls is illegal and a social crime,
- Reach the victim with immediate support,
- Enhance responsiveness of the community to take a combined stance against teasing and sexual harassment,
- Mobilize a social movement against sexual harassment in educational institutions,
- Expand access of victims to justice.

Project strategies

BRAC Gender Justice and Diversity section coordinated and mobilized the programme activities through different methods which led to reaching the goals and objectives of the project. The project focused on building mass awareness to recognize and articulate harassment as illegal and a social crime, and also to support the victims.

In this process, all girl students of the schools were oriented on sexual harassment issues for clear understanding of the problem and for its prevention. The programme also conducted mass outreach and public educational campaigns at community level, both regional and national. The programme focused on highlighting teasing and sexual violence, creating dialogue and awareness around a topic which has largely been shunned and hidden, and in some cases accepted. The campaigns contained behavioural change communication (BCC) to de-stigmatize the victims of teasing, and create gender intolerance across the society for teasing and sexual violence. Workshops and docu-dramas were held. Leaflets, posters, banners, and brochures were distributed in schools and in public spaces to reinforce the messages, raise community awareness and encourage social mobilization to end sexual harassment.

Target population and project period

The primary target population for the project was the girls of school-age, and the secondary target was boys, parents and teachers. Tertiary targets included community people/stakeholders. The project duration was one year (2010 to 2011).

Expected outcomes and output of the project

1. All girl students would recognize teasing and sexual harassment and comprehend how to challenge.
2. Sixty percent of the students could recognize and articulate that teasing and sexual harassment were violence and a social crime.
3. At least 60% of community people would mobilize against teasing and sexual harassment.
4. A common energetic platform against teasing and sexual harassment would be shaped.

Geographical locations: This project would cover 60 girls' schools in Ramna, Rampura, Khilgaon, Badda and Gulshan thana of Dhaka city. It covered all girl students of class VI to X.

Objective of the study

Although the project covered girls, school-teachers, parents and other community stakeholders including police, this study focused only on girls in the schools and in few cases school teachers, because despite the fact that sexual harassment of children, especially girls in our country, starts from their childhood, during adolescence enormous numbers of them were reported to have experienced sexual victimization. The main objective of the study was therefore to explore the reporting rate of sexual harassment experienced by the schools girls. The specific objectives were to:

- a. See the difference in respondents' knowledge on sexual harassment,
- b. Determine the changes in their attitudes towards sexual harassment, and
- c. Look into the number of girls who are sexually harassed within a defined period of time.

2. Methods

A quantitative method was used and quasi-experimental research design was employed to conduct the study.

Study area

The study was conducted in areas where the intervention was taken place. These included Gulshan, Badda, Rampura, Kilgaon, and Ramna. Control schools were selected from Mohammadpur, Agargaon, and Mirpur areas of Dhaka. The MEJNIN programme selected the schools based on the access to them.

Sample size

The MEJNIN programme intervened in 60 schools, out of which 20 were randomly selected for this study. These were treated as intervention schools. Twenty schools from control areas were selected as control schools. As the intervention was given to the students of class VI to IX, the students of these classes were interviewed. Twenty students from each school (five from each class) were randomly selected for interview. A similar procedure was followed in control areas. Thus, the total number of respondents was 800 (400 intervention and 400 control). Students' lists were collected from the registers in the school. In addition the head teacher of every school was also interviewed to find out the reasons for student dropout from the school.

Data collection technique

Data were collected through survey using mainly closed questions. A few of the questions were open-ended, particularly for the students who were asked to give suggestions as to how to stop sexual harassment at school, at home, on the streets, and at community level.

Analysis plan

Bivariate and multivariate analyses were done using SPSS version 17. The knowledge level of the girls about sexual harassment was measured. The respondents who could answer correctly would get '1' and those who answered wrong would get '0'. Then all scores were summed up revealing the knowledge status of the respondents. This status was compared between intervention areas and control areas.

The attitude of the respondents was measured on a four-point Likert scale. Ten statements were given to them on which they were asked to give their opinion

whether agreed or not. The statements reflected situations with which respondents were asked to agree or disagree. The respondents' attitude on each of the statements was captured in the four point Likert scale – completely agreed, partially agreed, partially disagreed, and completely disagreed. Both positive and negative statements were considered in order to get balanced attitudes from the respondents. Each of the statements was given numerical weight of four to one. 'Completely agreed' would be given a value of one While 'Completely disagreed' would be given four. For negative statements the given value four to one was reversed.

Variation emerges depending on the nature of the statements. Higher scores from a statement related to themes meant a more appropriate² attitude towards sexual harassment and the opposite meant a less appropriate attitude. A total score for each respondent was computed by summing the responses against each statement. The cumulative score from different statements represented their attitude towards sexual harassment. In the case of attitudes towards sexual harassment, possible scores for a respondent ranged from 10 to 40.

On the other hand proportion of girls who experienced various types of sexual harassment various types of sexual harassment within a year and average number of times they were harassed was also determined in this study.

² The word 'appropriate' means that nobody supports any type of sexual harassment against girl/woman.

3. Findings

Knowledge about sexual harassment

An important component of the intervention was to increase knowledge of the girl students on selected issues of sexual harassment. The issues include the definition of sexual harassment, potential age of a girl for sexual harassment, different types of punishment to the perpetrators for different types of sexual harassment, laws related to sexual harassment and the problems faced if a girl is sexually harassed. This study also aimed to compare the knowledge of the respondents and whether there was statistically significant difference between treatment and control areas regarding knowledge on those above issues.

The knowledge level of the respondents was expressed in two ways. Firstly, the proportion of respondents (girls) reported to have knowledge both in treatment and control areas. Secondly, how many questions were answered by the students/girls was revealed as a score. This score was made on the basis of the number of questions the respondents answered. Each of the questions was given value '1' for a correct answer and '0' for wrong/did not know.

In addition, the respondents were given opportunity to answer the questions. For example, girls/respondents were asked what sexual harassment was. It was difficult for them to give correct answer as it was mentioned in the questionnaire. Some relaxation leeway was provided to them, meaning that if the respondents could answer partially or nearest to the answer written in the questionnaire, this would consider a correct answer.

Table 1. Percentage of the respondents having knowledge about sexual harassment (n=800)

Questions	Treatment	Control	P value
What is sexual harassment?	82.46	48.11	.000
Are eve-teasing and sexual harassment same?	47.75	33.75	.000
At what age a girl is more sexually harassed?	95.50	86.58	.000
What is the punishment for disturbing others by doing obscene activities in an open place?	58.00	43.47	.000
What is the punishment for oppressing, insult or using filthy words to a woman in an open place?	58.50	38.69	.000
What is the punishment for doing sex forcefully which instigate a woman to commit suicide?	66.75	47.24	.000
What kind of law is existed in Bangladesh to prevent sexual harassment	28.25	20.85	.015
What kind of problem girls may face for sexual harassment?	98.50	93.50	.000

An overwhelming number of respondents (95.5% and 86.6%) both in treatment and control areas reported to have given correct answers about the potential age of girls having greater chance of being sexually harassed, and the problems a girl might face after being harassed (Table 1). The difference was statistically significant between the areas as mentioned.

The majority of the respondents (82.46%) in the treatment area knew what is sexual harassment while 48.11% of the respondents in control areas knew it, The difference was statistically significant. An insignificant number of respondents (28%, 20%) both in treatment and control areas reported to have knowledge about the existing laws regarding preventing sexual harassment in Bangladesh.

Findings also show that average knowledge scores in treatment areas was 5.35 whereas in control areas, it was 4.14, the difference was statistically significant. The scores were compared between treatment and control areas on the basis of economic status of the household, i.e. always deficit, sometimes deficit, break even, and surplus. Results show that the respondents belonged to break even or surplus households gave on average five correct answers in treatment areas. There were similar findings observed among the students of all classes (VI-X) in treatment areas. These respondents got higher scores compared to that from control areas. In addition, statistically significant different results were found between treatment and control areas. Knowledge scores were not different within the classes. A trend was observed that the higher the level of class, the average knowledge scores were also higher.

Table 2. Average knowledge score of the respondents on sexual harassment (n=800)

Economic status of household	Treatment	Control	P value
Always deficit	4.46	5.26	.239
Sometimes deficit	4.94	4.32	.015
Break even	5.50	3.88	.000
Surplus	5.55	4.05	.000
Class			
Six	5.06	3.86	.007
Seven	5.02	4.20	.002
Eight	5.40	3.97	.000
Nine	5.47	4.48	.000
Ten	5.59	4.24	.000

Attitude towards sexual harassment

Statements regarding sexual harassment were given to the respondents to give their opinion on a four-point Likert Scale. The statements included issues such as passing bad comments, evocative eye contact, touching the body, attempting to touch the body, disturbance through SMS or telephone, showing pornography, using slang, calling girls beautiful, threatening a women, having sex and creating false hopes, forming sexual relationship, behaving with the intention of having sex.

The level of attitudes of the respondents was divided into three on the basis of median scores:

- a. Less appropriate attitude – those scoring less than the median
- b. Neutral attitude – respondents who got scores equal to the median of total scores and they have neither appropriate attitudes nor inappropriate attitudes towards sexual harassment
- c. More appropriate attitude - respondents who scored more than the median scores

Findings show that 40% of the respondents showed more appropriate attitudes towards sexual harassment in treatment areas while a little more than one-third in the control areas showed same attitudes (Table 3). This means that respondents were dead against of any kind of sexual harassment. But 16% of the respondents in the treatment areas showed neutral attitudes against 18% in control areas. Table 3 also shows that a statistically significant difference between treatment and control areas was found in more appropriate attitudes towards sexual harassment. On the other hand, in the case of less appropriate and neutral attitudes towards sexual harassment, there was no statistically significant difference between treatment and control areas.

Table 3. Level of attitude of the respondents towards sexual harassment (%) (n=800)

Level of attitude	Treatment	Control	P value
Less appropriate	44.25	49.00	.179
Neutral attitude	15.75	18.25	.347
More appropriate	40.00	32.75	.033

Table 4 compares the appropriate attitudes of the respondents towards various types of sexual harassment between treatment and control areas. More clearly, the respondents did not support any type of sexual harassment. They were given statements which might be positive or negative, and asked to respond whether they agreed or disagreed (Table 4). For appropriate attitudes, value 4 was given for completely agreeing or completely disagreeing. Findings show that a little more than 90% of the respondents both in treatment and control areas had appropriate attitudes or completely agreed with the statements they were given. But out of those statements mentioned above the only statistically significant difference between treatment and control areas was observed in respondents' attitude towards the statement 'requesting to have sex by creating false hope'.

The respondents were also asked to express attitudes towards the statements such as 'suggestive eye contact is not sexual harassment'. Less than half of them (46%) in the treatment areas completely disagreed, whereas 39% did so in control areas. The difference was statistically significant. Fifty-three percent of the respondents in treatment areas did not completely agree that disturbing any female through SMS or telephone is not a sexual harassment compared to 43% in control areas. At the same time the statement – 'calling any female beautiful' is not sexual harassment' was

disagreed with by a little less than 60% of the respondents in treatment areas whereas a little more than 40% of them in control areas. A negligible percentage of the respondents showed positive attitudes towards the statements 'using slang is not sexual harassment' but the difference was statistically significant.

Table 4. Percentage of respondents having appropriate attitudes towards sexual harassment (SH) (n=800)

Type of harassment	Treatment	Control	p value
Passing sexual comments is SH*	67.75	61.75	.076
Having suggestive eye contact is not SH	45.75	39.00	.053
Try to touch female body is not SH	89.00	87.00	.385
Disturbing any female through SMS or telephone is not SH	53.25	42.75	.003
Showing pornography to female is SH	92.00	95.00	.085
Using slang is not SH	04.50	01.00	.002
Calling any female beautiful is not SH	57.50	41.25	.000
Threatening and pressuring a female to try to have sex is not SH	95.00	96.00	.496
Requesting to have sex by creating false hope is SH	92.50	96.75	.008
Any kind of physical and linguistic behaviour to female with a view to have sex is SH	94.00	96.50	.097

*SH= Sexual harassment

Table 5. Percentage of respondents having more appropriate attitudes towards sexual harassment by economic status and class (n=800)

Economic status of household	More appropriate attitude		
	Treatment	Control	P value
Always deficit	23.08	25.00	.904
Sometimes deficit	38.38	33.79	.464
Break even	38.82	27.67	.032
Surplus	44.44	43.24	.871
Class			
Six	32.26	50.00	.09
Seven	42.70	34.48	.266
Eight	40.63	27.59	.064
Nine	39.36	34.33	.518
Ten	40.00	16.00	.001

As there was a significant difference between treatment and control areas in expressing more appropriate attitudes, further analysis was done in terms of economic status of the household and type of class the respondents belonged to. A higher percentage of the respondents from the 'break even' households in treatment areas showed more appropriate attitudes towards sexual harassment compared to that of the control areas. In other words, 38% of the respondents from the treatment areas showed more appropriate attitudes against 28% of them in control areas and the difference was statistically significant at the 3% level.

On the other hand, the respondents of class VIII and X in the treatment areas showed more appropriate attitudes towards sexual harassment than the respondents from the same class in control areas (Table 5). More specifically, 40% of the students in class VIII and X in treatment areas reported to have appropriate attitudes while 21% in class VIII and 16% in class X in the control areas showed more appropriate attitudes. Within the classes there was a difference in respondents who had more appropriate attitudes towards sexual harassment.

Incidence of sexual harassment

The incidence of sexual harassment was explored at two levels. Firstly, there were a number of respondents who were victims of sexual harassment at least once in a year (2011, preceding year of data collection). Secondly, the number of harassment experienced by the respondents within a year were also explored (Table 6). Most of the respondents reported to have been harassed within the preceding one year. A higher percentage of the respondents in treatment areas reported to have experienced different types of sexual harassment at least once compared to the respondents from control areas. More than 60% of the respondents both in treatment and control areas experienced the type of harassment such as making sexual comments, suggestive eye contact and hounding females by males (Table 6). Less than half of the respondents (43%) in treatment areas and 36% in control areas became victims of attempting to touch the body. Calling female beautiful was found a type of harassment which was experienced by 53% of the respondents in treatment areas and a little less than 60% in control areas. In addition, there was statistically significant difference between treatment and control areas in the case of harassment through SMS or telephone.

Table 6. Percentage of respondents who were reported to be victims of sexual harassment (n=800)

Type of sexual harassment	Treatment	Control	P value
Making sexual comments	67.75	61.75	.076
Suggestive eye contact	66.75	64.00	.414
Touching body	37.75	31.50	.063
Attempting to touch body	43.25	36.50	.051
SMS/Telephone	51.50	39.75	.001
Showing pornography	16.00	10.75	.029
Using slang	36.50	34.00	.460
Calling beautiful	53.00	58.25	.135
Threatening a woman/girl	19.00	17.25	.521
Trying to have sex creating false hope	10.00	06.25	.052
Forming a sexual relationship by creating false hope	02.75	01.25	.130
Pursuing a girl/woman by male	61.75	61.50	.942
Compel to avoid participating any cultural ceremony	08.75	06.00	.137
Blackmail by still photography	10.00	10.75	.728
Threatened for refusing love relation	36.50	38.00	.661

Table 7 shows the average number of incidents of sexual harassment experienced by the respondents. The respondents in control areas were victims of SMS/telephonic harassment many times compared to treatment areas (65 vs. 40), the difference was not statistically significant. On the other hand, average number of times the respondent experienced the harassment of being shown pornography was higher in treatment areas compared to control areas (4 vs. 2). In addition, victims of sexual comments were higher in treatment areas compared to control areas (14 vs. 8), and the difference was statistically significant. The difference between treatment and control areas was significant (at 10% level) on the issue of suggestive eye contact. Pursuing a girl/woman by a male was another type of harassment by which the respondents in treatment areas became victims for, on average, 14 times while it was 7 times in control areas.

Table 7. Average number of sexual harassment occurred (n=800)

Type of sexual harassment	Treatment	Control	P value
Making sexual comments	13.82	8.17	.021
Suggestive eye contact	21.57	14.16	.089
Touching body	4.79	3.96	.303
Attempting to touch body	5.42	4.81	.498
SMS/Telephone	39.63	64.98	.151
Showing pornography	3.78	1.70	.004
Using slang	8.03	3.83	.018
Calling beautiful	9.63	16.81	.282
Threatening a woman	4.08	2.45	.331
Trying to have sex and creating false hope	2.53	2.04	.403
Forming a sexual relationship by creating false hope	2.82	2.60	.896
Pursuing a girl/woman by male	13.92	6.49	.023
Compel to avoid participating any cultural ceremony	3.51	4.58	.573
Blackmail by still photography	8.28	3.72	.357
Threatened for refusing love relation	4.85	5.44	.582

Moreover, further analysis on the variation of the occurrence of sexual harassment among the students of different classes was done. Findings show that more of class VI students (64%) in control areas were victims of sexual comments compared to treatment areas (35%), and the difference was statistically significant (Table 8). Similar trends were observed in the same class about showing pornography and using slang to girls. In other words, the difference in showing pornography and using slang between treatment and control areas was statistically significant at the 5% and 1% levels, respectively.

More students of class X in treatment areas reported to have been the victim of sexual comments, body touching and having a sexual relationship by creating false hope, compared to the students in control areas. And the difference between treatment and control areas in this regard was statistically significant at 1% and 5% levels respectively.

Table 8. Percentage of respondents who were sexually harassed by class (n=800)

Type of sexual harassment	Six (n=115)		Seven (n=177)		Eight (n=183)		Nine (n=161)		Ten (n=145)	
	T	C	T	C	T	C	T	C	T	C
Making sexual comments	35.48	64.29*	62.92	51.72	66.67	66.67	74.47	73.13	77.78	54.67**
Suggestive eye contact	54.84	61.90	65.17	60.92	67.71	70.11	71.28	74.63	66.67	53.33
Touching body	16.13	27.38	39.33	31.03	40.63	39.08	44.68	38.81	33.33	21.33
Attempting to touch body	25.81	30.95	42.70	35.63	48.96	50.57	44.68	38.81	42.22	25.33*
SMS/Telephone	29.03	22.62	39.33	29.89	44.79	36.78	62.77	58.21	66.67	57.33
Showing pornography	19.35	08.33*	15.73	11.49	13.54	11.49	15.96	14.93	17.78	08.00
Using slang	16.13	34.52**	28.09	32.18	37.50	36.78	45.74	34.33	41.11	32.00
Calling beautiful	22.58	64.29	53.93	51.72	51.04	56.32	59.57	61.19	57.78	58.67
Threatening a woman	06.45	13.10	15.73	14.94	20.83	22.99	26.60	19.40	16.67	16.00
Trying to have sex creating false hope	06.45	01.19	08.99	06.90	09.38	08.05	10.64	13.43	12.22	02.67*
Forming a sexual relationship by creating false hope	00.00	00.00	02.25	00.00	03.13	00.00	01.06	05.97	05.56	01.33
Pursuing a girl/woman by male	38.71	57.14	55.06	51.72	66.67	67.82	65.96	71.64	66.67	61.33
Compel to avoid participating any cultural ceremony	03.23	03.57	07.87	05.75	06.25	04.60	12.77	07.46	10.00	09.33
Blackmail by still photography	03.23	10.71	08.99	08.05	08.33	13.79	10.64	13.43	14.44	08.00
Threatened for refusing love relation	19.35	33.33	31.46	36.78	33.33	45.98	45.74	49.25	41.11	25.33*

T=Treatment, C=Control, **, * denotes significant at the 1% and 5% level

Prevention of sexual harassment

The respondents were asked what measures they took when harassed. Those who did not take any action against the harassment mentioned several reasons. In other words, for each of the statements, the respondents were asked about how they dealt with the perpetrator of the harassment. And if not what were the reasons?

The respondents were asked how they reacted when they heard sexual comments. Findings show that slightly more respondents in control areas compared to treatment areas did not take any measures after experiencing sexual comments (45% vs. 44%), although the difference was not statistically significant (Table 9). But half of the respondents (50%) both in treatment and control areas reported to have discussed the problem with their mothers. A few of them informed their teachers and friends. On the other hand, there were some respondents who did not react against the

comments for several reasons. One of the important reasons was that respondents were afraid of, thinking that the situation might get worse. Sixty percent of the respondents in treatment areas and 73% in control areas thought that the situation might be made worse if they protested against sexual comments from males (Table 10). One-third of the respondents in treatment areas did not protest about the harassment thinking that they would get a bad reputation. A little more than one-fifth of them in control areas did same as in treatment areas. Six percent of the respondents thought that parents might stop their education whereas 2% in control areas had similar thoughts.

Table 9. Percentage of respondents reacted against the sexual comments (N=453)

Type of sexual harassment	Treatment	Control
No measures taken	43.8	45.3
Discuss with mother	49.8	50.0
Inform community	0	0
Inform teacher	4.6	2.5
Inform friends/student watch group	1.4	.0
Call <i>shalish</i> (informal justice)	.5	2.1
P value	.134	

Table 10. Reasons of not reacting by the respondents against sexual comments (%) (n=185)

Type of sexual harassment	Treatment	Control
Thinking that situation might be worse	60.0	73.0
Thinking that there will be bad reputation	32.9	23.0
Thinking that parents might stop studying	5.9	2.0
Thinking that parents get them early married	1.2	2.0
P value	.185	

In the case of harassment such as suggestive eye contact 49% of the respondents in treatment areas and 52% in control areas did not take any measures (Appendix 1). In addition, an almost similar percentage of respondents both in treatment and control areas discussed the problem with their parents when they were victimized. On the other hand, an almost similar percentage of the respondents did not protest about the harassment of suggestive eye contact both in treatment and control areas for the same reasons as mentioned earlier (Appendix 2). In addition, 26% of the respondents in treatment and 29% in control areas avoided protesting against suggestive eye contact because of the risk of getting a bad reputation. Appendix 3 shows that most of the respondents both in treatment and control areas did not react against the harassment such as touching female body and those who reacted just discussed it with their mother. On the other hand, the reason behind not protesting about the harassment was thinking that the situation might be worse than it was before (Appendix 4). Most of the respondents (56%) in treatment areas and 35% in control areas reported to have discussed the situation with their mother when they were harassed.

Almost similar findings were observed in Appendix 5 and 6 about the harassment of suggestive eye contact to the earlier statement. On the other hand, the majority of the respondents – 88% in treatment areas and 74% in control areas – discussed with their mothers regarding harassment like being disturbed over the phone or SMS (Appendix 7). Those who did not take any measures rationalized that the situation might be worse if they protested (Appendix 8). In the case of showing pornography, 24% of the respondents in treatment areas informed their teachers, 28% discussed it with their mothers, while 48% in treatment areas and little more than one-fourth in control areas mentioned the risk of developing bad reputation as the reason for not taking any initiatives against the perpetrator (Appendix 9,10). Appendix 11 to 17 shows that as a measure of harassment majority of the respondents in treatment and control areas discussed with their mothers and those who did not protest mentioned the reason being the situation might be worse if they protested about the perpetrators.

Dropout of the respondents from school

The important and ultimate outcome of harassment is dropping out of the students from school, although there are some other reasons for this. The findings show that the majority of the respondents (76 and 71%) both in treatment and control areas reported that marriage was the main reason for dropping out of school (Table 11). On the other hand, one-quarter of the respondents in treatment areas and 12% in control areas reported that sexual harassment was the reason for dropping out of school. A small number, both in treatment and control areas, mentioned safety issues as the reason of not going to school. There were some girls who were forced to get married to avoid sexual harassment. So, along with marriage there was some incidences of sexual harassment as well for dropping out of school. Now it is clear that a significant number of students dropped out from school due to sexual harassment.

Table 11. Reasons for dropping out of the students from school (%) (n=707)

Type of sexual harassment	Treatment	Control
Sexual harassment	25.4	11.9
Marriage	76.1	71.6
Parents transfer	28.7	28.7
Safety issue to go to school	11.0	9.4

Multiple responses were considered

The head teachers of the study schools were asked the same questions as the respondents (Table 12). Both in treatment and control areas, they emphasized parents' transfer as one of the important reasons for dropping out of school. Marriage was another reason given by the teachers for dropping out of school. In addition, they also gave importance on safety issues for dropping out of school. Together with sexual harassment and safety issues, there would be a significant number of students who were forced to dropout from school.

Table 12. Reasons for dropping out of the students from school (%) (n=758)

Type of sexual harassment	Treatment	Control
Sexual harassment	13.3	16.7
Marriage	50.0	33.3
Parents transfer	66.7	75.0
Safety issue to go to school	36.7	16.7

Multiple responses were considered

Suggestions proposed by the respondents

The respondents were requested to give some suggestions from their experience about how to prevent sexual harassment both at home and outside and protect themselves from the perpetrators. Suggested steps include both preventive and curative measures as follows:

At schools

The teachers could play a significant role in preventing sexual harassment. They must be aware that harassment is taking place at their schools. Teachers should make the students aware of it and take initiatives. They should keep an eye on the boys who like to do this. On the other hand, students themselves should have done something to prevent harassment. Some of them mentioned that girls should always stay in the classroom and should not go outside. In other words, they should obey discipline or follow school norms and culture. Other respondents mentioned that girls should not look through the window of the school. They should stay at school peacefully. Others thought that they should keep quiet so that boys could not hear their voice. Also they should avoid laughing at school. Along with girls, boys must be given awareness training about the existing laws against sexual harassment and its consequences. Every school must have a strong committee to solve harassment issues as suggested by the respondents.

Some students suggested that there should be arrangements for the badly behaved boys who should not loiter in front of school for no reason or should employ permanent staff who would guard the girls from the badly behaved boys. Also it was recommended that girls should not respond if any unknown boys call them. On the other hand, girls also should control themselves from doing any wrong or being involved with anything which is not acceptable. They should also avoid making friendship with girls of bad character. Girls should also be given some life-skill training like *karate* for their own protection.

As a curative measure, they suggested that when they are victims they should inform their teachers or school committee and finally should seek help from the police if the teachers and school committee fails to solve the problem. In this regard a student mentioned, *"First of all I will inform a madam who is good and reliable and I will follow her advice. If it does not work, then I will go for legal action."* Zhorna Akter, class X, Agargaon High School.

On the way to school

Girls are likely to be sexually harassed on their way to school. To protect themselves they recommended various suggestions. Similar to the suggestions proposed by the respondents in the case of school for preventing and curative measures of sexual harassment, they also gave the following preventive measures to stay safe from sexual harassment.

According to them the girls should go to school with their mother instead of going alone or a school van could be used. No girls should talk with any unknown people even under pressure, or should not respond to calls or should keep silent if anybody passes bad or good comments. It was also suggested to providing knowledge about the effect of sexual harassment and existing laws for punishment to the perpetrators for harassment. They also preferred girls to use *burkha* (veil) to save them from harassment. Girls should not speak loudly on the way to school and should avoid eating on the way to school.

Taking photos on a mobile phone is easy and thus anybody can blackmail any girl using that photo. So, such an initiative should be taken so that nobody can take picture and use that for future harassment. A few respondents recommended that nothing should be done to attract anyone on the way and girls should go to school together or avoid the road where the boys gossip. Some of them proposed installing billboards, posters, and banners explaining the effects of harassment and making clear the punishment for harassment. In addition, the boys should be handled with care to avoid further harassment.

On the other hand when any girl is attacked by the harasser they should seek help from people on the roadside. Otherwise the victim should take measures according to the law.

At home

A high percentage of the respondents faced harassment at home as reported. They suggested taking some corrective measures to prevent harassment. First of all, the girls and their parents should be aware of how to avoid sexual harassment. In this regard, everybody at home should be given knowledge regarding sexual harassment. Girls should be careful and must avoid those people who were of bad characters. In the case of opening the door, girls should be careful to make sure they are safe from the person who is knocking at the door. Girls must close the door when they go to bed. They also should not stay at home alone.

Some other respondents reported that girls should avoid going out of the home unnecessarily. They were also advised to spend less time on the roof top. On the other hand, parents should guide their daughters carefully and all family members should discuss the issue of harassment, so that everyone is aware of that. Girls were advised to move away from the place where bad people stay. Sometimes cousins become serious in carrying out this kind of harassment. So girls were advised to

avoid cousins at home. In addition, neighbours should be aware of the possibility of harassment.

As a curative measure, on the other hand, the chairman of the area should be informed about sexual harassment so that the girl could remain safe. Girls should inform their mother, neighbour and police to get the perpetrator punished, so that in future they do not dare to do it again.

At workplace

The workplace is also not safe for women. Although school girls do not have experience of this type of harassment, they suggested from their assumptions or what they knew from different sources. They suggested that employees must be careful about harassment. They also mentioned that before joining any office a girl should collect some information about the work environment and the staff (if possible). Like other suggestions, employees were advised to wear the veil and avoid bad comments in the office. Women should be decently dressed. They also mentioned that women employees should have solidarity in fighting against the perpetrator.

The higher authority of the office should be given knowledge and advice to prevent harassment. As a curative measure, the victim should inform/report to the police. If necessary, the victim can manage to transfer herself to another place to escape from the harassment.

At other places

Including the places mentioned above there are some other places such as markets, buses or rail stations where girls can be harassed. In that case, girls should be careful when they go outside home. It is recommended that preferably they should stay with parents and should stay calm and quiet. The respondents suggested that they should wear decent dress and also suggested not to go alone anywhere or with boyfriends. Sometimes girls should go outside home such as to the market or other places with the guardians who are safe. Girls should also behave well with everybody to avoid harassment. In addition, girls should take the situation or environment into consideration because of safety issues around them when they go outside home.

The victims should protest or stand against the perpetrators when they are harassed sexually. Finally, similar curative measures such as informing police for taking action against the perpetrators were suggested by the respondents.

4. Conclusion

This study was to find out the changes in knowledge of the respondents and their attitudes towards sexual harassment, and the incidence of it in treatment areas by comparing with the control areas. The study shows that significant change in knowledge level of the respondents/girls in treatment areas took place compared to the control areas. The attitude level in treatment areas also changed a great deal compared to the control areas. In addition, reporting of any kind of sexual harassment by the respondents in the treatment area was higher compared to the control areas.

The knowledge level of the respondents/girls was reported to be higher in treatment areas compared to control areas. Within the classes there was a variation of the proportion of respondents who were knowledgeable about different issues related to sexual harassment. A higher number of the respondents of classes VIII to X both in treatment and control areas were knowledgeable about the definition of sexual harassment compared to the number of respondents of class VI and VII. But there was a statistically significant difference between the respondents of treatment and control areas. In terms of knowledge scores the respondents who were the students of class X obtained higher scores compared to the students of other classes.

Attitude levels of the respondents towards sexual harassment in treatment areas was different from the respondents of the control areas. A higher percentage of the respondents had appropriate attitudes towards sexual harassment compared to control areas. There was a statistically significant difference between treatment and control areas in the proportion of respondents who showed appropriate attitudes towards six statements out of ten. For example 4% of the respondents in treatment areas had appropriate attitudes towards/completely agreed with the statements - 'using slang is not sexual harassment' – against 1% of the control areas.

The incidence of most types of sexual harassment was observed to be higher in treatment areas compared to control areas. Fifteen types of sexual harassment were presented to the respondents/girls and asked whether they were victims of such harassment. , Higher percentage of the respondents in treatment areas compared to control areas became victim of 14 types of harassment. On the other hand, the average number of harassment incidents was also reported higher in treatment areas. This has given a clear message that due to intervention the reporting rate of sexual harassment by the respondents in treatment areas increased a lot compared to control areas. The field notes indicate that because of the intervention, the respondents were more open to express the harassment they experienced in given time. The respondents in control areas were a bit reserved because they were afraid of what might happen if they revealed their experience of harassment to the interviewer.

Around one-third of the respondents reported that they did not experience any kind of harassment. Of those who experienced harassment, in most cases they did not protest. Because, they might have to face more problems in future. Others thought that she and her family would get a bad reputation.

Finally, it can be concluded that the *MEJNIN* programme had been able to bring changes in girls' knowledge about various types of harassment and attitudes towards them. In addition, interventions increased the reporting of harassment by the victims. This awareness programme should be expanded throughout the country as well as prepare a comprehensive plan of action together with the government and other national and international organizations to provide safer environment to school girls. As a part of the plan, the following few things can be considered:

- a) The boys/men who are the potential perpetrators should be aware of the consequences of harassment and punishment under the existing law;
- b) The government agencies, especially police, must have an active role when any harassment takes place. They should immediately arrest the perpetrator and hand him over to the justice department which also must provide proper justice to the victim; and
- c) People in the community should also be involved in that process and then, if all those process as mentioned function properly, it will be possible to reduce the number of incidences of sexual harassment.

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Appendix

Appendix 1. Percentage of respondents reacted against the suggestive eye contact (n=453)

Type of sexual harassment	Treatment	Control
No measures taken	48.6	52.3
Discuss with mother	48.1	45.1
Inform community	0	0
Inform teacher	2.3	2.5
Inform friends/student watch group	.9	.0
Call <i>shalish</i> (informal justice)	0	0
P value	.433	

Appendix 2. Reasons of not reacting by the respondents against suggestive eye contact (%) (n=185)

Type of sexual harassment	Treatment	Control
Thinking that situation might be worse	69.4	67.9
Thinking that there will be bad reputation	25.9	29.4
Thinking that parents might stop studying	3.5	.9
Thinking that parents get them early married	1.2	1.8
P value	.585	

Appendix 3. Percentage of respondents reacted against touching body (n=453)

Type of sexual harassment	Treatment	Control
No measures taken	40.5	62.9
Discuss with mother	55.9	35.2
Inform community	.9	.0
Inform teacher	.9	1.0
Inform friends/student watch group	1.8	1.0
Call <i>shalish</i> (informal justice)		
P value	.02	

Appendix 4. Reasons of not reacting by the respondents against touching body (%) (n=185)

Type of sexual harassment	Treatment	Control
Thinking that situation might be worse	56.8	50.9
Thinking that there will be bad reputation	40.5	43.6
Thinking that parents might stop studying	2.7	3.6
Thinking that parents get them early married	.0	1.8
P value	.820	

Appendix 5. Percentage of respondents reacted against attempting to touch body (n=453)

Type of sexual harassment	Treatment	Control
No measures taken	48.8	55.9
Discuss with mother	49.6	42.4
Inform community	0	0
Inform teacher	1.6	.8
Inform friends/student watch group	0	0
Call <i>shalish</i> (informal justice)	.0	.8
P value	.456	

Appendix 6. Reasons of not reacting by the respondents against attempting to touch body (%) (n=185)

Type of sexual harassment	Treatment	Control
Thinking that situation might be worse	64.4	51.6
Thinking that there will be bad reputation	35.6	43.5
Thinking that parents might stop studying	.0	1.6
Thinking that parents get them early married	.0	3.2
P value	.341	

Appendix 7. Percentage of respondents reacted against disturbing over phone (n=453)

Type of sexual harassment	Treatment	Control
No measures taken	10.0	22.8
Discuss with mother	87.9	74.3
Inform community	.0	.7
Inform teacher	.7	.7
Inform friends/student watch group	.0	.7
Call <i>shalish</i> (informal justice)	1.4	.7
P value	.05	

Appendix 8. Reasons of not reacting by the respondents against disturbing over phone (%) (n=185)

Type of sexual harassment	Treatment	Control
Thinking that situation might be worse	62.5	62.5
Thinking that there will be bad reputation	25.0	37.5
Thinking that parents might stop studying	12.5	.0
Thinking that parents get them early married	0	0
P value	.195	

Appendix 9. Percentage of respondents reacted against showing pornography (n=453)

Type of sexual harassment	Treatment	Control
No measures taken	48.1	52.9
Discuss with mother	27.8	26.5
Inform community	0	0
Inform teacher	24.1	20.6
Inform friends/student watch group		
Call <i>shalish</i> (informal justice)	0	0
P value	.896	

Appendix 10. Reasons of not reacting by the respondents against showing pornography (%) (n=185)

Type of sexual harassment	Treatment	Control
Thinking that situation might be worse	44.0	76.5
Thinking that there will be bad reputation	48.0	23.5
Thinking that parents might stop studying	8.0	.0
Thinking that parents get them early married	0	0
P value	.09	

Appendix 11. Percentage of respondents reacted against using slang (n=232)

Type of sexual harassment	Treatment	Control
No measures taken	34.5	36.9
Discuss with mother	56.4	60.7
Inform community	0	0
Inform teacher	7.3	2.5
Inform friends/student watch group	.9	.0
Call <i>shalish</i> (informal justice)	.9	.0
P value	.256	

Appendix 12. Reasons of not reacting by the respondents against using slang (%) (n=71)

Type of sexual harassment	Treatment	Control
Thinking that situation might be worse	83.9	47.5
Thinking that there will be bad reputation	12.9	52.5
Thinking that parents might stop studying	3.2	.0
Thinking that parents get them early married	0	0
P value	.002	

Appendix 13. Percentage of respondents reacted against threatening women/girl (n=114)

Type of sexual harassment	Treatment	Control
No measures taken	31.5	36.7
Discuss with mother	66.7	53.3
Inform community	0	0
Inform teacher	1.9	8.3
Inform friends/student watch group	0	0
Call <i>shalish</i> (informal justice)	.0	1.7
P value	.237	

Appendix 14. Reasons of not reacting by the respondents against threatening woman/girl (%) (n=71)

Type of sexual harassment	Treatment	Control
Thinking that situation might be worse	69.2	55.0
Thinking that there will be bad reputation	30.8	35.0
Thinking that parents might stop studying	.0	10.0
Thinking that parents get them early married	0	0
P value	.448	

Appendix 15. Percentage of respondents reacted against blackmailing by still photography (n=57)

Type of sexual harassment	Treatment	Control
No measures taken	42.9	44.4
Discuss with mother	57.1	47.2
Inform community	0	0
Inform teacher	0	8.3
Inform friends/student watch group	0	0
Call <i>shalish</i> (informal justice)	0	0
P value	.356	

Appendix 16. Reasons of not reacting by the respondents against blackmailing by still photography (%) (n=22)

Type of sexual harassment	Treatment	Control
Thinking that situation might be worse	75.0	78.6
Thinking that there will be bad reputation	12.5	.0
Thinking that parents might stop studying	12.5	14.3
Thinking that parents get them early married	.0	7.1
P value	.505	

Appendix 17. Percentage of respondents reacted against refusing love relation (n=233)

Type of sexual harassment	Treatment	Control
No measures taken	25.0	31.6
Discuss with mother	65.0	63.9
Inform community	0	0
Inform teacher	3.0	2.3
Inform friends/student watch group	3.0	.8
Call <i>shalish</i> (informal justice)	4.0	1.5
P value	.399	

Appendix 18. Reasons of not reacting by the respondents against refusing love relation (%) (n=22)

Type of sexual harassment	Treatment	Control
Thinking that situation might be worse	63.6	51.4
Thinking that there will be bad reputation	27.3	29.7
Thinking that parents might stop studying	9.1	13.5
Thinking that parents get them early married	.0	5.4
P value	.611	