
BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN SEXUAL HARASSMENT LAWS AND AWARENESS: A STUDY OF FEMALE STUDENTS OF GUJARAT UNIVERSITY

Ms. Durga M. Ghanchi, Research Scholar, School of Commerce, Gujarat University,
Ahmedabad, India

Ms. Tejal Sharma, Research Scholar, School of Commerce, Gujarat University,
Ahmedabad, India

Dr. C. R. Marvadi, Professor, School of Commerce, Gujarat University, Ahmedabad, India

ABSTRACT

This study attempts to assess the awareness of female students of Gujarat University about the laws and guidelines relating to sexual harassment. In India, despite the presence of many legal provisions such as the POSH Act 2018, the Vishakha Guidelines, IPC Sections relating to Sexual Harassment, sections of the BNS Act, UGC Regulations, and many others, the issue of Sexual Harassment remains unresolved. A lot needs to be done to create awareness about these provisions. The present study is an endeavor to locate the gap between the provisions existing in law and the awareness of the female students of Gujarat University. A total 110 female students from various faculties like Commerce, Law and Management of Gujarat University were covered under the study. The data thus collected was subjected to various analysis like descriptive analysis of data as frequency count and percentage, and inferential statistics like Chi-Square test, Independent t-test and One-way ANOVA. The findings of the study reveal that there is a moderate level of awareness amongst students of GU regarding sexual harassment laws and it is fairly uniform across all the faculties of the University, with law students demonstrating comparatively higher awareness. Additionally, Urban students are more aware than rural students regarding the said issues. The POSH Act, 2013 emerged as the most recognized law (45.5%), whereas awareness of other legal frameworks remained comparatively low. The conclusion of the study reveals that despite of having general awareness of the laws related to sexual harassment the students suffer from deficiency of knowledge relating to the law and procedures to be followed.

Keywords: POSH Act, Sexual Harassment, UGC, ICC

Introduction

Sexual harassment in India is not limited to specific sectors or settings but prevalent across the board, pervading workplaces, academic spaces, public areas and online. To address the widespread phenomenon, India has had legislations for quite sometime. The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 details out the contours of sexual harassment, underlines the significance of the Internal Complaints Committees (ICCs) in addressing the grievances of women, elaborate the processes and methods of lodging a complaint and conducting inquiry. Similarly, provisions in Indian Penal Code in relation to harassment and voyeurism are retained in the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023, along with the corresponding punishments.¹

Sexual harassment in educational institutions is too prevalent. Thus, it is mandatory for institutions to formulate policies and mechanisms to prevent and redress the grievances of sexual harassment and also to organize programmes to create awareness in this regard. The UGC too has given direction to the higher educational institutions including the universities to do the same. At the Gujarat University, besides establishing the Women Development Cell (WDC), it has also set up the ICC as is mandatory as per the directions of UGC and law.

Although laws have been enacted to deal with sexual harassment, the system of redressal is often encumbered by numerous obstacles. In order to curb this, it is imperative to tackle the issue at its root by conducting a campaign of prevention and generating awareness about the issue. The present study is an attempt to explore the knowledge level regarding such laws and provisions amongst female students studying at Gujarat University.

Review of literature

The reviewed studies reflected a gradual paradigm shift from legal understanding of the laws to awareness of the laws. Kapoor, V. and Dhingra, K. (2013)² were focused on legal perspective of sexual harassment and its reasons at roots through sociological eyes to understand the effects of lack of awareness. Thomas, A. (2015)³ emphasized the importance of value-based

¹ Sexual Harassment – CGIC

² Kapoor, V., & Dhingra, K. (2013). Sexual harassment against women in India. *OIDA International Journal of Sustainable Development*, 6(10), 85-92.

³ Thomas, A. (2015). Incidents of sexual harassment at educational institutions in India: Preventive measures and grievance handling. *International Journal of Recent Advances in Multidisciplinary Research*, 2(03), 0317-0322.

institutional culture and highlighted the lacunae in the implementation of POSH Act. Another set of studies like Bloom, B.E. et al. (2021)⁴ and Jadhav, K. et al. (2022)⁵ presented the real stories, lack of awareness, and barriers like fear, stigma, and mistrust that prevent women from coming forward and reporting harassment. The recent studies by Jyotsna, U.K. and Yadla, R. (2024)⁶, Janjal, A. et al. (2025)⁷, and Agarwal, Y.Y. et al. (2026)⁸ were found focused on the awareness level among the women and found that although there is general awareness of the policies related to sexual harassment at workplaces yet there is lack of awareness regarding the in-depth details of the provisions, procedure of reporting, functioning of Internal Committees set up under POSH Act, 2013 and much. The studies thus again brought forth the existing gaps in the implementation of the law despite its enactment long ago.

Research Gap

Though a large amount of literature exists on sexual harassment laws, most of them focus on general awareness and do not probe deeper into specifics of the law and its implementation such as awareness about reporting, complaints committees etc. Issues like lack of legal awareness programmes, social stigma, fear of being blamed and disrespect after lodging a complaint, and lack of effective redressal mechanism etc. which act as barriers to create awareness and to complain against sexual harassment are not explored in the existing literature. Female students, particularly students of Gujarat University are another neglected group in this context. There is also a dearth in understanding the relationship between demographic variables and level of awareness and problems faced by the students. Therefore, this study makes use of both descriptive analysis and inferential statistics.

Research Methodology

The aim of this study is to examine the awareness about sexual harassment prevention laws among female students of three major faculties (Commerce, Law, Management) at Gujarat

⁴ Bloom, B. E., Sorin, C. R., Wagman, J. A., & Oaks, L. (2021). Employees, advisees, and emerging scholars: a qualitative analysis of graduate students' roles and experiences of sexual violence and sexual harassment on college campuses. *Sexuality & Culture*, 25(5), 1653-1672.

⁵ Jadhav, K., Pawar, S., & Walokar, D. (2022). Awareness of Sexual Harassment among Women Working in Chakan MIDC Pune. *National Journal of Professional Social Work*, 173-182.

⁶ Jyotsna U.K. and Yadla R. (2024) *Awareness levels on prevention of sexual harassment at workplace (POSH) Act among university teachers in Andhra Pradesh*. *Liberte Journal*, 12(8).

⁷ Janjal, A., Kalbhore, S., & Joshi, T. (2025). *Safety first: Evaluating policy awareness among female students and staff at university level*. *International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research (IJFMR)*, 7(4).

⁸ Agarwal, Y., et al. (2026). *Assessing the awareness and implementation of the POSH Act in workplace and educational sector*. *International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research (IJFMR)*, 8(1).

University.

Research Objectives:

Objective 1	H₀	There is no significant association between demographic variables and awareness about the sexual harassment redressal committee among female students of Gujarat University.
	H₁	There is a significant association between demographic variables and awareness about the sexual harassment redressal committee among female students of Gujarat University.
Objective 2	H₀	There is no significant difference in the level of awareness regarding sexual harassment prevention laws across different demographic variables among female students of Gujarat University.
	H₁	There is a significant difference in the level of awareness regarding sexual harassment prevention laws across different demographic variables among female students of Gujarat University.
Objective 3	H₀	There is no significant association between demographic variables and the challenges that hinder awareness of the Act among female students.
	H₁	There is a significant association between demographic variables and the challenges that hinder awareness of the Act among female students.
Objective 4	H₀	There is no significant association between demographic variables and awareness of sexual harassment prevention laws/guidelines among female students of Gujarat University.
	H₁	There is a significant association between demographic variables and awareness of sexual harassment prevention laws/guidelines among female students of Gujarat University.

Research Design:

This study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design.

Data Collection:

Primary data was gathered using a structured questionnaire created through Google Forms. The

questionnaire included demographic questions, yes/no questions, multiple-choice questions, Multiple Response questions and rating-scale questions ranging from 1 to 5. It was specifically designed to assess respondents’ awareness of laws related to the prevention of sexual harassment. To check the reliability and validity of questionnaire, pilot testing was conducted on 30 responses using the Cronbach's alpha test, giving a value of 0.876, which is fairly high and indicates validity and reliability of the instrument.

Sample Size:

The study is based on 110 female respondents from major three faculties (Commerce, Law, Management.), where 36 respondents from commerce, 36 respondents from Law and 38 respondents from Management of Gujarat University.

Method of Analysis:

The data were analysed using descriptive statistics, including frequency and percentage analysis, along with inferential technique such as the Chi square test.

Objective wise Data Analysis and Interpretation:

The data collected for the study has been analyzed for Four major objectives:

Objective 1: To analyze the association of demographic Variables with awareness about the sexual harassment redressal committee among female students of Gujarat University.

[A] Do you know that every university must constitute a committee to address sexual harassment complaints?

In order to check the association of demographic Variables (Age, Faculty and Place of residence) with awareness about the sexual harassment redressal committee the chi-square test has been applied and the results are shown in tables below:

Table 1: Chi-square analysis of Age and Institutional Awareness

Age			Institutional Awareness		
			Yes	No	Total
Below 21	Count	46	24	70	

		% of Total	41.8%	21.8%	63.6%
	21-23	Count	21	6	27
		% of Total	19.1%	5.5%	24.5%
	24-26	Count	4	2	6
		% of Total	3.6%	1.8%	5.5%
	Above 26	Count	5	2	7
		% of Total	4.5%	1.8%	6.4%
	Total	Count	76	34	110
		% of Total	69.1%	30.9%	100.0%
Statements			Chi-Square value	P-Value	Decision for Null Hypothesis
Age v/s Institutional Awareness					
H ₀ : Age does not affect the Institutional Awareness			1.362 ^a	0.714	Accepted
H ₁ : Age affects the affect the Institutional Awareness					

(compiled by authors using SPSS software)

Interpretation: Among 110 female GU students, 76 (69%) females know about committee for sexual harassment complaints at the university level while 34 (31%) do not know about the same. The age group with the Below 21 age has the highest awareness (41.8%). However, the chi-square test (value=1.362, p=0.714) indicates no significant association between age and institutional awareness and therefore, null hypothesis accepted implying that age do not have any association with the awareness about the constitution of committee at university level among female students of GU.

Table 2: Chi-square analysis of faculty and Institutional Awareness

		Institutional Awareness			
		Yes	No	Total	
Faculty	Commerce	Count	27	9	36
		% of Total	24.5%	8.2%	32.7%
	Law	Count	28	8	36
		% of Total	25.5%	7.3%	32.7%

	Management	Count	21	17	38
		% of Total	19.1%	15.5%	34.5%
	Total	Count	76	34	110
		% of Total	69.1%	30.9%	100%
Statements			Chi Square value	P-Value	Decision for Null Hypothesis
Faculty v/s Institutional Awareness					
H ₀ : faculty does not affect the Institutional Awareness			5.263 ^a	0.072	Accepted
H ₁ : faculty affects the affect the Institutional Awareness					

(compiled by authors using SPSS software)

Interpretation: From Table 2 above, it can be observed that Law female students at GU show higher institutional awareness compared to commerce and management students. However, the chi-square test (value=5.263, p=0.072) indicates no significant association between faculty and awareness level, accepting null hypothesis. It means that faculty of study do not influence the awareness about existence of the institution.

Table 3: Chi-square analysis of Place of residence and Institutional Awareness

Place of residence			Institutional Awareness		
			Yes	No	Total
	urban	Count	70	27	97
		% of Total	63.6%	24.5%	88.2%
	Rural	Count	6	7	13
		% of Total	5.5%	6.4%	11.8%
	Total	Count	76	34	110

		% of Total	69.1%	30.9%	100.0%
Statements			Chi Square value	P-Value	Decision for Null Hypothesis
Place of residence v/s Institutional Awareness					
H ₀ : Place of residence does not affect the Institutional Awareness			3.632 ^a	0.057	Accepted
H ₁ : Place of residence Education Level affects the affect the Institutional Awareness					

(compiled by authors using SPSS software)

Interpretation: Among 97 respondents residing in urban area, only 70 (63.6%) have awareness about the existence of institution whereas out of 13 students of rural area, only 6 are aware about the same. However, the chi-square test (value=3.632, p=0.057) indicates no significant association between place of residence and institutional awareness, and therefore, null hypothesis accepted, implying that place of residence does not have any association with the awareness about the constitution of body at university level among female students of GU.

[B] Do you know the name of the body?

In order to check the association of demographic Variables (Faculty and Education Level) with awareness about the sexual harassment redressal committee the chi-square test has been applied and the results are shown in tables below:

Table 4: Chi-square analysis of faculty and Name Awareness

Faculty	Name awareness				
	Women's Cell	Internal Complaints Committee (ICC)	Student Grievance Cell	Not aware	Total

	Commerce	Count	11	11	5	9	36
		% of Total	10.0%	10.0%	4.5%	8.2%	32.7%
	Law	Count	5	18	1	12	36
		% of Total	4.5%	16.4%	0.9%	8.2%	32.7%
	Management	Count	4	7	0	27	38
		% of Total	3.6%	6.4%	0.0%	24.5%	34.5%
Total	Count	20	36	6	48	110	
	% of Total	18.2%	32.7%	5.5%	43.6%	100.0%	
Statements			Chi-Square value		P-Value	Decision for Null Hypothesis	
Faculty v/s Name awareness of body							
H ₀ : faculty does not affect the Name awareness of body.			27.859 ^a		0.000	Rejected	
H ₁ : faculty affects the affect the Name awareness of body.							

(compiled by authors using SPSS software)

Interpretation: The above Table 4 depicts that among 110 female GU students, Law students lead in ICC awareness (18), Commerce balances across categories, and Management has the highest unawareness (27). The chi-square test (value=27.859, p=0.000) shows a significant association between faculty of study and awareness about the name of committee, implying the rejection of null hypothesis. It can be interpreted that faculty of study do have association with awareness about the name of committee.

Table 5: Chi-square analysis of Education Level and Name Awareness

		Name awareness					
		Women's Cell	Internal Complaints Committee (ICC)	Student Grievance Cell	Not aware	Total	
Education Level	Graduation	Count	10	26	1	41	78
		% of Total	9.1%	23.6%	0.9%	37.3%	70.9%
	Post-Graduation	Count	8	8	5	7	28
		% of Total	7.3%	7.3%	4.5%	6.4%	25.5%
	Ph.D. Scholar	Count	2	2	0	0	4
		% of Total	1.0%	1.0%	0.0%	0.0%	3.6%
	Total	Count	20	36	6	48	110
		% of Total	18.2%	32.7%	5.5%	43.6%	100%
	Statement		Chi Square value		P-Value	Decision for Null Hypothesis	
	Education level v/s Name awareness of body H ₀ : Education Level does not affect Name awareness of body. H ₁ : Education Level affects the affect Name awareness of body.		21.647 ^a		0.001	Rejected	

(compiled by authors using SPSS software)

Interpretation: Table 5 above demonstrates that among 110 female GU students, 36 have knowledge about the existence of committee at university level and from that 26 students belong to graduation level of study. The chi-square test (value=21.647, p=0.001) shows a significant association between education level and name awareness, here alternative hypothesis accepted, so education level does have connection with the awareness.

Objective 2: To analyse the level of awareness regarding sexual harassment prevention laws across different demographic variables (Faculty and Place of residence) among female students of Gujarat University using the Independent T-test and One-way ANOVA.

[A] To examine whether there is a statistically significant difference in the level of awareness regarding sexual harassment laws among female students of Gujarat University based on their place of residence (urban and rural) using an independent sample *t*-test. The corresponding results are shown in the tables below:

Table 6: Group Statistics of Level of awareness across place of Residence

AWARENESS LEVEL	Place of Residence	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
I am aware of the objectives and scope of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2013	Urban	97	3.16	1.007	0.102
	Rural	13	2.54	1.127	0.312
I have sufficient knowledge about what constitutes sexual harassment under the Act.	Urban	97	3.01	0.884	0.09
	Rural	13	2.38	0.961	0.266
I am aware of the existence and functions of the Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) in my institution.	Urban	97	2.74	0.939	0.095
	Rural	13	1.92	0.862	0.239
My institution provides adequate information or training regarding prevention of sexual harassment.	Urban	97	2.64	0.937	0.095
	Rural	13	2	0.816	0.226

I feel confident about reporting incidents of sexual harassment if they occur.	Urban	97	3.33	1.068	0.108
	Rural	13	2.54	1.266	0.351
I am aware of the procedure for filing a complaint before the Internal Complaints Committee in my university department	Urban	97	2.91	1.001	0.102
	Rural	13	2	0.816	0.226
Gujarat University has taken adequate steps to create awareness about prevention of sexual harassment.	Urban	97	2.96	1.03	0.105
	Rural	13	1.92	1.038	0.288

Table 7: Independent Samples t-Test of the level of awareness

Awareness level		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means	
		F	Sig.	Sig. (2-tailed)	Result
I am aware of the objectives and scope of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2013	Equal variances assumed	0.377	0.541	0.04	Significant Difference
	Equal variances not assumed			0.076	
I have sufficient knowledge about what constitutes sexual harassment under the Act.	Equal variances assumed	0.84	0.361	0.019	Significant Difference
	Equal variances not assumed			0.042	
I am aware of the existence and functions of the Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) in my institution.	Equal variances assumed	0.052	0.82	0.004	Significant Difference
	Equal variances not assumed			0.006	
My institution provides adequate information or	Equal variances assumed	1.222	0.271	0.021	Significant Difference

training regarding prevention of sexual harassment.	Equal variances not assumed			0.019	
I feel confident about reporting incidents of sexual harassment if they occur.	Equal variances assumed	0.89	0.348	0.016	Significant Difference
	Equal variances not assumed			0.049	
I am aware of the procedure for filing a complaint before the Internal Complaints Committee in my university department	Equal variances assumed	0.657	0.419	0.002	Significant Difference
	Equal variances not assumed			0.002	
Gujarat University has taken adequate steps to create awareness about prevention of sexual harassment.	Equal variances assumed	0.298	0.586	0.001	Significant Difference
	Equal variances not assumed			0.004	

Interpretation: The results of the independent samples t-test reveal a statistically significant difference in the level of awareness regarding the prevention of sexual harassment laws among female students of Gujarat University based on their place of residence (urban and rural) at the 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected.

It is observed that female students from urban areas have a higher mean awareness level compared to those from rural areas, indicating greater awareness among urban residents. Levene’s test for equality of variances shows that the assumption of equal variances is not violated at the 0.05 significance level; hence, the t-test assuming equal variances is considered.

These findings suggest that place of residence significantly influences the level of awareness about sexual harassment laws among female students of Gujarat University.

[B] To analyze whether there is a statistically significant difference in the level of awareness regarding sexual harassment laws among female students belonging to different faculties (Commerce, Law, and Management) of Gujarat University using one-way ANOVA. The corresponding results are shown in the tables below:

Table 8: One-way ANOVA analysis of the level of awareness across faculty

Awareness level	Faculty	N	Mean	Levene Statistic	F Statistic	Result	Post Hoc Test (pairwise Comparison)
				Sig.	P Value		
I am aware of the objectives and scope of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2013	Commerce	36	3.22	0.219	3.661	Significant Difference	Tukey HSD
	Law	36	3.33				
	Management	38	2.74	0.804	0.029		
	Total	110	3.09				
I have sufficient knowledge about what constitutes sexual harassment under the Act.	Commerce	36	3.08	0.574	2.799	No Significant Difference	-
	Law	36	3.08				
	Management	38	2.66	0.565	0.065		
	Total	110	2.94				
I am aware of the existence and functions of the Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) in my institution.	Commerce	36	2.64	0.129	0.054	No Significant Difference	-
	Law	36	2.61				
	Management	38	2.68	0.879	0.948		
	Total	110	2.65				
My institution provides adequate information or training regarding prevention of sexual harassment.	Commerce	36	2.58	0.306	0.045	No Significant Difference	-
	Law	36	2.58				
	Management	38	2.53	0.737	0.956		
	Total	110	2.56				
I feel confident	Commerce	36	3.39	1.066	0.51	No	-

about reporting incidents of sexual harassment if they occur.	Law	36	3.14	0.348	0.602	Significant Difference	
	Management	38	3.18				
	Total	110	3.24				
I am aware of the procedure for filing a complaint before the Internal Complaints Committee in my university department	Commerce	36	2.83	3.783	0.491	No Significant Difference	-
	Law	36	2.89				
	Management	38	2.68	0.026	0.614		
	Total	110	2.8				
Gujarat University has taken adequate steps to create awareness about prevention of sexual harassment.	Commerce	36	2.94	0.75	1.695	No Significant Difference	-
	Law	36	3				
	Management	38	2.58	0.475	0.188		
	Total	110	2.84				

Table 9: Multiple Pair-wise Comparisons (Tukey HSD)

Awareness Level	(I) Faculty	(J) Faculty	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
I am aware of the objectives and scope of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2013	Commerce	Law	-0.111	0.239	0.887
		Management	0.485	0.235	0.103
	Law	Commerce	0.111	0.239	0.887
		Management	0.596*	0.235	0.034
	Management	Commerce	-0.485	0.235	0.103
		Law	-0.596*	0.235	0.034

Interpretation: The above tables (Table 8 & 9) reveal that the overall level of awareness regarding the prevention of sexual harassment laws among female students of Gujarat University is moderate, with mean scores ranging approximately between 2.5 and 3.3 across

different dimensions. Descriptive statistics indicated that students from Law and Commerce faculties tend to exhibit slightly higher awareness levels compared to Management students; however, these differences are not substantial. The results of Levene’s test confirm that the assumption of homogeneity of variance is satisfied for most variables, ensuring the reliability of ANOVA results, except for the variable related to awareness of complaint procedures.

Further, the One-Way ANOVA results demonstrate that a statistically significant difference exists only for awareness regarding the ‘objectives and scope’ of the Sexual Harassment Act, while no significant differences are observed across faculties for other aspects such as knowledge of sexual harassment, awareness of ICC, institutional support, reporting confidence, and procedural awareness at 5% level of significance. Post-hoc analysis (Tukey HSD) identifies that this significant difference lies specifically between Law and Management students, with Law students showing relatively higher awareness.

Objective 3: To examine the association between demographic variables (education level) and awareness of sexual harassment prevention laws/ guidelines among female students of GU.

Which laws/guidelines related to prevention of sexual harassment are you aware of?

In order to check the association between the education level and the awareness of sexual harassment prevention laws/ guidelines among female students of GU chi-square has been performed, as shown in the table below:

Table 10: Chi-square test of between Law/Guidelines and Faculty

Laws/ Guidelines	Faculty											
	Commerce			Law			Management			Total		
	Aware	Not	Total	Aware	Not aware	Total	Aware	Not aware	Total	Aware	Not aware	Total
POSH Act, 2013	23	13	36	18	18	36	9	29	38	50	60	110
	20.9	11.8	32.	16.	16.	32.	8.2	26.4	34.5	45.	54.	100%
Chi square value = 12.498 and Sig.= 0.002 (Significant Association)												

Vishakha Guidelines, 1997	6	30	36	11	25	36	2	36	38	19	91	110
	5.5	27.3	32.7	10.0	22.7	32.7	1.8	32.7	34.5	17.3	82.7	100%
Chi square value = 8.290 and Sig.= 0.016 (Significant Association)												
UGC regulations	8	28	36	6	30	36	3	35	38	17	93	110
	7.3	25.5	32.7	5.5	27.3	32.7	2.7	31.8	34.5	15.5	84.5	100%
Chi square value = 2.965 and Sig.= 0.227 (No Significant Association)												
IPC provisions	13	23	36	18	18	36	4	34	38	35	75	110
	11.8	20.9	32.7	16.4	16.4	32.7	3.6	30.9	34.5	31.8	68.2	100%
Chi square value = 13.732 and Sig.= 0.001 (Significant Association)												
BNS provisions	10	26	36	11	25	36	4	34	38	25	85	110
	9.1	23.6	32.7	10.0	22.7	32.7	3.6	30.9	34.5	22.7	77.3	100%
Chi square value = 5.000 and Sig.= 0.082 (No Significant Association)												
GU guidelines	9	27	36	3	33	36	2	36	38	14	96	110
	8.2	24.5	32.7	2.7	30.0	32.7	1.8	32.7	34.5	12.7	87.3	100%
Chi square value = 7.413 and Sig.= 0.025 (Significant Association)												
Not aware of any law	29	7	36	30	6	36	12	26	38	71	39	110
	26.4	6.4	32.7	27.3	5.5	32.7	10.9	23.6	34.5	64.5	35.5	100%
Chi square value = 27.632 and Sig.= <.001 (Significant Association)												

(compiled by authors using SPSS software)

Interpretation: From the above Table 10, it is observed that among 110 female respondents, 50 (45.5%) are aware of the Prevention of sexual harassment of women at workplace (prevention, prohibition and redressal) Act, 2013 [POSH Act], where 23 (20.9%) from commerce, 18 (16.4%) from law, and 9 (8.2%) from management which showed majority awareness from Commerce faculty. The chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 12.498$, $p = 0.002$) indicated a

statistically significant association between faculty and awareness of the POSH Act. Therefore, the null hypothesis has been rejected, suggesting that faculty influences awareness of the POSH Act.

From the 110 female respondents, 17.3% females are aware of the Vishakha guidelines, 1997 where 5.5% from commerce, 10.0% from law and 1.8% from Management. The chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 8.290$, $p = 0.016$) showed a statistically significant association between faculty and awareness of the Vishakha Guidelines. Hence, the null hypothesis has been rejected, indicating that faculty affects awareness of the Vishakha Guidelines.

The table shows that 8 (7.3%) commerce, 6 (5.5%) law, and 3 (2.7%) management students are aware of UGC regulations on prevention of sexual harassment, 2015. The chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 2.965$, $p = 0.227$) indicated no statistically significant association between faculty and awareness of UGC regulations. Therefore, the null hypothesis has been accepted, suggesting that faculty does not influence awareness of UGC regulations.

It is observed that 13 (11.8%) commerce, 18 (16.4%) law, and 4 (3.6%) management students are aware of Indian Penal Code provisions (IPC). The chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 13.732$, $p = 0.001$) revealed a statistically significant association between faculty and awareness of IPC provisions. Hence, the null hypothesis has been rejected, indicating that faculty influences awareness of IPC provisions.

The table indicated that 10 (9.1%) commerce, 11 (10.0%) law, and 4 (3.6%) management students are aware of Bhartiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) provisions. The chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 5.000$, $p = 0.082$) showed no statistically significant association between faculty and awareness of BNS provisions. Therefore, the null hypothesis has been accepted, suggesting that faculty does not influence awareness of BNS provisions.

It is observed that 9 (8.2%) commerce, 3 (2.7%) law, and 2 (1.8%) management students are aware of Gujarat University guidelines. The chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 7.413$, $p = 0.025$) indicated a statistically significant association between faculty and awareness of GU guidelines. Hence, the null hypothesis has been rejected, suggesting that faculty influences awareness of GU guidelines.

It is observed from 110 female respondents, 35.5% female are not aware of any law/guidelines

mentioned above, whereas 23.6% from Management faculty showed highest unawareness of the any law/Guidelines. The chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 27.632, p < 0.001$) showed a statistically significant association between faculty and lack of awareness of laws leading to rejection of null hypothesis.

Objective 4: To analyze the association between demographic variables and the challenges that hinder awareness of the Act among female students.

What challenges hinder awareness about the act among female students?

To check the association between the demographic variables and the challenges that hinder awareness of the Act among female students, the chi square test has been applied shown below:

Table 12: Chi-square analysis of Age and Challenges hindering awareness

Challenges	Age														
	Below 21			21-23			24-26			Above 26			Total		
	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total
Lack of legal awareness programmes	57	13	70	21	6	27	2	4	6	3	4	7	83	27	110
	51.8	11.8	63.6	19.1	5.5	24.5	1.8	3.6	5.5	2.7	3.6	6.4	75.5	24.5	100.0
	Chi square value = 11.191 and Sig.= 0.011 (Significant Association)														
Social stigma and fear of victim blaming	27	43	70	13	14	27	3	3	6	3	4	7	46	64	110
	24.5	39.1	63.6	11.8	12.7	24.5	2.7	2.7	5.5	2.7	3.6	6.4	41.8	58.2	100.0
	Chi square value = 0.916 and Sig.= 0.822 (No Significant Association)														
Cultural and societal barriers	30	40	70	14	13	27	2	4	6	5	2	7	51	59	110
	27.3	36.4	63.6	12.7	11.8	24.5	1.8	3.6	5.5	4.5	1.8	6.4	46.4	53.6	100.0
	Chi square value = 2.851 and Sig.= 0.415 (No Significant Association)														
Lack of trust in grievance redressal mechanisms	28	42	70	7	20	27	3	3	6	6	1	7	44	66	110
	25.5	38.2	63.6	6.4	18.2	24.5	2.7	2.7	5.5	5.5	0.9	6.4	40.0	60.0	100.0
	Chi square value = 8.574 and Sig.= 0.036 (Significant Association)														

(compiled by authors using SPSS software)

Interpretation: Among the 110 female respondents, a majority (75.5%) reported a lack of

legal awareness programmes, with a statistically significant association between age and this challenge ($\chi^2 = 11.191, p = 0.011$), indicating that age influences awareness levels. Similarly, a significant association was found between age and lack of trust in grievance redressal mechanisms ($\chi^2 = 8.574, p = 0.036$), suggesting age impacts trust levels. However, no significant association was observed between age and challenges such as social stigma & fear of victim-blaming ($\chi^2 = 0.916, p = 0.822$) and cultural and societal barriers ($\chi^2 = 2.851, p = 0.415$), indicating that these challenges are experienced similarly across all age groups.

Table 13: Chi-square analysis of Faculty and Challenges hindering awareness

Laws/ Guidelines	Faculty											
	Commerce			Law			Management			Total		
	Ye	No	To	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total
Lack of legal awareness programmes	24	12	36	27	9	36	32	6	38	83	27	110
	21.8	10.9	32.7	24.5	8.2	32.7	29.1	5.5	34.5	75.5	24.5	100%
	Chi square value = 3.078 and Sig.= 0.215 (No Significant Association)											
Social stigma and fear of victim blaming	16	20	36	14	22	36	16	22	38	46	64	110
	14.5	18.2	32.7	12.7	20.0	32.7	14.5	20.0	34.5	41.8	58.2	100%
Chi square value = 0.230 and Sig.= 0.891 (No Significant Association)												
Cultural and societal barriers	17	19	36	17	19	36	17	21	38	51	59	110
	15.5	17.3	32.7	15.5	17.3	32.7	15.5	19.1	34.5	46.4	53.6	100%
Chi square value = 0.062 and Sig.= 0.970 (No Significant Association)												
Lack of trust in grievance	13	23	36	13	23	36	18	20	38	44	66	110
	11.8	20.9	32.7	11.8	20.9	32.7	16.8	18.2	34.5	40.6	60.4	100%

redressal mechanisms			7	8	9	7	4			0	0	
	Chi square value = 1.313 and Sig.= 0.519 (No Significant Association)											

(compiled by authors using SPSS software)

Interpretation: - The analysis indicates that although some variations exist across faculties, there is no statistically significant association between faculty and the challenges affecting awareness of the Act among female students at Gujarat University. Significant value for all the challenges is greater than 0.05. Therefore, in all cases, the null hypothesis has been accepted, suggesting that the faculty of studies does not have any association with these challenges.

Major Findings

- The level of awareness among the female students of Gujarat University regarding the laws to prevent sexual harassment is moderate and uniform; this awareness is highest among the Law students followed by Commerce students and least among Management students.
- 69% of respondents reported that they were aware of the redressal committee at the university level set up to deal with sexual harassment; however, only 32.7% of them knew that this committee was specifically called the Internal Complaints Committee (ICC).
- Findings showed that awareness of the ICC was predominantly influenced by faculty and education level, with Law students possessing the greatest level of awareness, followed by those in higher education (Postgraduates and Ph.D. scholars). There was a significant difference in awareness of the objectives and scope of the Sexual Harassment Act but no difference in knowledge of sexual harassment, awareness of the ICC, level of institutional support, comfort in reporting, and awareness of the procedures.
- Awareness levels were greater amongst urban students than rural students within their place of residence.
- 64.5% of the students were aware of all the laws / guidelines related to sexual

harassment at workplace whereas 35.5% of them were not aware of any of the laws / guidelines, the highest unawareness being amongst Management students.

- POSH Act, 2013 emerged as the most spoken about law at 45.5% followed by a very wide gap with other laws and guidelines such as Vishakha Guidelines (17.3%), UGC Regulations (15.5%), IPC provisions (31.8%), BNS provisions (22.7%) and Gujarat University guidelines (12.7%).
- We also observed a mixed relationship between demographic variables and challenges related to awareness. Age was associated with lack of legal awareness programmes and lack of trust in grievance redressal mechanisms but not with social stigma, fear of victim-blaming/culture of silence or other cultural barriers. Study Faculty was not a significant predictor for most of the challenges. While some knowledge of sex work law and policy exists, there is little understanding of the specifics around the issues. All groups reported challenges with regards to awareness, and thus recommend comprehensive, inclusive, and focused awareness programs at the University be developed and implemented.

Limitations of the Study

1. The study has a limitation that the findings are generalised only to students of Gujarat University and not to other universities of the country.
2. The data were collected from only three faculties (Commerce, Management and Law), excluding students of other departments and faculties.
3. This research study focused on female students; therefore, the findings are not generalizable to male students or other gender groups.

Scope of the study

Further studies can be done including all the stakeholders. The study can be carried forward including all the universities of Gujarat and all over India.

Suggestions

- Suggestions emerging from responses of female students of Gujarat University are as

follows:

- Hold regular awareness programmes / workshops; incorporate legal education in school and college curriculum.
- Support the strengthening and development of the ICC by making it more accessible and by ensuring that privacy and policies & procedures are respected and strictly adhered to.
- Creating a safe space for discussion within a confidential, non threatening counselling environment where there are no fear of consequences.
- Organize self-defense training for female students.
- Develop gender sensitization and respectful behaviour in all students.
- Spread awareness about cyber harassment & digital safety.

Conclusion

Even after enacting legislation with precise provisions to address sexual harassment at educational institutions, awareness among women about these legislations remains a persistent challenge. The study carried out among female students at Gujarat University indicates a moderate awareness among them about legal provision to prevent sexual harassment and about the redressal mechanisms; however, awareness level differs among faculties, law students reporting higher levels of awareness. There is an overwhelming lack of legal awareness programmes organised at University. The respondents are unaware of the mechanism of Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) established under the legislations. There is general awareness about the existence of redressal Committee, but a large majority remains unaware of its legal provisions, procedures and mechanisms. Age (demographic variable) affects the legal awareness challenges like 'Lack of legal awareness programmes' and degree of trust of respondents on grievance redressal mechanism; whereas faculty has minimal effect on all the challenges under study. Although awareness about provisions to prevent sexual harassment also differs among the variables of place of residence, variable of programme of study affects all the challenges. Moreover, irrespective of differences in level of awareness, a large number of female students face similar challenges like facing social stigma, inability to talk due to fear

of cultural barriers, facing victim-blaming and similar other problems. The study concludes by laying stress on designing awareness programmes which would reach all sections of female student body in an inclusive manner for augmenting legal literacy and to gear up universities to address complaints of sexual harassment.

REFERENCES

- Agarwal, Y., et al. (2026). *Assessing the awareness and implementation of the POSH Act in workplace and educational sector*. International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research (IJFMR), 8(1).
- Aina, A. D., & Kulshrestha, P. (2018). Sexual harassment in educational institutions in Delhi'NCR (India): Level of awareness, perception and experience. *Sexuality & Culture*, 22(1), 106-126.
- Bloom, B. E., Sorin, C. R., Wagman, J. A., & Oaks, L. (2021). Employees, advisees, and emerging scholars: a qualitative analysis of graduate students' roles and experiences of sexual violence and sexual harassment on college campuses. *Sexuality & Culture*, 25(5), 1653-1672.
- Crittenden, C. A., Gimlin, A. M., Bennett, A., & Garland, T. S. (2021). Exploring faculty and students' attitudes about consensual sexual relationships and sexual harassment on college campuses. *Educational Policy*, 35(1), 41-66. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0895904818810522>
- Jadhav, K., Pawar, S., & Walokar, D. (2022). Awareness of Sexual Harassment among Women Working in Chakan MIDC Pune. *National Journal of Professional Social Work*, 173-182.
- Janjal, A., Kalbhore, S., & Joshi, T. (2025). *Safety first: Evaluating policy awareness among female students and staff at university level*. International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research (IJFMR), 7(4).
- Jyotsna U.K. and Yadla R. (2024) *Awareness levels on prevention of sexual harassment at workplace (POSH) Act among university teachers in Andhra Pradesh*. *Liberte Journal*, 12(8).
- Kapoor, V., & Dhingra, K. (2013). Sexual harassment against women in India. *OIDA International Journal of Sustainable Development*, 6(10), 85-92.
- Mazer, D. B., & Percival, E. F. (1989). Ideology or experience? The relationships among perceptions, attitudes, and experiences of sexual harassment in university students. *Sex Roles*, 20(3-4), 135–147. <https://doi.org/10.1007/bf00287987>
- Melander, L. A. (2010). College students' perceptions of intimate partner cyber harassment. *Cyberpsychology, behavior, and social networking*, 13(3), 263-268.

Mukherjee, A., & Dasgupta, S. (2022). "He Says, She Says": Sexism and Sexual Harassment in Higher Educational Institutions of India. *Journal of Economic Issues*, 56(2), 408-415. . <https://ideas.repec.org/a/mes/jeciss/v56y2022i2p408-415.html>

Paludi, M., Nydegger, R., DeSouza, E., Nydegger, L., & Dicker, K. A. (2006). International perspectives on sexual harassment of college students: the sounds of silence. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 1087(1), 103-120. <https://doi.org/10.1196/annals.1385.012>

Shakthi, S. (2020). The law, the market, the gendered subject: workplace sexual harassment in Chennai's information technology industry. *Gender, Place & Culture*, 27(1), 34-51. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369x.2019.1608912>

Thomas, A. (2015). Incidents of sexual harassment at educational institutions in India: Preventive measures and grievance handling. *International Journal of Recent Advances in Multidisciplinary Research*, 2(03), 0317-0322. <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/1984-18885-001>