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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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List of Original Publications

Original Articles:

Article I

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Article II

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Article III

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Article IV

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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 #metoo 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 Victimization 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-Klawnsnik, 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-Klawnsnik, 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-Klawnsnik, 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 (Kiiänmaa, 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 & Dzinis, 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 Victimization of Women from Sexual Harassment in Public Places in Pakistan, Ghana, and Finland

Victimization 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, $\alpha = .81$), verbal (6 items, $\alpha = .77$), and nonverbal (8 items, $\alpha = .81$) 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, $\alpha = .86$). For Study III, the scale used in Study I was adapted for Finland. Three sub-scales measuring victimisation from physical (7 items, $\alpha = .89$), verbal (6 items, $\alpha = .79$), and nonverbal (7 items, $\alpha = .84$) 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)

Has someone	Studies			
<i>Physical Sexual Harassment</i>				
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	-
<i>Verbal Sexual Harassment</i>				
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	-
<i>Nonverbal Sexual Harassment</i>				
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.

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

Ḟ) 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 Victimization 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)

<i>How did it make you feel?</i>	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, $\alpha =.77$)

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, $\alpha =.85$)

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)

<i>Have you told anyone about it?</i>	<i>Study I</i>	<i>Study IV</i>
	<i>(7 items, $\alpha =.73$)</i>	<i>(7 items, $\alpha =.76$)</i>

a friend

a mother

a father

a sister

a brother

a relative

a co-worker

2.2.4 Measurement of Victimization from Physical Punishment during Childhood

Victimization 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).

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

2.2.5 Measurement of Victimization from Peer Aggression at School

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 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).

<i>When you were a pupil at school, how often were you victimised from the following things by another pupil?</i>	<i>Study II (α =.79)</i>	<i>Study III (α =.81)</i>
<i>Physical aggression, 3 items</i>		
Someone has for example hit you, kicked you, or shoved you		
<i>Verbal aggression, 3 items</i>		
Someone has, for example, yelled at you, called you bad names, or said hurtful things to you		
<i>Indirect aggression, 3 items</i>		
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 Victimization of Women from Verbal Intimate Partner Aggression

Victimization 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 Victimization from Verbal Intimate Partner Aggression in Study II (N=280) and Study III (N=591).

<i>Has your present partner, or a previous partner, done any of the following things to you</i>	<i>Study II (7 items, $\alpha = .87$)</i>	<i>Study III (7 items, $\alpha = .93$)</i>
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 Victimization of Women from Physical Intimate Partner Aggression

Victimization 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 Ghanaian culture (see Table 9).

Table 9

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

<i>Has your present partner, or a previous partner, done any of the following things to you</i>	Study II (6 items, $\alpha = .86$)	Study III (9 items, $\alpha = .91$)
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 Victimized 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, $\alpha = .81$). A shortened version of the Self-Esteem Scale (7 items, $\alpha = .95$) 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 Victimized from Sexual Harassment in Study III (N=591) and Study IV (N=586)

<i>Please indicate to what extent the following statements describe how you feel about yourself</i>	Study III (10 items, $\alpha = .81$).	Study IV (7 items, $\alpha = .95$)
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 Victimization 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, $\alpha = .85$)

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, $\alpha = .86$)

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 & Dzinis 1996), see Table 13.

Table 13

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

Due to fear of being harassed (5 items, $\alpha = .89$)

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, $\alpha = .89$)

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, $\alpha = .91$)

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 Victimization from Four other Types of Interpersonal Aggression in Ghana: A Cycle of Victimization

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 Ghanaian 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 ($\beta = 0.52$ [0.44, 0.60]) on post-traumatic stress disorder among the victims was mediated by abuse-related shame ($\beta = 0.30$ [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 ($\beta = 0.05$ [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 ($\beta = 0.30$ [0.24, 0.37]) than with depressive symptoms as outcome variable ($\beta = 0.24$ [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. Victimization 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 Victimization 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-UI-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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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.

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