

FEELING VULNERABLE IN HOUSES OF LEARNING

**CASE STUDIES OF STUDENTS EXPERIENCING
SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN EDUCATIONAL
INSTITUTIONS**

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MEHERGARH



AASHA





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PREFACE

AASHA, An Alliance Against Sexual Harassment has been focusing mostly on sexual harassment at work place. It had taken on formal workplace more intensely as the policy and then the legislation was drafted for that particularly. The work with the informal sector continued over the last decade and did culminate into an amendment of the Pakistan Penal Code section 509. There was a strong feeling that AASHA is not directly addressing issues related to sexual harassment of the students. During the course of time we did hear about complaints from them or occasional message saying the teachers need to understand the concept also but one can say that AASHA's target driven course demanded to focus at the work place. Even universities and colleges were addressed more as workplace.

At one point before we proposed the idea of legislation to the government formally, we did make several attempts to reach out to the Education Ministry to let us help them institutionalize the Code of Conduct in all the government educational institutions. For them we revised the document of the Code to include the students and expanded the definition accordingly. However, we were not able to make any major breakthrough on that front.

This was one area we always felt we did not do much and wanted to fill the gap. Fortunately the open mindedness of the Higher Education Commission got them to begin working on a set of guidelines for instituting anti sexual harassment policy for the universities. After the legislation was passed in March 2010 they ensured compliance and are expected to send it out to all the vice chancellors in December 2010. The Education Ministry is also being very cooperative and is willing to facilitate institutionalizing the Code of Conduct in all

government schools and colleges.

We still hear statements of denial as if this issue does not exist in educational institutions. We hear claims of management that their particular institution is too good for this kind of stuff. Some articulate it and some only believe that it cannot happen in their educational institution. We conducted this research with case studies of students experiencing sexual harassment just to give them a reality check.

Sexual harassment is a very common phenomenon and it is happening frequently in many institutions. It is time that we feel pride in providing supportive and effective mechanisms for students to seek, resolve and clean out the environment rather than feeling pride in some fake concept of honour of the institute and refuse to open our eyes. I believe the honourable thing to do is to allow the students, faculty and staff to transform their lives and behaviour to become ethically sound citizens. That is the role of educational institutions.

Dr. Kamran Ahmad
Chairperson, Mehergarh

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INTRODUCTION

Sexual harassment in educational institutions is well established in many countries (McCormack, A. (1985), Till, F. J. (1980), HREOC 2004; Adams, J; Kottke, J; Padgitt, J (1983); Britwum, A (2006)). Some Universities have acknowledged it and have set up policies to deal with it¹; some are still living in denial and refuse to believe that their university could have such a problem. Research shows that even in developed countries the problem has infested the higher education institutions, places that are supposed to teach individuals the highest standards of ethics (Reggs 1993).

A survey conducted by American Association of University Women reported 83% of girls in high schools experience sexual harassment. Another more recent survey from the same organization showed 62% of female college students experiencing sexual harassment.

Years of being unchecked, this crime has infested all segments of our society.

It was in eighties that the world started waking up to this extremely common behaviour and realized the strong oppressive impact it has on women. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in USA published its guidelines to deal with sexual harassment. In 1984 the guidelines expanded to include educational institutions. In 1984 Australia defined sexual harassment under The Sex Discrimination Act. UK also amended its existing law against discrimination to include sexual harassment in 1986. France covered sexual

¹ Most of the Universities have given their policies, complaint procedures or helpful guidance to their students for reporting sexual harassment on website for easy access. some examples:
<http://harass.stanford.edu/>; <http://www.sexualharassment.uiowa.edu/>; <http://www.osaka->

harassment from someone in authority only in article 222-33 of the French Criminal Code.²

After taking up several cases it was in 1986 that the US Supreme Court in a judgment ruled that sexual harassment is a form of intentional sex discrimination and is thus prohibited by Title VII³.

The 1980s saw many of the educational institutions in the developed countries following the guidelines and beginning to develop their own sexual harassment policies.

In 1990s the developing countries began to wake up to this problem and gradually one saw, one after the other, countries either amending their existing laws or making new laws to hold sexual harassing behaviour accountable.

Philippines brought in a new law in 1995 and Japan amended its labour laws to get the definition of sexual harassment included in the same year. The educational institutions in both these countries followed the trend and began weeding out this menace from their universities.

In South Asia, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh amended their existing laws to include sexual harassment as a crime. However in Bangladesh a High court ruled that the Penal Code amendment and the provisions in the Police Act were not enough to protect women from such harassment⁴. It asked the parliament to make a new law, which is awaited. India's high court, in a judgment on 13th August, 1997, called Vishaka guidelines⁵, gave guidelines for all institutions to

² ILO Report (1992) Combatting Sexual Harassment at Work. Presents information on 23 countries about their national legislation, actions taken by their governments and practices of their institutions to counter sexual harassment.

³ Title VII of Civil Rights Act 1964 of USA

⁴ Bangladesh Introduces sexual harassment Ban AFP, 14th May 2009 - the High court ordered a temporary order to ban sexual harassment in Universities and asked the parliament to make a law to address this endemic crime in educational institutions.

⁵ Vishaka vs State of Rajisthan. AIR 1997 SC 3011

adopt an anti sexual harassment policy. Even though a separate law passed for this purpose has still not succeeded, the educational institutions of India initiated the process of having their own anti-sexual harassment policies. In South Asia, Pakistan was the first country to have an independent law passed to curb sexual harassment in 2010. Protection Against harassment of women at workplace Act 2010 requires each institution in the country to have an anti sexual harassment policy called the Code of Conduct, have a three member standing Committee to address grievances of sexual harassment and to display this policy in the organization publicly. It also puts the responsibility of following the policy in letter and spirit on the management of the institutions.

The Higher Education Commission of Pakistan had initiated its process of coming up with its own policy in 2008 which culminated after the passage of the law in December 2010. This policy gives a clear guideline to all the Universities to institute an anti sexual harassment policy. The Federal and Provincial Ministries of Education are in the process to giving instructions of all the government educational institutions, schools and colleges to follow the Code of Conduct. The process of dealing with sexual harassment in the educational institutions has thus begun.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to have a quick sense of the level and kind of harassment that is going on in the educational institutions in Pakistan. Though it is not a study with large scale sample and broad based results about the frequency of sexual harassment, it does provide a good idea of the nature of sexual harassment that is going on in our universities and the level of repression it creates for young women students. Through case studies, it gives glimpses into the lives of these young students who face this problem.

It is hoped that the management, the members of the Inquiry Committees, that will be formed under the Act⁶, and the senior officials in the national machinery of Education will gain insights into the magnitude, systemic deep rootedness and the impact of this behaviour.

Case studies of female students were gathered from ten universities in all the provinces including Federal area. In depth interviews were conducted and details were documented. Only selected case studies are being presented in this booklet.

⁶Protection Against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act 2010

NATURE OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT


Sexual harassment is any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favors or other verbal or written communication or physical conduct of a sexual nature or sexually demeaning attitudes, causing interference with work performance or educational learning, or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment at a work place or an educational institution. This also includes any attempt to punish the complainant for refusal to comply with such a request.

It includes three types of behaviours:

Quid Pro Quo: This comes from the senior people who have control over your conditions of employment or conditions of your being a student. This can include your supervisors who can fire you and influence your job position. Similarly professors, administration staff or managers in an educational institution can influence a junior staff or students in several ways. They can have a student expelled, lower their grades, fail them in a class, stop registration for their examination, change their attendance record or simply bad mouth them.

Creating Hostile environment: Fellow workers, teachers or fellow students can create a hostile environment because of their behaviour described above. This may include use of sexually charged swear words, sexual jokes, ogling, and sexual invitations or touching their own or other student's body parts inappropriately. This kind of behaviour usually does not expel you from the educational institution or get you terminated, but can make life very difficult for you.

Retaliation: When a person does not respond to sexual invitations, retaliation from the perpetrator is very common.



They may threaten, undermine, scold, churn rumours, humiliate or physically abuse the other person. They can also sexually assault them.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

It is interesting to note that when cases of sexual harassment began to appear in courts, and some courts took a strong stance on them, the public began to realize the nature and severity of the cases. Other than research, court cases became an educational tool and brought various aspects to light.

BANGLADESH

In May 2008 four women students of Jahangirnagar University in Bangladesh filed a case within their university against serial sexual harassment by the chairman of the department. After three inquiry committees which consecutively decided against the teacher, the University announced that no charges of sexual harassment could be proved beyond reasonable doubt. During this time the women complainants continued to face threats and further harassment by the perpetrator as well as the system. Those who became the witnesses were expelled from the university. The high court in response to public interest litigation decided against the University and declared their action without legal authority. They asked for a fair inquiry and upon hearing cases from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh stated that corroboration was not always required to prove allegations of sexual harassment. It further clarified that the standard of 'beyond reasonable doubt' could not be applicable in cases of this nature. This decision was applauded by the progressive citizens of Bangladesh⁷.

⁷Report of Women Living Under Muslim Law, 2nd June, 2009. Bangladesh: University Student's victory in Sexual harassment Case.

USA

In USA a student from Spencer School District, Kentucky was subjected to three years of sexual harassment by some other students. She and her mother reported this to the school administration several times. The perpetrators were never reprimanded but were only talked to. Her harassment included, verbal sexual invitations, fondling, assault and threats. Finally her family filed a case with the District court but the court only gave her permission to finish her school at home and did not reprimand the perpetrator. The student and her family filed another case under Title IX against the school. The jury decided in her favour with compensation of US dollars 220,000/-⁸

INDIA

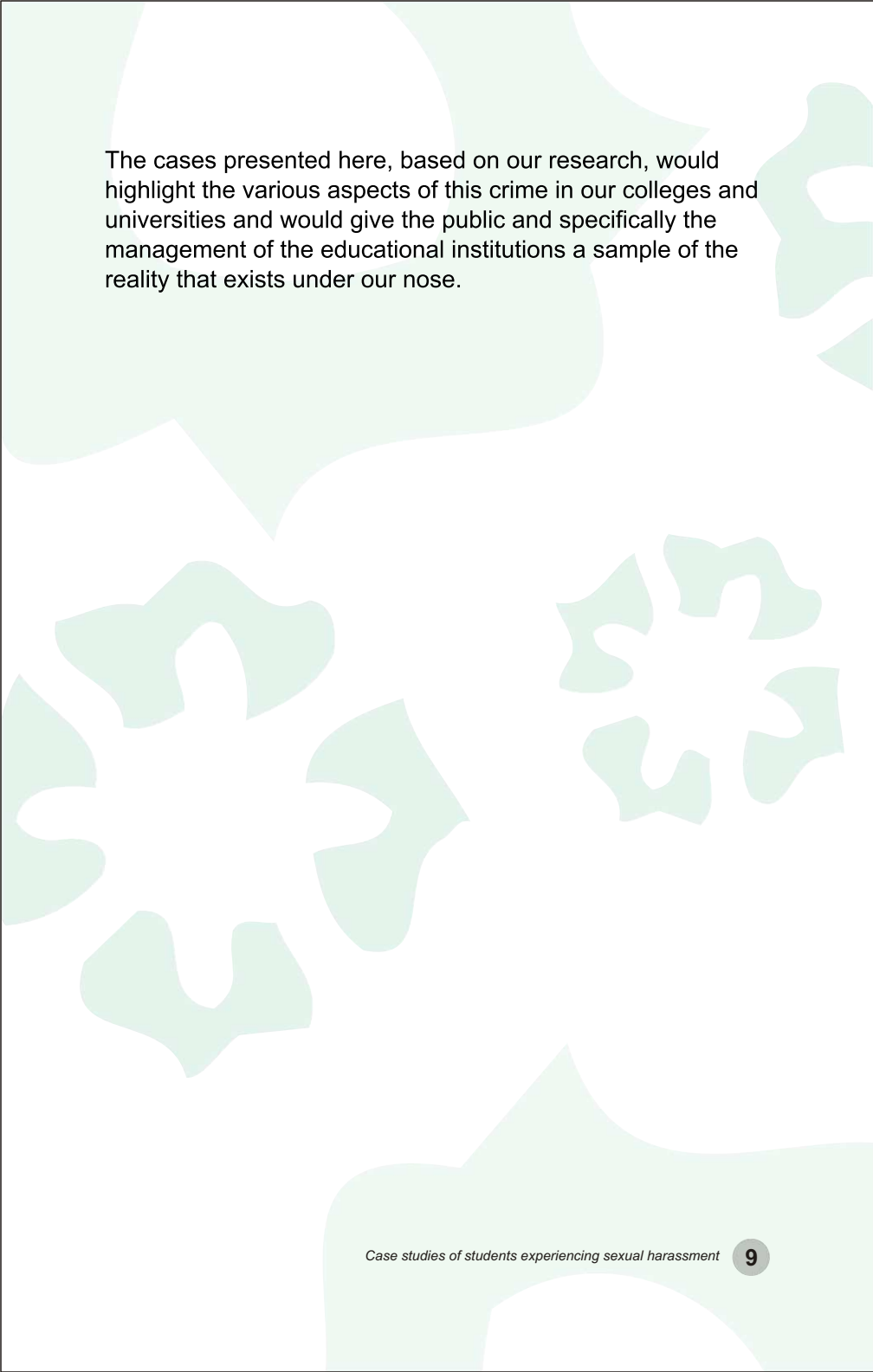
A case of sexual harassment became public when some male students revealed that they have been sexually harassed by a senior male faculty member. The incident happened in October 2007. The case was filed with the College. The College Complaint Committee gave its report confirming the abuse and recommended his termination immediately in April 2008. A series of public protests from the students started in September 2008 after their patience gave up⁹.

PAKISTAN

In Pakistan though the courts have hardly taken up cases of sexual harassment so far, we are still hoping to see some firm and positive judgments to set trends. Meanwhile the mechanism stipulated in the recently passed legislation, Protection Against Harassment of Women at Workplace, Act 2010 is expected to set in the basic mechanism within educational institutions.

⁸ Vance v Spencer county Public School . Case no 99-5095
Judge Keith, United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit, Kentucky, USA

⁹irate students seek teacher's sack for sexual harassment, Thai Indian news. 25 September, 2008



The cases presented here, based on our research, would highlight the various aspects of this crime in our colleges and universities and would give the public and specifically the management of the educational institutions a sample of the reality that exists under our nose.

CASE STUDY 1

ACTING NORMALLY NOT ALLOWED

Sarah, a bright student who traveled a distance to study in a boarding set up in a good university in Kyber Pakhtoon Khwa province, thinks that the two years she spent there were the worst in her life.

Being an extrovert in her personality, Sarah was excited about being in a university, learning new things, having new experiences and meeting new people. She was away from her friends, her family her surroundings only to get a good education and a degree which not only ensures her a job but also makes her more educated.

She happily and decently interacted with young men in her class and the teachers. She was very sure that her behaviour was within the tradition and the limits she knew of her culture. But within the first term she realized that co education actually did not mean in this university that men and women get education together. It meant women stay in their pocket and men stay within their own gender pocket, however, hovering around women.

She noticed that while she did not want to have any relationship with any particular man she started getting a little too much sexual attention. She also started getting invitations from other students for a special friendship. She got a little flustered and a little concerned. She reflected on her own behaviour, but noticed that nothing she was doing was inviting them. She was only talking to them normally in a very decent

manner. Realizing the impact of this normal conversation, she backed off.

She had to politely refuse the influx of sexual invitations and withdraw from the normal interaction. This disappointed her and dampened her high spirits about this university. She got second position in the first term but her spirits and grades declined. She was really shook up with invitations where her fellow students had asked her to go out with them and spend a night together. She never in her wildest dreams thought that in Pakistani culture she could be approached in this manner. She withdrew and stopped talking to the men.

This generated another reaction. These young men almost started playing with her as a pack of wolves play with a wounded deer. They started gossiping about her and a few started bragging that they have had physical relationship with her. This scared her as she was very sure she did not do anything that could have instigated any of this.

Sarah complained to her teachers. She received some advice in terms of how she could change her behaviour. She had already withdrawn totally. She was a little surprised though that all the advice related to how she needed to change herself and no one really talked about giving a written complaint for some action or reprimanded these young men who were violating all ethical and cultural standards.

One of the male teachers approached her and asked her if she was having problems with the male students. She admitted and told him how she felt vulnerable. He was very sympathetic and tried to help her out. In this process he almost found an excuse to engage with her and then revealed that he had fallen in love with her and wanted to marry her. Sarah had only come to the university to get an education and was not interested in any proposals. She found it very offensive and felt even more vulnerable. She politely

refused and immediately stopped any contact with that teacher.

Now she was even afraid to discuss her problem with anyone. She thought that other students or teachers might say why she is the only one having such problems. She also was afraid that the sympathizer may cause further problems. The teacher did not take 'no' very well. He started building pressure on Sarah, which scared her a lot. She was taking two of his classes in that term. He started rejecting her assignments without any reason. He suddenly lowered her grades. Sarah could not confront him, at the same time could not accept his offer. It was very difficult for her to focus on the studies but she tried her best as she didn't want him to fail her.

The teacher gave her very low grades and humiliated her in class finding one excuse after another. In the last term when she was not taking any of his courses, he did not have a direct way of getting back at Sarah. He got together with the male students of her class who had been teasing and harassing her earlier and jointly waged a campaign of rumours against her. He wanted to teach her a lesson or was trying to avenge his 'honour', Sarah was not sure.

It was as if he had given a free hand to the students to go after her. They were very clear that they had the backing of that teacher and no one could touch them. They went out of their way to openly making vulgar comments. Sarah kept her senses and made a lot of noise to attract other students' attention to avoid an attempted assault one day. This really shook her up and she prayed for the time in the university to be over. She thought of going back home many times, but just could not return without a degree. She thought of all the claims she had made to get her parents permission to allow

her in a boarding set up and a co-education university. She could not go back without finishing her degree.

They continued torturing her by sending vulgar messages by phone. She kept changing her cell number, but every time they would find the new number. She complained many times, but there was no response. No one noticed that an A grade student who got the second position in the first term fell to the lowest rung and had gone completely silent.

Sarah did not fail. She passed and finished her degree, but had very low scores. She gave a sigh of relief when she got out of that university; years that she looks back at as going through hell.

CASE STUDY 2

NO ACCOUNTABILITY FOR HOUND DOGS

Tammy was a friendly and fun loving young woman. Her parents, who were from the upper middle class in northern Punjab, had brought her up well and were proud of her. She also looked at the bright side of things and was genuinely interested in her studies. She was in the masters program with a few women and many young men in her class.

In one of her classes, the teacher divided the students into small groups to work on a term paper. He picked names according to the roll numbers so she ended up working in a mixed group of women and men for some time. Once the project was done and the class finished she never really remained in contact with them. One of them approached her later and casually talked to her about his networking on the internet. He invited her to connect with him on the internet, which she did. They had some chats but the conversations were not that interesting to hold her interest. Besides he asked her to be a “good friend” of his and not exactly knowing what that meant she told him that she was not interested. From that point onwards she withdrew and did not maintain any contact with him.

After some time she heard that there was a phone text message going around that she had approached this young man for a special friendship and he had said yes. The language used was very vulgar. She was shocked and upset about this message. She ignored it as she didn't want this to become a scandal, but she was very angry thinking, 'a few days of hello hi turns into such scandalous message'.

Some of her friends found out that a few young men got together in one of the hostel rooms and made such vulgar messages about girls. Tammy was disgusted to find this out. She didn't know exactly who did that. She found out that her class mates were gossiping and enjoying that message but would not say anything in front of her. This really made her angry. She thought that the bad guys were playing the game but all the other students, with whom she thought she had a good, decent relationship, were quiet about it. No one was saying anything or objecting to such a vulgar act. That hurt Tammy immensely and her social interaction reduced.

This series of events had shaken up Tammy because she was not interested in having affairs with any of the young men. She was much more concerned about her parents' trust in her and only maintained a friendly platonic interaction with her class mates.

The person who was implied with Tammy in the message came to her when she was sitting with her friends and apologized. He said that this would not happen again.

After a few days there was another message that this man had sent a proposal to Tammy's family for her marriage and they accepted it. Tammy was furious and was totally at a loss of ideas to counter it. This message went to every class fellow of her, men and women both. Even at her openly countering the information everyone enjoyed and said that there must be something behind it.

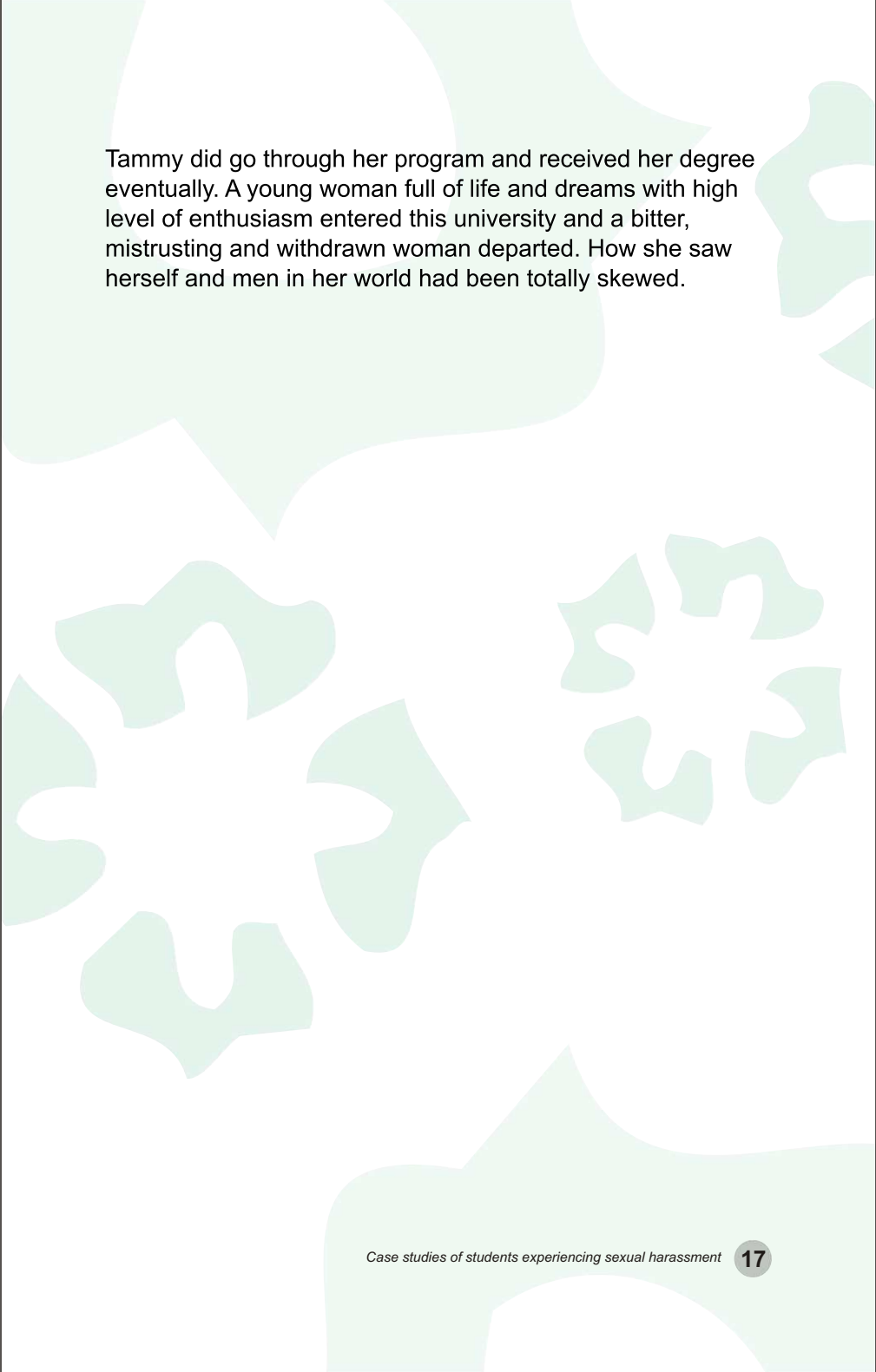
Some friends tried to help. One said that she would talk to the course coordinator. One said he would take it to a teacher. The matter was discussed in a staff meeting but Tammy was not sure what they came up with. She did not trust anyone, not her class fellows, not her friends, not the staff. She felt that people were having their kicks at her expense. She was

very hurt that the majority of students did not condemn such a low level attempt of disrespecting her. No one said anything to stop it or condemn it publicly.

The young man who was implied to be marrying her in the message this time was seen acting very cool. He was not worried to make any attempt to straighten out this mess. With that attitude Tammy found out that the apology last time was a fake. That made her mistrusting of anyone who came up to say it was a distasteful joke. She thought they must be laughing and enjoying it behind her back.

As if this was not enough, this man and his friend made up a case which implicated one of Tammy's friends as the message creator. When one of the teachers talked about this issue they put the blame on him and the teacher believed it. The way they did it was very clever and when the teacher believed it, Tammy did too. She immediately stopped talking to him. It was not until two months later she found out that it was a lie and her friend was innocent. It made her very unsure about who to believe and who not to believe. Everyone around her was lying and deceiving her.

Her trust on friendships shattered. The fact that most of the people from her class never really took a stand and questioned this vulgarity really left her bruised and mistrusting. She withdrew and gradually almost lost all her friends. She started being rude to people because she thought they were all the same, not worthy of trusting and hypocrites. She thought they were less interested in learning and more interested in scandals. She also thought that being in a co education was a big challenge. She lost respect of people in general in her university and focused more on how she could go through her program by minimum contact and interaction with teachers and students.



Tammy did go through her program and received her degree eventually. A young woman full of life and dreams with high level of enthusiasm entered this university and a bitter, mistrusting and withdrawn woman departed. How she saw herself and men in her world had been totally skewed.

CASE STUDY 3

A HELPFUL HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

Najma was a young woman full of life and totally in love with literature. Although on her own she had read quite a few good works of literature and probably was into this field more than some of the teachers at the university, she wanted to get her masters degree in literature. She got admission and was anxious to pursue her studies and her passion through the courses.

Unfortunately she faced some difficult circumstances at home that directly affected her studies. Najma had lost her mother a while ago and was playing a motherly role at home, taking care of her father and her siblings. Her father suddenly was diagnosed with a terminal illness. This left Najma to be the primary care taker. She was determined to take on the additional responsibility, but was committed not to give up on her studies. She wanted to be well prepared with her Masters degree to make a living one day and fulfill the responsibilities of an eldest child. She did not want her father to think that he was not able to take care of the family financially.

Najma made arrangements at her university in a way that she could come to her classes only for two days and would take notes from her fellow students for the others to make up for the studies. Everyone in her class and her department knew of her unfortunate family circumstances and they all cooperated.

With such domestic tensions and a limited opportunity to attend classes she surprised everyone by taking the first

position in her exams. She indeed was very bright and was committed to her studies. This earned her praise and respect from her fellow students and the teachers.

As the circumstances at home did not change much she continued with her arrangement and depended on her friends for class notes and studied on her own.

In her third semester her head of department visited her home to check on her father. This gesture was seen as a very respectful attempt to share their problems and show concern. Najma's friends also appreciated this gesture. During this visit the professor told Najma and her father that he would try and help Najma with her attendance in the examination form and would offer make up classes so that she would not have any problems in her senior year. He also offered to give her the notes for his class so that she didn't have to ask other students. This made Najma very happy and she respected the head of her department even more from that day. She told her father to pray for him as he was helping them in their time of need. Najma was anxious to finish her degree to then look for a job.

The first two lectures that he did for her as make up sessions in his office Najma felt a little odd that he would divert from the topic and talk about his own marital problems. She did not see herself as a friend of his to console him but thought that because he knew of her domestic problems perhaps he thought it was okay to talk about his. She also thought that perhaps he is so upset with his family life that he was not thinking straight and was a little scattered in his thinking.

He told her that he was very unhappy with his wife. She was neither caring nor did she understand him. He painted himself as a victim who was living with a woman who actually did not deserve him. These conversations started taking up more time in the make up sessions and Najma did not take too long

to figure out that there was something wrong with the situation. It made her very uncomfortable and she tried to change the topic back to her studies. After a few sessions she had figured out that this favour of his was not going to work for her. He visited her father once more and Najma remained serious. She was afraid that their politeness was giving him an impression of welcoming his initiative. There were some more sessions where he extended them and explicitly told her his dissatisfaction with his wife.

She was quite upset about it as she didn't know how to talk to him or tell him that she didn't need those sessions. She could do fine without them. She stopped going to those sessions and started avoiding him. This in her mind was the best way to tell him indirectly that she was not interested in him. He crossed her path a few times and she tried not to make eye contact.

One day Najma was in the library, going over some books when the head of department walked in and stood by her. She got up from her chair in nervousness. There was no one around. He held her from her waist and kissed her on her lips. Najma went into a shock. She was humiliated and pulled herself back with a very angry and fearful expression. Seeing her not reciprocating his affections he got very offended and left the library.

Najma became so afraid that she hardly went to the university for a few weeks. Once when she was at the university he passed by her and in a threatening tone said that if she had refused him he would see to it that she never received her degree.

Najma mustered the courage to talk to some of her teachers. They were very disappointed, but told her that there was no way anyone would take any action against the head of department. They told her that he even had the registration of

her final examination in his hand and therefore she could not afford to report him. Her university had no proper mechanism for reporting such incidents. She thought of going to some senior officer in the university but came to the same conclusion that her women teachers gave her. He could have made her life hell. Her marks in the examination of his course were in his hand, and every step towards graduation was dependent on him.

She could not face him at all and could not think of going to his class even once. Her visits to university became fewer and fewer. Her fear of him and his threats resulted in her dropping out of her studies. The high scores in her exams, her first position in her class and her passion for literature and her dreams of getting a job soon after her graduation, all withered away. The university, the place for learning, lost a bright student in her final semester when she failed to complete her degree.

CASE STUDY 4

BEING INVISIBLE DOESN'T HELP EITHER

Fauzia came from a struggling middle class family in Sindh. Her father worked in the administration side of a university. It was decided for her that she would go to the same university as it would be easier for her to travel with her father and safer as he would be there for her. With her ordinary looks, polite and introvert mannerism and subdued clothing, she had acquired a skill to disappear in crowds of students. She had always had low confidence level and hardly took initiatives. Her father's encouragement at times did not work as she was more influenced by the way he had brought her up at home. Daughters could not say too much and were obligated to obey their parents' authority.

The father had picked science for her and she had gradually acquired interest in it. She had done well in her studies at her university and felt one of the fortunate ones to get a job at her own university. After her graduation she was appointed as a research assistant in a big research project that her university was undertaking. Because of the nature of the research she had to work long hours at the lab. Most of the time the lab was crowded so she had to stay late to finish up her work. She had a small table with access to a computer. She was happy working hard and thankful to her university for this job.

One day when she was alone in the lab and was searching hard for some information online, a professor of the same department came to her and casually offered help in what she was doing. Fauzia smiling sheepishly told him that she was looking for certain information. It was as if she didn't even

allow her mind to make a decision whether she wanted the help or not yet, the professor came close to her and asked her to give him the seat in front of the computer. She stood by him and suddenly felt that there was something wrong. It was the tone of voice of this professor and the expression on his face that turned on some internal alarms in Fauzia. She was unsure where that intuitive warning was coming from. Before she knew it the Professor opened a website and flashed pornographic material in front of her.

Fauzia totally went into a shock. She felt as if she would faint. She quickly got a hold of herself and turned her face the other way. The professor got amused at her gesture, got up from the seat and said that it was quite common to get such websites when looking for other material. He told her not to be afraid it was alright. It was clear to her that he had no intention to help her look for the material in any case.

Fauzia was too shocked after this incident. It was as if her safe heaven was totally violated. The university that she thought of like her home, suddenly was a place she felt very unsafe in. The seniors that she always thought of similar to her father were suddenly very scary to her. She lost whatever confidence she had started to gain with her new job. She could not think of telling anyone about it. Not even her father. She knew that her father would make her resign and probably would never let her work again. The only thing she could think of was totally avoiding that professor. She would not even look at him when he passed by. She prayed that by ignoring it would just go away. She did become very apprehensive of anyone using the computer in front of her. She would quickly move away to the other side of the lab.

After a few weeks the professor came back to her at a time when she was alone in the lab. He told her that he wanted her to work with him in his project. Though Fauzia was not

confident to engage with him in any conversation she quickly said to him that she could not because she already is very busy with her work. The professor looked at her and used an authoritative voice. He said that he insisted on this move because the project would be a good learning experience for her. With fear her legs were shaking but she said no again, not quite looking at him.

He picked up her USB flash drive lying next to the computer and said that she actually had no choice in the matter. He said he would save important files in this USB about the project, which she should look at when she is at home, and the next day she should report to him in his office and that is when he would discuss them with her. He dropped the USB flash drive after a while with her. Fauzia didn't say a word to him and tried to wrap up her work as soon as she could.

That night it was very hard for her to open the USB. She knew there would be some notorious stuff on it, but then she was not sure if he could have the courage to put something in her USB just like that. When she opened her drive she was shocked to find out that he had put in hundreds of porn images and video clips in there. With trembling hands she immediately started deleting that stuff from her drive. She was so afraid for any one to find out about it. She didn't want her parents or anyone to find out about such an embarrassing happening.

She was very confused and had no idea how to resolve this matter. It was not just dealing with her feeling of humiliation but actually she had started facing regular teasing gestures from that man. He was now pursuing her for more. One day when she felt she could not take it any more she talked to a female teacher. That teacher got some other women teachers involved and together they talked to Fauzia. They all were of the opinion that she should report him to the senior

management.

The anti-sexual harassment legislation had just been passed and the teachers told her about it. They told her that it was all over television and that women should report these matters. They themselves were however concerned that their university had not appointed a committee or set up a mechanism for complaints.

Fauzia had not had the courage to tell her father. She wanted to hang on to this job very much. When the teachers could not suggest any other solution she decided to stay on and wait for her university to set up a mechanism. The hope that one day her University would announce that this kind of harassment is not acceptable and women can come up and complain is what keeps her going for now.

She continues to face her circumstances. The professor has not given up and has started to show his strength to her once in a while by talking bad about her. Fauzia lives like a scared young woman, afraid when she will face him again. She is even afraid of her own shadow. She has hope though and claims that when her university forms a committee to check sexual harassment, she will be the first one to go and report him.

CASE STUDY 5

WEIGHING THE CONSEQUENCES

Gulrukh was a student in the Psychology Department. She was in the final year of her Master's program. Her village was only a little outside the city, but she still felt fortunate that her parents had allowed her to complete a Master's degree. She knew that many of her friends had not even been allowed to go beyond high school, which was located in their village. Sending a daughter to the city on local transport was a very brave step for her whole family. Gulrukh knew the sensitivities and was sure that she would never give them any reason to regret. In fact, she felt she would make them very proud of her.

Her parents were not rich but, from her first year in collage, Gulrukh received merit scholarships and continued her studies with that support. The scholarships, once awarded, did require some follow up in the administration office of the university but she knew a person there who was also from her village. He was always helpful in getting the paperwork moved and Gulrukh never had to become a burden on her parents.

She was very careful in terms of interaction with her class fellows and her teachers. She tried her best to somehow engage enough, yet not go overboard for any concerns to be raised.

As Gulrukh's village was outside the city, she had to face various hardships when she used public buses to mute back and forth to her university. The section for women was small

and getting to the bus in the crowds mostly of men was always a challenge. She was used to dealing with all these challenges, but one day she faced yet another challenge that left her confused. The conductor one day told her that her ticket was paid for. She was surprised and asked him who paid it. He would not tell who, but did not take payment from her. This confused Gulrukh and worried her as well

This happened a few more times and it made Gulrukh extremely embarrassed. She first scolded the conductor for accepting money from another person for her. She also told him to point out the person who paid for her, so that she could tell him off also. This time the conductor pointed out a man who Gulrukh knew well. This was the clerk at the university administration office who was from her village. She felt it would be improper to argue with him on the crowded bus, but the next day she went to his office to resolve the issue.

Within the realm of politeness, she told him that he should never pay for her ticket again as that was not acceptable to her. She told him that it was not seen as a nice gesture by her, but has offended her. She also told him not to keep a tab on when she returns home and on which bus.

Being from a Pukhtun family, this episode had made her very concerned. She had three brothers who already were leery of her taking a bus every day. She did not want them to have an excuse to make her leave the university. After talking to this clerk and forbidding him to repeat that mistake she thought she had taken care of the issue.

About one month later, she had to file for the next installment of her scholarship. As usual, she took the file to the clerk from her village, but this time, instead of helping, he returned the file with a nasty letter placed inside it. Not only did he refuse to help, which was actually his job, but he had used very abusive language to tell her off. This upset Gulrukh. She

thought that he should have been embarrassed at what he did, instead he was acting as if she had done something wrong by telling him to stop. From then on, he took every opportunity to intimidate her into starting a relationship with him.

Gulrukh on one hand was very surprised at this behavior since the man was married and had two children, but she also became afraid of him. She tried her best to handle the situation, but the man started getting braver, openly expressing his desire for her to be 'friendly' with him. She took a month off from college and tried to cool off the situation, but when she returned the man started following her again.

Gulrukh's mind forgot about studies and she would constantly think about what would happen if he made a single remark about her in the village. She sometimes wondered what the reaction of her brothers would be if they found out that he had paid the fare for their sister or was friendly with her beyond his professional duties. She was sure her brothers would never let her step out of the house ever again. Actually her heart knew that they would find it so dishonorable that they would kill her.

Analyzing the risks that were so high and fearing that any scandal might block the path of any other women from her village to get permission for university, she decided to take care of the problem herself. She quit the university in her final year, deciding to eliminate the problem...and any possibility of a professional career.

CASE STUDY 6

TRYING A SOLUTION

Amna was a young woman who had been recently divorced. She did not want to be a burden on her parents who already were not economically strong so she had decided to live by herself and support herself. This was a daring decision in a society which has a hard time accepting women living by themselves. Amna's life had given her such bitter taste that she just did not want to deal with or trust men again in her life.

With only two years of college education she had to struggle to find a job. Finally she found a job in a library of the university. She was concerned about learning her work quickly but soon became more concerned with the routine of her colleagues' sexually charged behaviour. They frequently made overt passes at women, offers to have physical relationships with them and intimidating behaviour, which shocked her. Being among very few women in this area she could not believe the high frequency of such behaviour she had to face.

As she needed the job badly and she was not a permanent employee, she decided to ignore them. In other words she decided to put up with them. Coming out of a divorce she felt as if she was surrounded by hounds. She felt disgusted at how they used her vulnerability.

When she could not tolerate this any more she complained to a senior woman teacher at the university, who was very sympathetic and helped her get transferred to another department. There was no reprimand of her male colleagues.

At the new place she was working under a senior professor.

She felt that she was thrown out of the frying pan into the fire. The situation was worse. After the information about her background reached him, he overtly started making offers of a sexual relationship with her. She politely refused so he started threatening her. She tried her best to stick to the low level chores she was assigned, but there was no escaping this man. He used his full authority to harass her. He clearly told her that he would make sure that she was out of the university if she continued to refuse him. Amna felt very helpless but also tired of being hunted like a deer again and again.

She didn't want to complain again. Thinking about her future she thought she only had two options; one was to slap the guy across his face and resign and the second was to accept his offer and give into the situation. She did not want to do both.

After thinking a lot and hearing something about sexual harassment at work on television she gathered her courage and went to the police station. She thought if she had to leave the job at least she should try to get someone to reprimand him for what he did to her. The police were surprised at this complaint. Though they did not do much and left him alone after a friendly inquiry the word got around. Socially the professor felt embarrassed.

With all this Amna approached the seniors once again and asked to transfer her. The university management hesitated to terminate her after her action of reporting the professor. They thought that it would clearly look as if they had done it only because she reported a professor. Thus they gave her another chance and transferred her to the university canteen.

The news of her reporting the professor spread like fire. In her new post she is much more exposed to men of all ages but now no one dares to make any sexual comment around her. They are very weary of her and are almost afraid of her.

CASE STUDY 7

IMPACT OF PORNOGRAPHY

Saiqa was a young girl full of dreams. She wanted to get good education and was determined that her small Punjabi town, living with her parents and conservative environment that discouraged women in every way was not going to come in her way. She had heard enough television discussions on how women need to take decisions and move ahead in their future. It is women who have to assert and be brave if they want to move forward in life. Her dream was to go to the neighbouring big city, the heart of her province and attend a good college.

She had little experience of moving around alone and was a little protected among her family and relatives, but she did manage to convince her parents to send her to a university with hostel facilities. She got the admission and the family did become supportive. After all she was the only daughter and education was a highly desired value. She was surprised at her father coming over to see her more frequently than she thought, with boxes of home cooked food that her mother would send for her.

Saiqa bloomed in the university environment. The learning opportunity totally engulfed her and she thoroughly enjoyed her classes which were in the evening. Though still a little hesitant to venture out she limited her movement to her classes and hostel with occasional visits to the market with other class fellows. She was still shy but was gaining some confidence.

One evening when she was returning to the hostel after her class she was startled by a male student. He stopped her and pulled her to one side. She was totally shocked and could not

make any noise. This student was watching a pornographic film on his lap top. Saiqa, already in a shock, saw the film and was very afraid. She tried to scream but this student put his big hand on her mouth and pulled her further into a cover. He put the laptop aside and tried to rape her. Saiqa prayed to God to get her out of this situation and struggled hard. Finally she hit him hard and bit his hand to loosen his hold and ran as fast as she could to her hostel.

Saiqa remained in shock. Her body felt violated and her mind could not think of anything but to run back to her home. She did not have the courage to tell any teacher. She was only able to share it with some of her room mates.

The next day she packed up her bag and left the university. She never went to any other university, or that thriving city that she loved so much. Her dreams were shattered totally and she could not even think about how to cope with her mental state. She told her parents that she did not want to continue studies. The parents thinking that it was too hard on her to live on her own accepted her decision and got her married. Saiqa lives with her husband with her in-laws and never thinks about studying or working again.

CASE STUDY 8

POLITICS, ROMANCE OR STUDIES

Saima Lashari was a naive student at a university in Balochistan. She was one of the first in her close family to be allowed to venture out to study at a university, although some of her female cousins had been well educated. She was very interested in social sciences and wanted to do something good for humanity. She had a general idea of this good, but did not have any clarity on what exactly she could do to contribute. Students like Saima were perfect subjects for a professor who was known for his political convictions. He taught two classes to Saima's group and used to motivate them to participate in political activities.

Saima learned to understand his world view, but did not fully agree with his proposed methods to achieving the objectives. She always felt that he was talking very negatively about things and was bitter in his description of his people. However, Saima felt pressured to go with the group and agree with everyone when they said he was a great thinker.

Over time, the professor started paying more attention to Saima. He saw a potential disciple in that naive girl who he could involve in his political activity. Saima was not comfortable with such attention from a male. At first she tried to avoid him, but due to his senior status and a reputation among students of being sort of a hero she could not refuse this attention.

Gradually, she felt that his attention started looking more like the start of a romantic involvement. She had a hard time

avoiding him and stopping him from reciting romantic poems in her presence. She felt that if he was a stranger she could have sworn at him, cursed him or even hit him, but knowing a person and that too with such credentials made it very difficult for her to react to comments she did not like. The professor praised her and kept making excuses to see her. He used the context of political activity inside and outside the campus where he pushed her to help him out in writing pamphlets and letters. This was his context for developing this one sided relationship.

Saima started missing classes more frequently and would stay back home making excuses that she was sick. She could not figure out how she could resolve this problem. The more this professor pushed himself on her, the more she resented him. Assigning her tasks in calling other women for a protest, holding group meetings with other women to mobilize them and drafting flyers and press statements on his dictation were the most common tasks given to her. These had nothing to do with her courses, but she could not say no.

Soon enough, the professor made his move from reading romantic poetry to physical encounters. This devastated Saima and she became intimidated. She did not know about sexual harassment, so did not see or understand what was happening to her in that context. She only looked at it as if it was her ill fate that got her into this trouble. Everyone admired him so she could not even talk to her close friend. She strongly felt that no one would believe her and she would be persecuted as a liar.

One day, when she was sitting in his office writing a note under his dictation, he physically grabbed her. A male student walked in and the situation became embarrassing. Saima immediately left the room and the professor made a joke to normalize the situation.

This news travelled to Saima's home very quickly because the student was from her tribe. The reaction it incited in her home from her father and brother was beyond Saima's imagination. She was immediately removed from the university and her tribal elders angrily contacted the elders of the professor's tribe.

The professor immediately admitted to his elders that he was at fault and would accept their daughter in marriage to save her from any damage of repute. The elders from both sides resolved the situation and Saima's family, where some men wanted to kill her for bringing a bad name to her tribe, felt that this would be the best solution. They somehow managed to keep the issue within the tribal circles and it did not become a scandal in the university. It could be that the professor had such popularity that people didn't want to say anything bad about him.

Elders in Saima's family were satisfied with the decision. Those at the university who found out about this case said it was honourable of this professor to offer the option of marriage. However, Saima wailed at the thought of being forced so close to him for the rest of her life, as a junior wife with his five grown up children.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of illustrating these cases is neither to make young women scared of going to colleges and universities, nor it is for the parents to be afraid of sending their daughters for higher education. It is for the management to understand the level and dynamics of sexual harassment common in educational institutions and for students to be more prepared to counter it with confidence.

During the research the following forms of harassment were found to be most common, directed towards the women in educational institutions:

- Staring, touching, standing too close
- Sexual and vulgar jokes in the presence of women
- Sexual invitations by teachers, staff and students

Retaliation

One of the key patterns of retaliation emerged from the case studies and discussions with students was the use of a rumour campaign. The common scenario is that a man, either a student or a teacher approaches a woman, for a sexual friendship or marriage. The girl refuses, he doesn't show any reaction at the time, but soon after, a rumour campaign starts against the character of the young woman. This rumour campaign can take many forms: Anonymous sms campaign, the man telling his friends that the girl has several boy friends, mobilizing friends to spread the rumour that the woman had an affair or is of loose character.

Another common pattern which is not reflected in the case studies presented here was that a male teacher or a student forces a female student into a sexual link. This mostly was coercion but could at times be with consent. It is when the woman either doesn't see the relationship going towards a

marriage or is just tired and does not want to put up with that abuse any more and wants to withdraw, the retaliation begins. This is very common where a teacher or a student can blackmail or threaten her and push her into continuing the relationship. Their confidence comes from the idea that she, because of her reputation, is on a weaker footing. It is very difficult for the woman to get out of this situation. It is important for the Committee Members to understand that even if it was a consensual link the case cannot be seen as a weak case because the retaliation is real and no person can manipulate and blackmail another only because she gave into the pressure once.

Reasons why women do not report:

Among the most common reasons found for women to put up with sexual harassment or not report it were:

- Scared of losing their reputation
- Fear that people would blame them for it
- Their parents would stop their education
- The perpetrator, if in authority, would retaliate and make their life hell
- They would not be believed
- They do not know how to report

WAY FORWARD

The Government has declared sexual harassment a crime¹⁰ and has made it necessary for all the educational departments to:

- a) have an anti sexual harassment policy
- b) appoint a three member Committee to deal with the complaints
- c) display the policy in a common area where faculty staff and students have access to it.
- d) take charge of implementing the policy in letter and spirit

The Prime Minister has sent out a special directive to instruct all government Educational Departments to ensure compliance with this law. The Ministries of Education have instructed all the Government schools and colleges to comply.

The Higher Education Commission has given the matter serious attention and developed a comprehensive policy to deal with this issue. All the universities under the Commission are bound to comply.

The efforts given above are a major turning point to change the environment for our educational institutions. These are places of learning where we educate our future leaders. The managements need to come out of their denial and implement these efforts with full commitment to make these institutions respectable, safe and open for learning. The students also need to cooperate, both in terms of reporting the incidents, not being a party to the Common patterns of retaliation and changing their behavior into more dignified and respectful for both genders.

When dealing with sexual harassment, in the beginning we might focus on dealing with incidents, but eventually we need to focus on the general environment that needs to become more dignified and open for learning.

¹⁰ Protection Against harassment of Women at Workplace Act 2010