

# Sexual harassment among female students in Damanhour University

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**Abstract:** Sexual harassment phenomena are worldwide transcending among all various levels of socioeconomic status and academic level. It is a dangerous moral and social problem that pervades the lives of women and girls and is deeply inherent in our culture. Aim of study is to assess sexual harassment among female students in Damanhour University. A cross sectional descriptive design was used. The study was conducted on 6 out of 10 faculties of Damanhour University; convenient sample of 2102 female students were reached. Data was collected through sexual harassment self-administered structured questionnaire for female students. Results: more than three quarters of studied female students exposed to harassment. The verbal harassment was more prevalent among female students than physical harassment. The main predisposing factors or causes for sexual harassment from female students' point of view was easy accessibility to pornography as reported by the majority of them (94.4%) and more than half of them (54.4%) mentioned poverty. Runaway, ignorance, fear were the main students' responses towered sexual harassment. Being careful in relationships, decrease confidence in others and sleep disturbance were major effects of harassment on lifetime of harassed students. Conclusion: The sexual harassment was prevalent among studied female students; there are many factors that affect this phenomenon. Recommendation: health education program and workshops for youth should be executed to increase students' awareness and eliminate sexual harassment.

**Keywords:** Violence, Sexual Harassment, Verbal Harassment.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Violence against female is a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination against female and all acts of gender-based violence leading to or causing physical, sexual, psychological and economic harm or distress to female. This involves threats that include acts of coercion or arbitrary deprivation of freedom, whether in public or in private life. <sup>(1)</sup>

Sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination and violation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and 1991. <sup>(2)</sup> It is any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favor, verbal or physical conduct or gesture of a sexual nature, or any other behavior of a sexual nature that might reasonably be anticipated or be perceived to cause misdemeanor or disgrace to a different person. <sup>(3)</sup>

The phenomenon of sexual harassment has become a main concern of the entire world. In a report by the US National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine survey of academic environments 20–50% of female students notified sexual harassment experiences in 2018. <sup>(2)</sup> Additionally, 81% of females reported sexual harassment experiences within their lifetime in a national study on sexual harassment and assault in the United States in 2019. <sup>(4)</sup>

In Mideast societies, the sexual harassment phenomena have recently increased rapidly; particularly, Egyptian society. <sup>(5)</sup> It has become a highly controversial issue whereas the majority (90.5 %) of female students at Mansoura University reported that they were subjected to harassment in 2017. <sup>(6)</sup> Also, 65.3% of female students at Menoufia University stated that they were subjected to sexual harassment in 2018. <sup>(7)</sup>

There are many forms of sexual harassment, namely: verbal, non-verbal and physical. Firstly, verbal forms like sexual insinuations and jokes. Secondly, non-verbal forms as sexual suggestive photographs or following person. Finally, physical forms like unwelcome physical contact, including touching the body or kissing. <sup>(8)</sup>

There are multidimensional factors that lead to sexual harassment, which can be individual, family, community and societal factors. Regarding individual factors as general hostility and hyper-masculinity. While family factors as history of exposure to physical, sexual, abuse and poor parent-child relationships. Additionally, community factors as public acceptance of sexual violence within the community and unemployment. Finally, societal factors for example, societal norms that support sexual violence and sexual privilege. <sup>(6)</sup>

The dynamics of sexual harassment often involve an aggressor who holds a position of power over the victim, which include men against women, senior students against junior students and in a teacher-student relationship. <sup>(9)</sup>

The perpetrator for sexual harassment may be a friend, relative, student, staff of university, neighbor, or family member. <sup>(10)</sup> Sexual harassment has become an enormous and authentic problem that all females in Egyptian society faces, often on everyday basis, in public places like markets, public transport, parks, coffee shops and highways, and in private places like educational institutions, workplace, clubs, over the telephone and via email. <sup>(11,12)</sup>

The response of the victim differs from one to another include moving away from the perpetrator, trying to confront the perpetrator and seeking social support. <sup>(10)</sup> Sexual harassment can have several consequences as depression, anxiety, embarrassment, panic attacks, trouble sleeping, difficulty concentrating, eating disorders, loss of self-esteem and confidence. <sup>(13)</sup> Additionally, withdrawal, declines in educational performance and dropping out of college can be the outcomes of SH. <sup>(14)</sup>

Community health nurse has a pivotal role in prevention of harassment and has the skills to be a very important part of the community's comprehensive violence prevention efforts. <sup>(15, 16)</sup> They offer empathetic and supportive care to those who may suffer from violence and caring for those who experience abuse and those who perpetrate abuse of others. <sup>(17)</sup>

### **Significance of the study:**

The problem of sexual harassment constitutes more health hazards to both victims and the entire community. Nowadays, it becomes more obvious problem and social threat where most universities do not have a policy to combat it. Egypt ranks first in sexual harassment within the Arab World, as the Arab Barometer's fifth wave in 2020 <sup>(5)</sup> found that nearly all younger females reporting some form of harassment (90 % of females aged 18-29). Sexual harassment is never acceptable; women and girls should not be anticipated to tolerate it. <sup>(18)</sup> Therefore, this study highlights sexual harassment prevalence, the important reasons that led to the aggravation among Damanshour university female students. Additionally, identify the coping strategies adopted and suggested solutions to this phenomenon the studied female students.

### **Aim of the Study:**

The present study aimed to assess sexual harassment among female students in Damanshour University.

### **Research questions:**

1. What is the prevalence of sexual harassment among studied female students in Damanshour University?
2. What are the causes, types, effect and response of sexual harassment among female students in Damanshour University?

## **2. MATERIALS AND METHODS**

### **Research design:**

A cross sectional descriptive research design was used.

### **Setting:**

- The main setting of study was Damanshour University.
- The study was conducted on 6 out of 10 faculties of Damanshour University namely (Veterinary Medicine, Nursing, Agriculture, Early childhood education, Commerce, Art).

**Subjects:**

The target population of this study was female students enrolled in faculties of Damanhour University who met the following eligibility criteria:

- 1- Aged 18-25 years
- 2- Willing to participate in the study.

**Sampling:**

By using stratified sampling technique, the following steps was carried out to select the study sample: -

- Damanhour University which composed of 10 faculties; 5 Scientific (Science, Pharmacy, Nursing, Veterinary Medicine, Agriculture) and 5 theoretical (Early childhood education, Education, Art, Commerce, Specific education)
- Six faculties out of the total faculties' numbers (10 faculties) were randomly selected, namely (Veterinary Medicine, Nursing, Agriculture, Early childhood education, Commerce, Art)
- By using proportion allocation method 15% of total female students from each previously chosen faculty was selected and representing each academic year.
- The total female students' number who selected from each faculty were represented at (table 1)
- Female students enrolled into the study were conveniently selected from each academic year. The estimated sample size was made at assumption of 95% confidence level and 80% power of study.
- The total sample size was 2102 female students.

**Table (1): Distribution of female students affiliated to each faculty in Damanhour University at the academic year 2018-2019.**

Faculty	Population	Sample
Veterinary Medicine	924	139
Nursing	919	138
Agriculture	1189	179
Early childhood education	1152	173
Art	7307	1097
Commerce	2506	376
<b>Total</b>	<b>13997</b>	<b>2102</b>

Sources: Damanhour University Students' Affairs at the academic year 2018-2019 <sup>(19)</sup>

**Tool for data collection:**

In order to collect the required data from the study subjects, the following tool was developed and used by the researcher based on relevant literatures and research <sup>(6,7,20)</sup> to assess sexual harassment among female students in Damanhour University.

**Tool: Sexual harassment self-administered structured questionnaire:**

One tool was used for collection of data from studied subjects. It consisted of two parts:

**Part I: Personal data:** - student's age, name of faculty, academic year, marital condition, place of residence, students' current living, number of sibling, birth order, parents' education, type and size of the family and family income.

**Part II: Sexual harassment structured questionnaire:**

A. **Student's knowledge about sexual harassment:** it composed of concept of sexual harassment, type of sexual harassment (physical, verbal, and nonverbal), high risk group of sexual harassment, perceived predisposing factors or causes for sexual harassment.

**Scoring system:**

Each part of sexual harassment knowledge was scored then summed together and the maximum total score was 8. The responses were evaluated as follow: each complete correct answer was scored (2) and incomplete correct answer was scored (1). Then the total scores are transferred into percentages and classified into three categories as follow:

Score	Interpretation
≥75% (6-8 points)	Good
50-75% (4-5 points)	Fair
<50% (0-3 points)	Poor

**B. Frequently of exposure to sexual harassment:** method of transportation frequently used, exposure to sexual harassment, place where SH occurred, age and character of the harasser, time of harassment, its types, frequency of exposure and general appearance of victim at time of harassment.

**C. Consequences of sexual harassment:** students were asked about the extent to which sexual harassment caused or aggravated certain situations or conditions as fear of possible reoccurrence, feelings of depression, difficult to concentrate on their academics.

**D. Students' response to sexual harassment** as ignore the person, withdraw from the place or the perpetrator, report to lecturer.

**E. Students suggested preventive measures of harassment phenomena.**

**Methods:**

- **Administrative process:**

1. An official letter from the faculty of Nursing, Damanhour University was directed to Damanhour University Vice President for Postgraduate Studies and Research.
2. Official letter from Damanhour University Vice President for Postgraduate Studies and Research was directed to the Faculties' Deans to get their permission to conduct the study after explaining its purposes. Permission was obtained to collect the data from the chosen faculties.

**Development of study tool:**

1. The tool was developed by the researcher based on review of the recent relevant literatures and researches.
2. Tool validity of the study was tested by Jury consists of 5 experts from faculty of nursing of Damanhour University within the field of Community Health Nursing department, who reviewed the content of the tools for inclusiveness, accuracy, clarity and relevancy.

**Pilot study**

A pilot study was carried out on 10 % of the selected subject which consists of 210 students who was chosen conveniently and was not included within the study sample in order to ensure the clarity, applicability and understanding of the tool and identify obstacles and problems which may be encountered during data collection. Accordingly the necessary modifications were taken into consideration.

**Collection of data:**

- Data collection was done over a period of 4.5 months (from first February till 15/3 and paused from 15/3 to 1/7 because of the COVID 19 national lock down and was resumed from October to December 2020).
- The researcher distributed the prepared tool for every student and the time required for complete the tool averaged from 10 – 20 minutes.

**Ethical considerations:**

- Ethical approval was obtained from the research ethical committee of the Faculty of Nursing, Damanhour University.

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- Official permission was obtained to collect the data from each Deans responsible of the chosen faculties to facilitate data collection process.
- Written informed consent at the start of tool with startup statement was obtained from every student included in the study
- Confidentiality and privacy of studied students' responses were guaranteed by statement within the cover page.
- A code number was used rather than names. This helped a lot to ensure their cooperation and gaining their confidence.

**Data processing and analysis:**

- After data collection, the collected data was coded and transferred into especially designed format to be suitable for computer feeding.
- Data was entered into and analyzed using the statistical package of social science (SPSS) version 20.
- After data entry, data was checked and revised through frequency analysis, cross tabulation, and manual revision to discover any error during data entry.
- Variables were analyzed using the descriptive statistics which included: percentages, frequencies, range (minimum and maximum), arithmetic mean, and standard deviation (SD). They are used as measures of central tendency for normally distributed quantitative data.
- The level of significance selected for this study was  $p \leq 0.05$ .
- Chi square test ( $X^2$ ) was used to test the significance of the results and to test the association between categorical variables.
- Graphical presentation: included pie charts were done for data visualization by using Microsoft Excel program.

**Limitation of the study:**

The data collection was paused due to the COVID 19 pandemic national lock down.

**3. RESULTS**

**Table (2):** shows that, less than half (40.7%) of the studied students age ranged from 20-22 years old, the majority (95.7%) of them were single, the majority (89.5%) of them lived with both parents, more than half (54.8%) of them were from urban areas and less than three quarters (74.7%) of their families had insufficient income.

**Table (3):** displays that, more than half (57.7%) of the studied students had fair level of knowledge regarding sexual harassment.

**Figure (1):** reveals that, more than three quarters (75.5%) of studied students exposed to sexual harassment in the last year.

**Table (4):** illustrates that, less than two thirds (60.3%) of harassed students exposed to verbal harassment. Whistling or dirty talk and staring was reported by the majority (94.4%, 96.0% respectively) of harassed students and more than three quarters (76.1%) of them reported that (breast/ buttock/abdomen) among sites that touched.

**Table (5):** demonstrates that, more than three quarters (77%) of harassed students mentioned that they exposed to harassment several times and more than three quarters (78.9%) of them were harassed on the street.

Also, the table shows that, less than two thirds (60.3%) of harassed students exposed to harassment via internet (post, photos) while less than half (45.0%) of them exposed to harassment via phone (call, text messages). Less than half (42.6%) of harassment occurred in bus and more than three quarters of harassment (79.4%) occurred in the afternoon. Additionally, more than half (56.3%) of harassed students dressed conservative clothes with makeup.

**Table (6):** displays that, the majority (97.5%) of perpetrators were males as reported by harassed students, 68.5% of them were strangers and less than two thirds (62.1%) of them were adult.

**Table (7):** shows that, harassed students' immediate responses toward occurrence of harassment varied into ignorance (31.4%) and fear (28.5%), the immediate reaction toward perpetrators by harassed students varied between as runaway

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(43.7%), ask help from bystanders (28.1%), keep walking (27.4%) and the effect of harassment on life as reported by harassed students such as being careful in relationships (59.6%), decreased confidence in others (30.2%) and sleep disturbance (17.9%). Also, more than one third (36.4%) of them used self-defense measures.

**Table (8):** presents studied students' suggested preventive measures of harassment phenomena as media monitoring, activate laws of harassment, increase youth opportunities for employment, the educational institutions instill moral and religious values and raising community awareness on harassment (80.7%, 64.9%, 59.0%, 46.8%, 44.4% respectively).

**Table (9):** illustrates that, there was statistically significant relation between the student's age, academic year, family size, parents' travel, place of residence and their exposure to harassment where  $p = (0.001, 0.000, 0.001, 0.005, 0.012,$  respectively).

**Table (10):** discloses that, there was statistically significant relation between the total level of knowledge regarding sexual harassment and their exposure to harassment where  $p = (0.007)$ .

**Table (2): Distribution of the studied students according to their personal characteristics**

Students' personal characteristics:	Total students n=2102	
	No	%
<b>Age (years):</b>		
- 18-	726	34.5
- 20-	856	40.7
- 22-	512	24.4
- ≥24	8	0.4
<b>Min – Max</b>	<b>17-27</b>	
<b>Mean ± SD</b>	<b>20.31 ± 1.366</b>	
<b>Academic year:</b>		
- First	539	25.6
- Second	531	25.3
- Third	493	23.5
- Forth	519	24.7
- Fifth	20	1.0
<b>Students' marital status:</b>		
- Single	2011	95.7
- Married	91	4.3
<b>Parents' travel:</b>		
- None	1926	91.6
- Yes	176	8.4
- Father	165	93.7
- Mother	4	2.3
- Both	7	4.0
<b>Place of residence:</b>		
- Urban	1152	54.8
- Rural	950	45.2
<b>Students' current living:</b>		
- With family	1421	67.6
- Rent home	642	30.5
- Relatives (Grandma and Grandpa, uncle and aunt)	39	1.9
<b>Family income:</b>		
- Insufficient	1571	74.7
- Sufficient	531	25.3

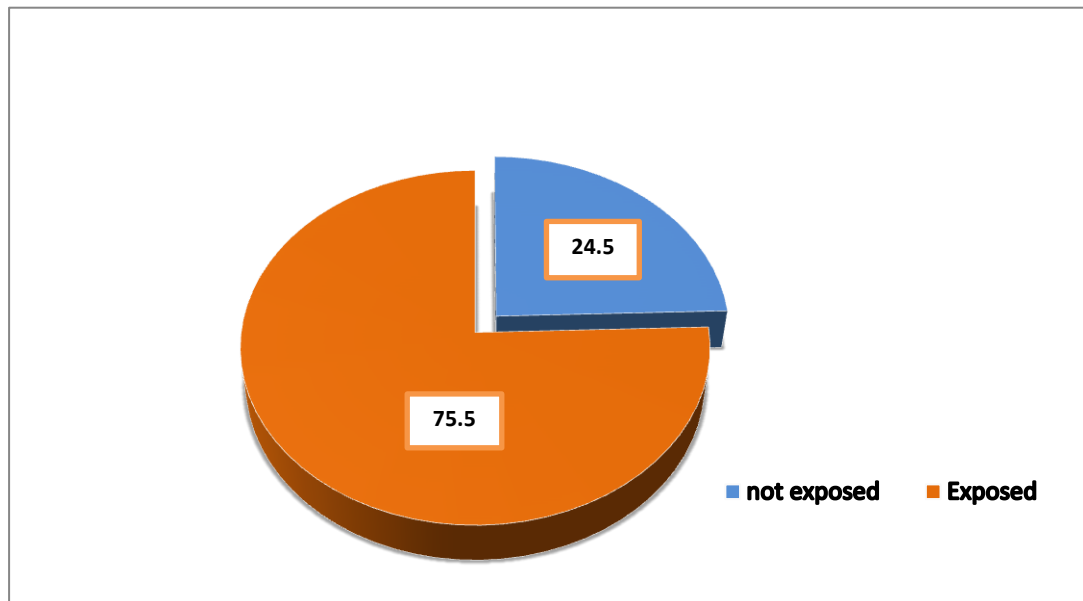


Figure (1): The prevalence of the studied students according to their previous experience of sexual harassment exposure.

Table (3): Distribution of the studied students according to their knowledge regarding sexual harassment

Items	Total n= 2102	
	No	%
<b>Total level of knowledge regarding sexual harassment</b>		
- Fair	1213	57.7
- Good	889	42.3
<b>Min – Max</b>	<b>4 – 8</b>	
<b>Mean ± SD</b>	<b>5.389±0.868</b>	

# Multiple responses were allowed

Table (4): Distribution of studied students regarding to their sexual harassment exposure

Component of sexual harassment:	Total n= 1586	
	No	%
<b>Types of sexual harassment previously experienced # :</b>	<b>n= 1586</b>	
- Verbal	957	60.3
- Non-verbal	654	41.2
- Physical	629	39.7
<b>Forms of verbal harassment #:</b>	<b>n= 957</b>	
- Whistling (dirty talk , offensive words)	903	94.4
- Comments on body	313	32.7
- Comments on cloths	307	32.1
- Phone Sex cues	113	11.8
- Sex jokes/stories	32	3.3
- Demands for sexual favors in return for benefit	20	2.1
- Request for sexual relations	14	1.5
- Insisting on taking home despite repeated refusal	1	0.1

Forms of non-verbal harassment #:	n= 654	
- Staring	628	96.0
- Follow	346	52.9
- Indecent exposure	136	20.8
- Phonographs	128	19.6
Site of physical harassment #:	n= 629	
- Breast / Buttock/ Abdomen	478	76.1
- Back	205	32.6
- Shoulder	167	26.6
- Leg/ thigh	131	20.8
- Arm	112	17.8
- Face/ neck/head	21	3.3

# Multiple responses were allowed

Table (5): Distribution of studied students according to their frequency, place and time of previously exposure to sexual harassment

Items:	Total n= 1586	
	No	%
Repeated exposure to harassment:	n=1586	
- No	364	23.0
- Yes	1222	77.0
Frequency of exposure to harassment in last year:		
- Once	364	23.0
- Daily	212	13.4
- Weekly	189	11.9
- Monthly	821	51.7
Min – Max	0-5	
Mean ± SD	2.84± 2.065	
Place where harassment occurred #:		
- Streets	1252	78.9
- Public transportations	1127	71.1
- Public places (gardens, beach, restaurants)	854	53.8
- Supermarket	571	36.0
- Faculty	443	27.9
- Clinical areas (hospital & lab)	386	24.3
- Home	374	23.6
- Work place	35	2.2
Exposure to electronic harassment via internet (post, photos)		
- No	630	39.7
- Yes	956	60.3
Exposure to electronic harassment via phone (call, text messages)		
- No	873	55.0
- Yes	713	45.0
Means of transportations where harassment occurs #:	n= 1127	
- Bus	480	42.6
- Van	309	27.4
- Train	219	19.4
- Taxi	185	16.4
- Tok-tok	104	9.2
- Private car	14	1.2



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Time of harassment #:	n= 1586	
- Morning	588	37.1
- Afternoon	1260	79.4
- Night	391	24.7
General appearance of victim at time of harassment #:		
- Conservative clothes with makeup	893	56.3
- Conservative clothes without makeup	548	34.6
- Non conservative clothes with makeup	156	9.8

# Multiple responses were allowed

Table (6): Distribution of previously harassed students according to gender, identity, and age of the perpetrator

Items:	Total n=1586	
	No	%
gender of perpetrator		
- Male	1546	97.5
- Female	40	2.5
The perpetrator's identity #:		
- strangers	1087	68.5
- Colleagues	417	26.3
- Employees	245	15.4
- Passengers/driver	167	10.5
- Relatives	79	5
- Faculty staff members	40	2.5
- Family members	9	0.6
Age of perpetrator as perceived by the victim #:		
- Young	296	18.7
- Adult	986	62.1
- Elderly	309	19.5

# Multiple responses were allowed

Table (7): Distribution of the previously harassed students according to their responses to harassment occurrence and its' consequences

Consequences of harassment	Total n= 1586	
	No	%
Immediate responses toward occurrence of harassment #:		
- Ignorance	498	31.4
- Fear	452	28.5
- Self-blame	377	23.8
- Confused	325	20.5
- Anger	279	17.6
- Contacted family members/friend	216	13.6
- Feeling of femininity and desired	142	9.0
- Crying and sadness	141	8.9
Immediate reaction toward perpetrator # :		
- Runaway	693	43.7
- Ask help from bystanders	445	28.1
- Keep walking	435	27.4

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- Confusion	358	22.6
- Verbal assault of the perpetrator	329	20.7
- Ask police help	89	5.6
- Block the internet site/mobile	48	3.0
- Physical assault of the perpetrator	22	1.4
<b>Effect of harassment on life of harassed students #:</b>		
- Be careful in relationships	946	59.6
- Decrease confidence in others	479	30.2
- Sleep disturbance (insomnia, night mare)	284	17.9
- Decrease ability to work	269	17.0
- Be academic underachiever	80	5.0
- Hate male	9	0.6
- No effect	268	16.9
<b>Use of self-defense measures:</b>		
- No	1009	63.6
- Yes	577	36.4

# Multiple responses were allowed

Table (8): Distribution of the studied students according to their suggested preventive measures of harassment phenomena

Items:	Total N= 2102	
	No	%
<b>Suggested preventive measures of harassment phenomena #:</b>		
	N= 2102	
- Media monitoring	1696	80.7
- Activate laws of harassment	1365	64.9
- Increase youth opportunities for employment	1241	59.0
- The educational institutions instill moral and religious values	983	46.8
- Raise community awareness on harassment	934	44.4
- Create hotlines for case report	876	41.7
- Raise religious awareness	857	40.8
- Increase policemen in streets	792	37.7
- Good rearing of offspring	667	31.7

# Multiple responses were allowed

Table (9): The relation between the students' exposure to harassment and their personal characteristics

Items:	Exposure to harassment				Test of Significance
	No (n=516)		Yes (n= 1586)		
	No.	%	No.	%	
<b>Age (years):</b>					
- 18-	216	29.8	510	70.2	X <sup>2</sup> = 16.653 P= 0.001*
- 20-	189	22.1	667	77.9	
- 22-	110	21.5	402	78.5	
- ≥24	1	12.5	7	87.5	
<b>Academic year:</b>					
- First	181	33.6	358	66.4	X <sup>2</sup> = 35.600 P= 0.000*
- Second	112	21.1	419	78.9	
- Third	114	23.1	379	76.9	
- Forth	102	19.7	417	80.3	
- Fifth	7	35.0	13	65.0	

Family size:					
- Two	3	15.0	17	85.0	X <sup>2</sup> = 16.801 P= 0.001*
- Three	36	15.9	190	84.1	
- Four	80	21.1	299	78.9	
- Five and more	397	26.9	1080	73.1	
Parents' travel:					
- No	488	25.3	1438	74.7	X <sup>2</sup> = 7.739 P= 0.005*
-Yes	28	15.9	148	84.1	
Place of residence:					
- Urban	258	22.4	894	77.6	X <sup>2</sup> = 6.374 P= 0.012*
- Rural	258	27.2	692	72.8	

X<sup>2</sup> Chi Square test \* Statistically significant at p ≤ 0.05

Table (10): The relation between the students' exposure to harassment and their total level of knowledge regarding sexual harassment

Items:	Exposure to harassment				Test of Significance
	No (n=516)		Yes (n= 1586)		
	No.	%	No.	%	
Total level of knowledge regarding sexual harassment:					
- Fair	324	26.7	889	73.3	X <sup>2</sup> = 7.242 P= 0. 007 *
- Good	192	21.6	697	78.4	

X<sup>2</sup> Chi Square test \* Statistically significant at p ≤ 0.05

#### 4. DISCUSSION

Globally, sexual harassment is an offensive act aimed at violating the fundamental human right of women and their dignity. <sup>(21)</sup> It became a rising concern at the national and international level as it was estimated that no less than 75 % of the world 2.7 billion females aged 18 years and older have been sexually harassed based on surveys conducted in some countries for example Ethiopia, India, Australia, China, Egypt (2012-2015).<sup>(22)</sup>

Females are more likely to be victims of sexual harassment than males. Sexual harassment faced by females includes: verbal, non-verbal and physical harassment.<sup>(8)</sup> Many cases of sexual harassment are not punished; victims have to deal with the trauma associated with many of them over a long period of time and sometimes relapses into a psychological condition and mental health challenges and adversely affecting their academic performance. <sup>(13, 23)</sup> So, the current study was conducted to assess sexual harassment among female students in Damanshour University.

The current study finding revealed that more than three quarters of the studied students exposed to sexual harassment. This study was similar to a study conducted by **Gautam et al., (2019)** <sup>(24)</sup> at the Kathmandu valley of Nepal who found that more than three quarters of female students exposed to sexual harassment. However, this result was contradicted to study conducted by **Hejase, (2015)** <sup>(25)</sup> at Lebanon who reported that less than one fifth of females exposed to sexual harassment. This could be explained as the current study subject was university adolescent students that are one of the risk populations because of their age, developmental stage, proximity to one another and their access to social activities.

As regard to types of sexual harassment, the results of the current study revealed that less than two thirds of harassed students exposed to verbal harassment while more than one third of them exposed to physical harassment. This could be due to the perpetrator believes that verbal harassment does not make him liable to the law. The current study result was in the line with a study conducted by **Truluck, (2015)** <sup>(26)</sup> at Jordanian who reported that higher percentage of females exposed to verbal harassment. This result disagreed with a study conducted by **Gautam et al., (2019)** <sup>(24)</sup> at the Kathmandu valley of Nepal which revealed that female students exposed to physical harassment more than verbal harassment.

Regarding to places of harassment, the current study findings revealed that the majority of students exposed to harassment at the streets followed by the public transportation. This might be because there are always no police men in streets, overcrowding in public transportation and perpetrators can easily carry out offensive acts without being caught. The

current study results were in the line with a study conducted by **Fahmy et al., (2014)**<sup>(27)</sup> at Cairo who found that the most common places of harassment were the street and the public transportation. This result agreed with a study conducted by **Adams et al., (2020)**<sup>(28)</sup> at United Kingdom who reported that sexual harassment was happen most frequently in the street.

Nowadays, the use of public transportation has become common among females mainly for the purpose of education and work. This leads to overloading of passengers, lack of space and provide a suitable environment for perpetrators to harass females.<sup>(24)</sup> The current study results revealed that less than half of the harassment acts occurred in buses followed by vans. These results agreed with a study conducted by **Gautam et al., (2019)**<sup>(24)</sup> at the Kathmandu valley of Nepal who reported that most of the harassment acts occurred in buses.

Regarding to exposure to electronic harassment, the current study findings revealed that less than two thirds of harassed students were exposed to harassment via the internet (post, photos) and less than half of them via phones (call, text messages). These results agreed with a study conducted by **Ali et al., (2019)**<sup>(29)</sup> at Sohag University who reported that less than half of harassed students were exposed to harassment via phones. These results were contradicted with a study done by **Kearl et al., (2019)**<sup>(4)</sup> at United States who reported that less than one third of females reported being sexually harassed online (such as over email or social media platforms) and by phone. This could be due to females in Egypt are exposed to all sorts of sites, images, and messages while surfing the internet, making them relatively more exposed to familiar and unfamiliar online perpetrators of sexual misconduct.

Time is important for the exposure to harassment act. The current study finding revealed that harassed students reported that more than three quarters of harassment occurred in the afternoon as returning home might be due to the rush traffic hours. This result was like a study conducted by **Fahmy et al., (2014)**<sup>(27)</sup> at Cairo who revealed that the time when sexual harassment most frequently occurred was in the afternoon. However, this result disagreed with a study conducted by **Farahata et al., (2015)**<sup>(7)</sup> at Menoufia University which revealed that returning home during nighttime was higher in the exposed group.

In relation to females' exposure to sexual harassment based on appearance, more than half of the students wore conservative clothes with makeup. This result disprove the belief that sexual harassment is linked to the way women dress. The current study result was supported by a study conducted by **EI Deeb, (2013)**<sup>(20)</sup> in Egypt who reported that higher percentage of harassed students wore conservative clothes with makeup. the current study finding was contradicted with a study conducted by **Farahata et al., (2015)**<sup>(7)</sup> at Menoufia University which revealed that wearing tight clothes in hot colors and putting make-up were risk factors for exposure to harassment.

Pertain to gender of perpetrator; the current study finding revealed that the majority of perpetrators were males as reported by harassed students. This result agreed with studies conducted by **Paula et al., (2018)**<sup>(2)</sup> in Washington and **Adams et al., (2020)**<sup>(28)</sup> at United Kingdom which revealed that the majority of perpetrators were males.

Perpetrators are not restricted to a particular type or group of people, they come from all ages and all segments of Egyptian society. Sexual harassment may occur within or outside the family, for example by a parent, sibling, other relatives, colleagues or strangers.<sup>(3,30)</sup>

The current study finding revealed that harassed students reported that more than two thirds of perpetrators of sexual harassment were strangers. This result agreed with studies conducted by **Arya et al., (2019)**<sup>(31)</sup> at Haryana state who reported that strangers were the most frequently listed type of people who committed the harassment against females.

Concerning the age of the perpetrator, the current study result revealed that harassed students reported that less than two thirds of the perpetrators were adult. This finding agreed with a study conducted by **Farahata et al., (2015)**<sup>(7)</sup> at Menoufia University which revealed that more than half of the perpetrators were adult. The current study finding disagreed with a study conducted by **EI Deeb, (2013)**<sup>(20)</sup> in Egypt who reported that more than two thirds of perpetrators of sexual harassment were from all ages.

The present study findings highlighted that the responses among the university students who exposed to harassment were ignorance, fear, running away and asking for help from bystanders. This could be due to their limited experience and being young age as they try to protect themselves as much as possible in safety manner. The current study results were supported by a study conducted by **British Crown, (2015)**<sup>(32)</sup> in the United Kingdom which revealed that the most common actions taken to stop sexual behavior were ignorance of behavior and avoidance of the person.

Regarding effect of harassment on life, the current study findings highlighted those harassed students reported being careful in relationships, sleep disturbance and being academic underachievers. These results were supported by a study conducted by **Arya et al., (2019)**<sup>(31)</sup> at Haryana State who reported that harassed female students complained from decreased academic performance, inability to study and sleep disturbance.

According to relation between personal characteristics of the students and their exposure to harassment, the present study showed that there was highly statistically significant relation between students' age, academic year and their exposure to harassment. The current study results agreed with a study conducted by **Wolff et al., (2017)**<sup>(33)</sup> at the Midwestern United States who reported that older students were significantly more harassed/victimized than their younger. However, these results were incongruent with a study conducted by **Farahata et al., (2015)**<sup>(7)</sup> at Menoufia University who reported that the prevalence of harassment decreases with age.

Moreover, the current study found that there was no statistically significant relation between students' marital status and their exposure to harassment. The current study result agreed with a study conducted by **Manuel, (2017)**<sup>(34)</sup> at the university of the Western Cape who reported that sexual perpetrators do not necessarily consider whether targets are married or single before engaging in harassment. Also, the current study result disagreed with a study conducted by **merkin, (2012)**<sup>(35)</sup> at New York who stated that single females are more likely to be sexually harassed than those who are married because they tend to be younger and less aware of sexual harassment.

Furthermore, this study exhibited that there was statistically significant relation between parents' travel, family size and exposure to harassment. These could be due to living with only one parent may result in less than optimal parental involvement and emotional deprivation that make them vulnerable to sexual harassment. The current study result was congruent with a study conducted by **Kaltiala-Heino et al., (2016)**<sup>(36)</sup> at Finland which reported that not living with both parents is associated with sexual harassment.

Additionally, this study showed that there was statistically significant relation between place of residence and exposure to harassment. The current study result agreed with a study conducted by **EI Deeb, (2013)**<sup>(20)</sup> in Egypt who reported that urban areas suffer more than rural areas from the phenomenon of sexual harassment. Nevertheless, it was contradicted with the result of another study done by **Farahata et al., (2015)**<sup>(7)</sup> at Menoufia University which revealed that those who lived in rural areas were exposed to sexual harassment more frequently than those of urban areas.

To prevent sexual harassment, students need to understand the predominant situations of sexual harassment existing today in order to create a secure environment for all.<sup>(37)</sup> In accordance, this study showed that there was highly statistically significant relation between the total level of knowledge regarding sexual harassment and exposure to harassment. The higher percentage of harassment is among students with good information, this might be due to that in spite of good knowledge regarding sexual harassment, they lack of appreciating the risk situations exposed them to harassment. The current study result agreed with a study conducted by **Apaak et al., (2015)**<sup>(38)</sup> at Ghanaian female University who reported that sexual harassment is prevalent in Ghana despite of highly knowledgeable university females.

In order to create university climate that do not perpetuate sexual harassment, the present study findings revealed that there were many ways and methods to eliminate sexual harassment suggested by studied students as media monitoring, activating laws of harassment, increasing youth opportunities for employment, the educational institutions instill moral and religious values, raising community awareness on harassment and raising religious awareness. Similarly, studies conducted by **EI Deep, (2013)**<sup>(20)</sup> in Egypt and **Shebl et al., (2017)**<sup>(6)</sup> at Mansoura university who reported that female students suggested methods to eliminate sexual harassment as putting special legislation criminalizing sexual harassment, implementing existing laws to deal with sexual harassment, religious education in schools and universities and put censorship over the media.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Based upon the results of the current study, it could be concluded that:

The sexual harassment prevalence was common among studied female students as more than three quarters of them exposed to harassment. The verbal harassment was more common than physical harassment. Also, the predisposing factors or causes for sexual harassment as perceived by studied students were media pornography followed by poverty. Ignorance, fear, runaway were main students' responses. Being careful in relationships, decrease confidence in others and sleep disturbance were major effects of sexual harassment on life of harassed students.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

### Based on the results of the current research

1. Awareness raising program and workshops for youth of both genders to eliminate sexual harassment.
2. Fully initiation and implementation of sexual harassment preventive policies by the government and other stakeholders.
3. Early case finding, screening of victims and provide case management services with maintaining all privacy and confidentiality services.
4. University should establish a committee of anti-harassment to deal with the harassment complaints and provide counseling services to victims to help them cope with sexual harassment effects.

### Recommendations for further researches:

1. Conducting further research to evaluate the effect of interventional preventive measure program on female students' responses to sexual harassment.
2. Development of sexual harassment validated scale to highlight the significance of problem.

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