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Elected People's Representatives
of the Rural Local Governance
Units, Union Parishads, of
Bangladesh: Workplace and
Sexual Harassment, and Cultural
Hurdles to Female Participation**





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Abstract

The aim of this thesis, consisting of four published articles (Studies I–IV), was to explore sex differences in political participation and factors related to these sex differences among people’s representatives in the local governance of Bangladesh. In Study I, a paper-and-pencil questionnaire was completed by 680 (347 female, 333 male) representatives from Union Parishads, the rural local governance bodies of Bangladesh. The mean age of the participating women was 42.5 years (SD 6.5) and of the participating men 44.2 years (SD 6.3). In Studies II–IV, the sample was expanded to comprise 821 representatives (412 females, 409 males) from 128 Union Parishads, who filled in the same questionnaire. The mean age was 42.6 years (SD 6.4) for females and 43.9 (SD 6.2) for males.

The questionnaire included scales for the measurement of (a) political participation, (b) workplace harassment (workplace bullying), (c) sexual harassment, (d) experienced cultural hurdles for female political participation, (e) family restrictions against political participation experienced by women, and (f) to what extent these restrictions were also noticed by men.

Study I: The aim of this study was to investigate sex differences in effective political participation among 680 representatives in the rural local governance of Bangladesh, Union Parishads (sample described above). Four subscales related to political participation were analysed. Females scored significantly lower than males on the scales of having influence on political decisions, active political participation and initiatives, and political commissions of trust; they scored significantly higher than males on the victimisation from faulty meeting procedures. Influence on political decisions varied according to age group for females but not for males. Of the males, 94.7% participated in meetings regularly compared to only 30.1% of the females. Of the females, 16.9 % reported they were not informed about the time of the meetings, while this was the case for only 3.7% of the males. None of the committees used voting at the monthly meetings. Of the males, 94.9% reported that meeting decisions were taken through mutual understanding, while only 15.3% of the females were of that opinion. Of the females, 64.8% reported that decisions were taken by the chairman alone, and 19.9% of them that decisions were taken by the chairman and male members only.

Study II: The aim of the study was to explore the relationship between victimisation from workplace harassment and political participation among 821 elected peoples' representatives to the rural local governance, namely the Union Parishads in Bangladesh (sample described above). The sample was the same as in Studies III and IV, and the questionnaire the same as in all four studies. In this study, the scales for the measurement of political participation and workplace harassment (workplace bullying) were applied. The scale measuring workplace harassment had six subscales measuring different types of harassment. The results showed that women were significantly more victimised from verbal, nonverbal, and rational-appearing aggression, social isolation, and indirect social manipulation than men. For women, the most common type of victimisation was rational-appearing aggression, followed by social isolation, and verbal aggression. For men, the most common type of victimisation was from verbal aggression, all the other types of victimisation appeared rarely. Representatives with low political participation scored significantly higher than those with high participation on all six types of harassment. Five of the six types predicted active political participation negatively. Women were more victimised from five types of workplace harassment than men. Victimisation from workplace harassment predicted low political participation.

Study III: The aim of the study was to investigate differences between reports of victimisation from sexual harassment by females and awareness of ongoing sexual harassment of female representatives among their male colleagues. The sample was the same as in Studies II and IV, and the same questionnaire was used. Sexual harassment was measured with the Sexual Harassment Experience Questionnaire, measuring different types of sexual harassment. For all types of sexual harassment, reports by females on how often they were victimised were significantly higher than reports by males about how often they had observed female colleagues being harassed. Females 29–45 years of age were significantly more victimised from all types of sexual harassment than those 51–61 years old. Males 56–61 years of age scored higher than other males on observations of female victimisation from all types of sexual harassment. Females reported victimisation from verbal sexual harassment to be the most common type, followed by nonverbal harassment, and sexual harassment based on social manipulation; the least common type was victimisation from physical sexual harassment. Conclusively, great discrepancies were found between reports by females of victimisation from sexual harassment in the Union

Parishads and awareness of the ongoing sexual harassment by their male colleagues.

Study IV: The aim of the study was to investigate cultural hurdles and family restrictions on female political participation among representatives to the Union Parishads of Bangladesh. The sample consisted of 821 representatives and was the same as in Studies II and III, and the instrument was the same as in the other studies. The scales used in this study were for the measurement of political participation and for the experiences of females and observations by males regarding cultural hurdles and family restrictions on female political participation. The amount of both cultural hurdles and family restrictions experienced by female representatives were significantly higher than the amounts their male colleagues had observed. Women with low levels of political participation had experienced high levels of cultural hurdles and low levels of family restrictions. Women with high levels of political participation experienced low levels of cultural hurdles and high levels of family restrictions. For females, age correlated negatively with cultural hurdles but not with family restrictions. Conclusively, female political participation in the Union Parishads of Bangladesh is hampered by both cultural hurdles and family restrictions. Male colleagues did not observe the full amount of hurdles that the female representatives experienced.

It may be concluded that despite recent legislative measures, women representatives still face far more difficulties than their male colleagues, and that female political participation needs to be improved further in Bangladesh.

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List of Original Publications

Article I

Talukdar, I. H., Österman, K., & Björkqvist, K. (2018). Gender differences in effective participation of the elected people's representatives to the Union Parishads of Bangladesh: Token presence or effective participation. *European Journal of Social Sciences Education and Research*, 5, 245–254.

Article II

Talukdar, I. H., Österman, K., & Björkqvist, K. (2020). Workplace harassment and political participation among representatives to the Union Parishads in Bangladesh. *Journal of Educational, Health and Community Psychology*, 9, 345–361.

Article III

Talukdar, I. H., Österman, K., & Björkqvist, K. (2019). Discrepancies between women's reports and men's awareness of sexual harassment: A study among representatives to the Union Parishads in Bangladesh. *Eurasian Journal of Medical Investigation*, 3, 196–204.
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Article IV

Talukdar, I. H., Österman, K., & Björkqvist, K. (2021). Cultural hurdles and family restrictions on female political participation among representatives to the Union Parishads of Bangladesh. *Technium Social Science Journal*, 18, 306–316.

Author Contribution

The first author is responsible for the collection of all data, and for writing the main part of the text. The statistical analyses have been conducted jointly within the research group.

1. Introduction

1.1 Aim of the Studies

The overall aim of this thesis, consisting of a framework and four published articles, was to explore sex differences in political participation and factors related to these sex differences among people's representatives in the local governance of Bangladesh. The respondents were 821 representatives (412 females, 409 males) from 128 Union Parishads (UP), the smallest and oldest units of local governance in Bangladesh. They filled in a paper-and-pencil questionnaire, which included scales for the measurement of (a) political participation, (b) workplace harassment (workplace bullying), (c) sexual harassment, (d) experienced cultural hurdles for female political participation, (e) family restrictions against political participation experienced by women, and (f) to what extent these restrictions were also noticed by men. The topic belongs to a relatively scarcely researched area, although there is previous research in the field (Hossain, 2012; Panday, 2012; Prodi, 2014; Panday, 2008; Zaman, 2012). Previous studies were conducted with limited sample sizes, non-validated measurement tools, statistical tests used to analyse the data were not clearly described, and statistical analyses for measuring associations among the variables did not include confidence intervals and probability levels (Talukdar, 2017).

The purpose of the current thesis is to bridge some of the prevailing research gap in the area, and to conduct a thorough quantitative study on the subject.

1.2 Background

The target 5.2 of United Nation's Sustainable Development Goal 5 (Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls) strongly asserts the ensuring of women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life (Sen, 2019). In line with this goal, indices measuring women's political empowerment and participation (Global Gender Gap Report, 2020; IPU Parline, 2020; *UN Women*, 2020; Vogelstein & Bro, 2020; World Economic Forum, n.d.) have been showing that at a global level, women are overall getting more involved in politics and more empowered day by day. However, a careful analysis suggests that the

opposite is the case in some parts of the world. In contrast to macro-numerical measures of political participation of women, studies (e.g., Milazzo & Goldstein, 2017) show that though the number of women is increasing day by day in the political arena, their voice, choice, work freedom, and actual participation in their assigned responsibilities remain restricted for years in the developing world (Milazzo, & Goldstein, 2017). As an example, women in the developing world who function as people's representatives in the arena of politics and governance experience several forms of obstacles, even violence, aggression, and deprivation, when they try to fulfill their obligations (Begum, 2012; Hossain, 2012; Zaman, 2007). To unveil the status quo scenario, some scholars (Rameez, 2018; Vijayalakshmi, 2002) have presented a more nuanced and probably more truthful picture of women's actual participation in the political dimension in South Asia. Vijayalakshmi (2002) pointed out three circumstances that prevent women from actively participating in political life: lack of effective participation, multiplicity of identities, and the absence of consolidation of gender specific concerns (Vijayalakshmi, 2002). The study of Rameez (2018), applying a mixed method design in the study of women's effective participation in the local governance of Sri Lanka, revealed that the collective effort of women was effective only in social welfare, livelihood, and social security, but not in political participation (Rameez, 2018). Even in the case women took sincere interest to participate in the local governance, they did not receive space to participate despite their best efforts due to their gender, in combination with economical, psychological, religious, and political factors (Rameez, 2018). Women in other countries of the South Asian region meet similar difficulties (Begum, 2012; Hossain, 2012; Husain & Siddiqi, 2002; Khan, & Ara, 2006; Panday, 2008; Panday, 2010; Prodip, 2014; Rahman, 2014; Zaman, 2007; Zaman, 2012).

The Union Parishad (UP) is the smallest and oldest rural local governance unit of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. Each council consists of 13 members comprising 9 general members (generally males) for 9 words (a word = a sub-unit of the UP); 3 places are reserved only for females, each of whom represents three words together, while three male members represent these three words, and there is one chairman. The women are elected with the same voting system as the men. Though the provision of reserved seats for women was taken immediately after the liberation in 1971, the most notable legal initiative was to formulate the Local Government Ordinance of 1983 (Government of Bangladesh, 1983) which was reformed in 1992 and 1997, and which finally resulted the Local

Government Act of 2009 (Government of Bangladesh, 2009). The aim of the Act was to empower women in the political arena and develop more participatory governance, which is associated with economic and social empowerment (Husain & Siddiqi, 2002). Despite this measure taken by the government, studies claim that women are lagging men in effective political participation due to psychosocial, institutional, legal, cultural, and other barriers (Panday, 2008). Though studies are claiming that women's political participation has increased significantly in the local governance of Bangladesh (e.g., Zaman, 2012), it is still a matter of concern whether women are actively participating in the political decision-making, resource and responsibility allocation, and other core arenas of the political governance.

This thesis explores sex differences in political participation along with its obstacles - sexual harassment, work harassment, and cultural and family obstacles - among the elected peoples' representatives of the Union Parishads of Bangladesh, the lowest tier of the rural local governance.

1.3 Effective Political Participation (EPP)

The term "participation", in a general view, is defined as nominal membership to any activity (Molinas, 1998). In a political perspective, it denotes having voice and influence on the decision-making process (e.g., Narayan, 1995; White, 1996). To experience equity, efficiency, empowerment, and sustainability are core elements of participation (Uphoff, 1991). Accumulating previously established concepts, Agarwal (2001) proposed a typology model of participation. According to the model, there are three types of participation: nominal (being a member of any group), passive (being asked opinions without any assurance of implementation or action), activity-specific participation (only being asked to do specific task), active participation (having the right to express an opinion without guarantee of being solicited and taking initiatives), and interactive (empowerment) participation (having voice and influence on a collective decision) (Agarwal, 2001). In another study, Agarwal (2010) outlined the difference between token participation and active participation, based on three parameters of participation: attendance at meetings, speaking up, and office bearing in the organisational setup. Hossain (2012) defined the term as involvement of people in policy formulation and implementation. He also included having voice and choice of any individual within the organisation. Panday (2010) described

participation regarding women's political empowerment as having the right to political involvement, exercising the right of voting at both a household and a community level, and having female representation in regional and national bodies of government.

In this thesis, the term "participation" is defined as the scope of raising voice in all the forums, taking part into the decision-making process, holding positions to the organisation as defined by the provisions, and having the scope of conducting the tasks assigned by the provisions to the elected people's representatives. These concepts have been operationalised in the empirical studies of the thesis through the construction of scales by conducting item analysis, followed by a pilot study, and further the final data analysis process for validating these scales.

1.4 Sex Differences in Effective Political Participation in Bangladesh

Studies (Hossain, 2012; Panday, 2012; Prodi, 2014; Panday, 2008; Zaman, 2012) have been conducted on sex differences in political participation in the governance of Bangladesh regarding activities in the meetings such as low attendance rate, causes for not attending meetings, reluctance to raise one's voice, and not having one's opinion treated with respect by other members. In a study of 60 male and female representatives from the Dhaka Municipal Corporation and the Narayanganj municipality, it was found that female councilors had a higher attendance rate in the meetings than male councilors (Zaman, 2007). Common causes for not attending meetings for males were forgetting the schedule, being abroad, and not getting informed in time. In the case of females, the main causes were illness, and not getting floor time to talk in the meetings (Zaman, 2007). Moreover, male members were found to fully participate in meeting discussions, but in the case of female members, some participated partially, and some did not participate at all in the discussion at the meetings (Zaman, 2007). It has been argued (Zaman, 2012) that sex differences regarding reluctance to raise one's voice in meetings occur due to faulty meeting procedures. Another study conducted on Union Parishads from six districts of Bangladesh and two districts of India, with 602 women and 399 men (Shamim & Kumari, 2002) found that in addition to not getting informed of the meetings, the women members reported that their opinions were not duly accepted at the meetings.

Other sex differences have also been identified, such as problems related to the low number of female councilors, gender-based allocation of responsibilities and exclusion, being forced to pay money to get one's rights, and proxy participation. One study investigated a particular problem affecting females connected to the ratio of male-female members. It was found that decisions were taken according to a coram of 60% of members. Since females were a minority in number, they could not as a group influence any decision taken in the meetings (Khan & Ara, 2006).

Perceived possibilities of influencing decisions have been addressed in many studies. Prodip (2014) found women to be systematically excluded from the activities of the councils. Zaman (2012) describes discrimination in allocation of responsibilities between male and female council members. The chairmen, who managed the work distribution to council members, assigned less responsibilities to women, they ignored women in financial affairs, and instead gave them unimportant tasks. Zaman (2012) also reported that in the case of the Narayangonj municipality, no female was assigned to be the head of a standing committee.

A study conducted on 19 Union Parishads found that women were forced to pay money to the chairmen in order to get involved in political projects (Rahman, 2014). In the same study, it was found that the members and the chairman were sharing the profit of various projects they were in charge of. Ultimately, a study conducted by Hossain (2012) on two Union Parishads and one Upazila (a sub-district of a UP) revealed proxy participation, that is, husbands were found to attend meetings on behalf of their wives.

1.5 Age and Effective Political Participation

Age and political well-being have been interlinked in several studies. Involvement in civic political participation such as attending meetings, and investing time in volunteering, has been found to be one form of productive aging (Burr, Jeffrey, Caro, & Moorhead, 2002). Older party members, women included, have been shown to be valuable to the political parties due to their experience, flexibility regarding time, and contributions to local fund raising (Hudson & Gonyea, 1990). Similarly, a study by Schneider and Ingram (1993) showed that political contributions of elderly members were significant, and that their presence was experienced in a positive way.

1.6 Sex Differences in the Perception of Sexual Harassment and EPP

Sexual harassment of women is a serious social problem around the globe (Pryor, Giedd & Williams, 1995); it occurs in almost every culture, and it takes multiple forms (Ahmed, Jackson, Ahmed, Ferdous, Rifat, Rizvi, Mansur, & Protibadi, 2014). Studies have shown that sexual harassment occurs frequently in workplaces, both in the public sector (Culbertson, Rosenfeld, Kewley, Magnusson, 1989; Martindale, 1990) and in the private sector (Fitzgerald, Shullman, Bailey, Richards, Swecker, Gold, Ormerod, & Weitzman, 1988, Gutek, 1985; Saunders, 1992). Exposure to sexual harassment is, to different degrees, a familiar experience for working women (Blau, 1998; Blau, Ferber & Winkler, 1998). Two meta-analytic reviews have covered research on differences in the perception of sexual harassment between females and males (Blumenthal, 1998; Rotundo, Nguyen, & Sackett, 2001). Both concluded that women experienced a broader range of behaviors as harassing. However, for a behavior to be considered as harassing, the observer first must be aware of its existence. A study found that females and males did not agree on how often sexual harassment occurred in the workplace (Collins & Blodgett, 1981). Whether an individual perceives a behaviour as harassing or not depends on him/her being aware of it in the first place. A simple nonverbal gesture, like e.g., a man seemingly incidentally touching the hand of a woman when giving her something might go completely unnoticed by a bystander. Thus, females and males might not only disagree on what types of behaviours are harassing, and their severity, but they might also have different levels of awareness of single behaviours.

Although several studies have been conducted on the gender discrepancy in active participation of women in the UPs of Bangladesh, few studies have addressed sexual harassment as a major hindrance for effective participation. A study conducted with representatives of 19 union councils in different sociocultural zones of Bangladesh as respondents found major challenges for women to participate in the UPs; these were male domination, corruption, and faulty legal provision (Rahman, 2014). Female council members to the UPs of Bangladesh have been found to be victimised from sexual harassment by their fellow male members and chairmen (Panday, 2008), in the form of both verbal and attitudinal

harassment (Begum, 2012). The main cause of the sexual harassment has been suggested to be the cultural role of women in Bangladesh (Begum, 2012), as well as an unfriendly and repressive organisational culture (Hossain, 2012; Prodip, 2014).

1.7 Workplace Harassment and EPP

Workplace harassment or workplace bullying may take several different forms, it may be physical, verbal, nonverbal, sexual, rational-appearing, socially isolating, consist of indirect social manipulation, be in the form of degrading treatment, or attitudinal harassment. No single definition covers the concept fully. Typically, it may include subtle long-term psychological aggression directed towards a person who is not capable of defending him or herself in a particular situation (Einarsen, 2005). It might be directed toward a single individual or toward a group. Imbalance of power between the victim and the bully has been conceived to be a central feature of workplace bullying (Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2003). A power imbalance between men and women has also been found in organisations across the globe; at the governance level; this type of power imbalance, intermingled with gender issues, has been found to be common (Boer & Mashamba, 2007). Any dysfunctional behaviour conducted by a colleague against another can be workplace harassment. The concept of dysfunctional behaviour has been described from diverse perspectives. It has been described as organisational deviance; as counterproductive, antisocial, or unethical behaviour (O'Leary-Kelly, Duffy, & Griffin, 2000). Both public and private organisations in a variety of countries have been shown to suffer from a dysfunctional organisational climate (Pheko, Monteiro, & Segopolo, 2017). Studies have been conducted on the prevalence and cause-effect relationships of organisational climate. In a multi-occupational study from Spain, it was found that 14% of the workforce had experienced workplace bullying (Trijueque & Gómez, 2010). In a study on National Health Service staff in the United Kingdom ($N = 2,959$), it was found that 20% of the employees had been bullied, and that 43% had witnessed bullying (Carter et al., 2013). In Bangladesh, many studies have been conducted on women's active political participation to the local government, but few have addressed dysfunctional organisational behaviours directed against them by male colleagues. The most common types of workplace harassment in Bangladesh have been

found to be verbal, attitudinal, and sexual harassment (Begum, 2012), and spreading negative rumours about female sexuality (Panday, 2008). In the case of sexual, verbal, and attitudinal harassment, a repressive organisational culture has been found to be one of the central causes (Prodip, 2014). It has been found to be an institutional obstacle which keeps females apart from decision-making and other functions (Hossain, 2012). Besides victimisation from sexual harassment, victimisation from verbal and attitudinal harassment carried out by male colleagues has also been found among females in 19 union councils in the different sociocultural zones in Bangladesh (Rahman, 2014). In the study, the core cause of the harassment was found to be a repressive and unfriendly organisational culture. Patriarchal social structures foster unequal power relations between males and females which suppress women and discourage them from active participation in the political arena (Begum, 2012). Domination, hegemony (Rahman, 2014), and a rigid division of labour (Begum, 2012) have been reported to keep women apart from many political activities. If women are viewed as women rather than as individual members of the Union Parishad, it is assumed that they are not capable of doing the same tasks as men are able to do (Panday, 2008). Hegemonic attitudes in a society also leads to proxy participation where a husband can take part in the activities of the councils on behalf of his wife who is the actual elected representative; this also deprives women from active participation (Hossain, 2012). In the Narayanganj City corporation in Bangladesh, patriarchal power relations have been found to be the cause of systematic exclusion of female councilors from the routine activities of the urban local governmental body (Zaman, 2012). Women have also been found to be victims from extreme threats from their male colleagues. In some studies, it has been found that female representatives were harassed by their male colleagues and chairmen when they tried to raise their voice to protest illegal and unequal distribution of projects (Begum, 2012; Panday, 2008). It has also been reported that there is an insufficient legal basis for women to challenge the work environment that promotes hostility and abusive practices against them (Begum, 2012). Less access to information has been found to be common, with female representatives not being informed about meetings (Shamim & Kumari, 2002) and not provided with sufficient information about their responsibilities (Islam & Islam, 2012; Prodip, 2014). Women have also reported that they do not get enough space to raise their voice in the discussion at the meetings (Shamim & Kumari, 2002; Zaman, 2012). Being assigned with unimportant tasks (Zaman, 2012), systematic

bias (Khan & Ara, 2006), indirect threats, being laughed at, and insulting gestures (Zaman, 2012) have commonly been reported.

1.8 Cultural Barriers, Family Restrictions, and EPP

Adverse cultural shaping for women is considered one of the foremost barriers to the participation of women in community activities, civic participation, and political engagement across the globe during all times (Norris & Inglehart, 2001). Living in a society with huge domination of the patriarchy, the women of Bangladesh experience similar cultural barriers in participating to the political institutions (Hossain, 2012; Prodip, 2014; Panday, 2008; Rahman, 2014). A patriarchal society fosters negative family attitudes towards women's participation in political activities (Panday, 2008). It has also been suggested that women who have an outside job beside their household chores face conflict in balancing work and family (Prodip, 2014). This conflict is more severe in Bangladesh due to its patriarchal adverse cultural set-up and negative social attitudes towards the political participation of women (Rahman, 2014).

Major challenges were found regarding domination, patriarchy, and hegemony in the study by Rahman (2014), which investigated 19 UPs from different sociocultural zones of Bangladesh. The literature review by Prodip (2014) showed that patriarchal attitudes and lack of social acceptance are core cultural hurdles for women's political participation. Other cultural hurdles mentioned in the literature are the negative attitude towards political and community activities which may be prevalent in some communities (Hossain, 2012), low social acceptance as peoples' representatives, limited freedom of movement, low access to the public sphere (Islam & Islam, 2012), social obligations, lack of security, restrictions in involving regular outdoor activities (Zaman, 2012), unequal power relations, rigid division of labour, negative social values about women in the society (Begum, 2012), lack of social mobility, patriarchal cultural settings, strict gender identity of women, lack of confidence due to social negligence (Panday, 2008), and adverse social norms in general (Khan & Ara, 2006). In a study by Panday (2010) conducted on 60 UPs of Bangladesh, it was found that becoming a member of a UP increased the confidence of women, but the social attitude towards them remained unchanged. This clearly depicts how severe the impact of social and cultural values is on women's participation in the political arena of Bangladesh.

Several studies about the barriers women experience making political participation in the local governance of Bangladesh difficult for them have found family restrictions to be one of the core problems. The study by Begum (2012) found that a woman's role as a caregiver of the family and at the same time a representative to the UPs creates a huge conflict which negatively impacts on their active political participation. Other studies have found that lack of family support (Shamim & Kumari, 2002), lack of family cooperation (Prodip, 2014), the stressful situation when trying to balance work and family (Hossain, 2012), and negative family attitudes towards political involvement (Islam & Islam, 2012) to be common family hurdles.. The study by Hossain (2012) explored a new dimension of negative family influence on female political participation which was termed as "proxy participation", meaning that the husband of a woman representative takes part in the monthly meetings of the UPs on behalf of the wife, and directly influences the decisions of the meetings. It is a clear indication of the patriarchal attitudes of the family within the Bangladeshi society towards the political participation of women.

2. Method

2.1 Participants and Sampling

First, a pilot study was conducted with a view to developing the data collection tools. A total of 141 participants (65 females and 76 males) from different Union Parishads of the Jamalpur District of Bangladesh participated in the pilot study.

In the first study of the thesis, the final questionnaire was completed by 680 representatives (347 females, 333 males) including the 141 participants of the pilot study. The mean age was 42.6 years ($SD = 6.4$) for females and 43.9 ($SD = 6.2$) for males; the age difference was significant [$t(678) = 2.6, p = .009$].

In the second, third and fourth study, a total of 821 representatives from 128 Union Parishads (412 females and 409 males) took part (Note: In three of the original articles, it is incorrectly stated that the respondents were from only eight UPs). Purposive sampling was used to select the participants. Male and female respondents were selected from the same UPs to ensure an even distribution of gender as the female participants are lower in number in each local governance unit.

The data were thus collected in three phases. The pilot data were collected between January and July 2015. The second and third phase data were collected in September 2015 and January 2016, consecutively.

2.2. Measures

2.2.1 Political Participation

Effective Political Participation (EPP) was measured by using four scales. Single items and Cronbach's alphas for the four scales are presented in Table 1. The response alternatives were on a five-point scale ranging from 0 to 4 ((never = 0, seldom = 1, sometimes = 2, very often = 3, always = 4).

Table 1

Single Items and Cronbach's Alphas for the Four Scales

Influence on Political Decisions (6 items, $\alpha = .97$)
1) I experience that I can influence decisions if I want to
2) My opinion is asked in specific matters, but I cannot influence decisions directly
3) When I make an initiative, it is received well
4) My opinion is valued in standing committees
5) I am being asked to undertake specific tasks
6) I have selected and decided about beneficiaries
Active Political Participation and Initiatives (7 items, $\alpha = .96$)
1) In meetings, I express my opinion freely, whether or not solicited
2) I have expressed my disagreement verbally at a meeting
3) I have participated actively in project implementations
4) I have participated actively in relief allocations
5) I volunteer to undertake specific tasks
6) I make initiatives of different kinds
7) My initiatives have led to concrete actions or decisions
Political Commissions of Trust (6 items, $\alpha = .79$)
1) I became the convener of a tender committee
2) I became a member of a tender committee
3) I have signed to the monthly account statement
4) I became chairman of any village court arranged by the union council
5) I became a member of any village court arranged by the union council
6) I have been a convener of project preparation and implementation committee
Victimisation from Faulty Meeting Procedures (6 items, $\alpha = .89$)
1) I don't get informed of the monthly meetings,
2) My divergent opinion has been duly included in the minutes of the meeting *)
3) I get informed about decisions only after then meetings,
4) I have signed the resolution of a meetings without having attended,
5) I have been forced to sign to the resolution of a meeting,
6) Someone else has attended meetings for me.

2.2.2 *Sexual Harassment*

The Sexual Harassment Experience Questionnaire (SHEQ) (Kamal, Tariq, 1997) was used to measure sexual harassment in Study 2. The response alternatives to the individual items were on a five-point scale ranging from

0 to 4 (never = 0, seldom = 1, sometimes = 2, very often = 3, always = 4) (table 2).

The introductory sentence to each scale was stated differently for females and males. It was, for females: Has your male boss/colleague/subordinate ..., and for males: Have you observed a male boss/colleague/subordinate ... (“you” substituted with “a female colleague”).

Table 2

Subscales of Sexual Harassment and their Cronbach's Alpha Values

Verbal Sexual Harassment (12 items, females $\alpha = .94$, males $\alpha = .85$)
1) Admired your dress or make-up
2) Admired your face or hair
3) Appreciated your figure
4) Invited you for an outing or to go to a restaurant with him
5) Taken interest in your personal life with the intention that you might start responding favorably to him
6) Called you darling, sweetheart, or the like
7) Tried to talk with you about a vulgar movie or a television program
8) Told you a dirty joke
9) Tried to probe your sexual deprivation, and pretended to be sympathetic
10) Made obnoxious calls to you on the telephone
11) Tried to talk about your or his sexual life
12) Tried to have an immoral talk with you.
Nonverbal Sexual Harassment (7 items, females $\alpha = .90$, males $\alpha = .77$)
1) Stared at you from head to toe with dirty looks
2) Tried to give you a card
3) Tried to give you a love letter
4) Offered you a lift in his car
5) Tried to flirt with you
6) Hummed filthy songs in your presence
7) Tried to show you a magazine containing pornographic material.
Physical Sexual Harassment (8 items, females $\alpha = .87$, males $\alpha = .80$)
1) Tried to touch your hand while giving you something
2) Put his hand on your hand while posing to teach you something, e.g. computer skills
3) Collided with you while passing by
4) Tried to pat you on your shoulder or back while passing you at work,
5) Put his hand on your shoulder or back while working,
6) Tried to have body touch with you while sitting and working,

-
- 7) Tried to kiss you,
 - 8) Tried to rape you.
-

Sexual Harassment Based on Social Manipulation (8 items, females $\alpha = .91$, males $\alpha = .50$)

- 1) Tried to make you sit with him with some lame excuse
 - 2) Withheld or delayed your work so that you might go to him again and again regarding that work
 - 3) Tried to defame you for not fulfilling his immoral demands,
 - 4) Forced you to fulfill his immoral demands by exploiting details of your personal life,
 - 5) Have made you lose something in the workplace for not meeting his immoral demands
 - 6) Have made you lose something in the workplace for not meeting his immoral demands,
 - 7) Assured you of promotion in the job or of some other benefits if you would fulfill his immoral demands,
 - 8) Threatened you to be fired if you did not develop romantic ties with him,
 - 9) Threatened to put you out of job if you didn't have a sexual relation with him.
-

2.2.3 Work Harassment

Work harassment (workplace bullying) was measured with the Work Harassment Scale (Björkqvist & Österman, 1992), consisting of six subscales (Table 3). Again, the response alternatives to the individual items were on a five-point scale ranging from 0 to 4 ((never = 0, seldom = 1, sometimes = 2, very often = 3, always = 4).

Table 3

Subscales of Workplace Harassment and their Cronbach's Alpha Values

Verbal Aggression (6 items, $\alpha = .96$)
1) Being unduly disrupted
2) Being ridiculed in front of others
3) Words aimed at hurting you
4) Being shouted at loudly
5) Accusations
6) Direct threats
Nonverbal Aggression (4 items, $\alpha = .91$)
1) Insinuating glances and/or negative gestures
2) Refusal to hear you

3) Refusal to speak with you
4) Being sneered at
Rational Appearing Aggression (4 items, $\alpha = .99$)
1) Being unduly criticised
2) Belittling of your opinions
3) Having your work judged in an incorrect and insulting manner
4) Having your sense of judgment questioned
Social Isolation (3 items, $\alpha = .97$)
1) Being treated as non-existent
2) Unduly reduced opportunities to express yourself
3) Being isolated
Indirect Social Manipulation (5 items, $\alpha = .90$)
1) Lies about you told to others
2) Insulting comments about your private life
3) Having sensitive details about your private life disclosed
4) Having malicious rumors spread behind your back
5) Accusations of being mentally disturbed
Degrading Treatment (2 items, $\alpha = .88$)
1) Being given meaningless tasks
2) Being given insulting tasks

2.2.4 Family Restrictions for EPP

Experienced family restrictions to female political participation were measured with one eight-item scale. The response alternatives to the individual items were on a five-point scale ranging from 0 to 4 ((never = 0, seldom = 1, sometimes = 2, very often = 3, always = 4). There were male and female versions of the scales worded slightly differently from each other:

Table 4

Family restrictions experience scale ($\alpha = .65$)

1) My husband/Husbands cooperate(s) with and encourages my/the wife's institutional activities
2) My/ family members cooperate with my institutional activities/of women
3) I /Women feel stressed to function as a people's representative beside my/their household responsibilities
4) I/ A woman can go out anytime for my/her institutional activities after managing the family responsibilities
5) My husband/Husbands has/have a negative attitude towards my political involvement/ of their wives

6) My/ family members have a negative attitude towards my/ political involvement /of female family members

7) I/ Women experience disputes with a family member due to my/their political involvement

8) I/Women can take part in any political or institutional activities at any time without any hindrance from my/their home.

2.2.5 Cultural Hurdles for EPP

There were male and female versions of the scale measuring cultural hurdles to female political participation. The response alternatives to the individual items were on a five-point scale ranging from 0 to 4 ((never = 0, seldom = 1, sometimes = 2, very often = 3, always = 4).

Table 5

Cultural Hurdles for EPP ($\alpha = .90$)

1. People seem to think that it is not suitable for a woman to take part in meetings.
 2. Someone has insinuated that a woman should not talk in meetings.
 3. There are restrictions on what /I can do because I am a woman/ a woman can do.
 4. I/Women feel uncomfortable at meetings.
 5. I/Women have access to all the same information that my male colleagues have.
-

2.3 Ethical Considerations

The original studies included to this thesis were initiated, designed, reviewed, and conducted based on integrity followed by the principles concerning human research ethics of the Declaration of Helsinki (World Medical Association, 2013), as well as guidelines for the responsible conduct of research of the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity (2012). The foremost ethical challenge was to collect gender sensitive data, especially the data regarding sexual and workplace harassment, where almost illiterate women of rural Bangladesh were to expose their often quite horrible personal experiences to the data collectors. It was not merely a matter of exposing their gender sensitive secrets, but also a likely structural threat from the patriarchal social and organizational set up.

Thus, questionnaires were kept secret to the male coworkers and data were collected from the women participants with the aid of a female data collector for ensuring the highest level of rapport and confidentiality. All personal and organisational information were kept secret.

3. Overview of the Original Studies

3.1. Study I: Gender Differences in Effective Participation of the Elected People's Representatives to the Union Parishads of Bangladesh: Token Presence or Effective Participation

The aim of Study I was to compare female and male people's representatives to the rural local government (Union Parishads) of Bangladesh regarding their effective participation in the overall governance process they are assigned to. Effective political participation was measured with a self-reported questionnaire which comprised of four scales: (1) having influence on political decision making, (2) active political participation and initiatives, (3) political commissions of trust, and (4) victimisation due to faulty meeting processes. A total of 660 elected members (347 female and 333 male) from 128 Union Parishads of Bangladesh participated in the study. High correlations were found among the four scales. A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted with sex and age group as independent variables and the four scales as dependent variables. The multivariate analyses showed significant sex and age differences on these four domains of participation. The univariate analyses revealed that in terms of political decision-making authority, active political engagement and initiatives, and political commissions of trust, women scored significantly lower than the men. In contrast, the women scored significantly higher in victimisation due to flawed meeting procedures. Females had a greater impact on political choices than men regardless of their age. The attendance rate in the monthly meetings were notably lower for the women (30.1%) than the men (94.7%) representatives. There was also an evident discrepancy in the case of raising voice in the meetings: 16.9% of women reported that they could not speak out in the meetings, while this rate was only 3.7% for the men. Any decision was reported not to be taken by voting as it was supposed to according to the provision. While 94.9% male members reported that decisions were taken based on mutual understanding, only 15.3% of females claimed so. Among the women, 64.8% reported that the chairman made all the decisions solely, while 19.9% women reported that the decisions were made only by the chairman and the male members without any female members' consent. Asking consent of women members on

taking a variety of decisions and carrying out activities like choosing and deciding on beneficiaries, were rarely reported to be happened to the women. The level of political commissions of trust bestowed upon women and men, as well as their own level of political engagement, were strongly associated with their perceptions of political power. In terms of political engagement and initiative, females lagged males. It was found that the more representatives were exposed to poor meeting procedures, the less influence they had on political choices and decision making. This was evident for both sexes. Females were more likely than men to blame defective meeting protocols for their plight. In the case of women, it was found that effective participation increased with the increase of age. However, for men, there was no such age trend and effective participation followed a stable pattern across the age groups.

3.2 Study II: Discrepancies between Women's Reports and Men's Awareness of Sexual Harassment: A Study among Representatives to the Union Parishads in Bangladesh

The aim of Study II was to investigate differences between self-reported levels of victimisation from sexual harassment of female representatives to the local Union Parishads and compare them with observations made by their male colleagues. Sexual harassment was measured with the Sexual Harassment Experience Questionnaire (Tariq & Kamal, 1997). In the case of women respondents, the instrument measured the frequency of their personal experiences of victimisation, while in the case of male respondents, the instrument measured observations by males of victimisation of their female colleagues. The subscales of the questionnaire were, however, constructed in a different way than in the original version of SHEQ. Since it is common in aggression research to categorise aggressive behaviour into physical, verbal, and indirect aggression in the form of social manipulation (Björkqvist et al., 1992), an item analysis was made to investigate whether the items of the scale could be organised in a similar way. It was found that four scales measuring different types of sexual harassment could be identified. The scales measured verbal, nonverbal, and physical sexual harassment, and sexual harassment based on social manipulation. The questionnaire was completed by 821 representatives (412 women, 409 men) from 128 Union Parishads of Bangladesh. The mean age was 42.5 years ($SD = 6.5$) for women and 44.2 ($SD = 6.3$) for men.

A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted with sex as independent variable, the four scales as dependent variables, and age as a covariate. The multivariate analysis was significant. The univariate analyses showed that for all subscales, the females' scores on the frequency of their victimisation were significantly higher than reports by the males describing their perceptions of how often their female colleagues were sexually harassed. Women were found to be significantly more victimised from verbal, nonverbal, and rational appearing aggression, social isolation, and indirect social manipulation than men. For the women, the most common type of victimisation was rational appearing aggression, followed by social isolation, and verbal aggression.

A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted for females only with age group (I-VI) as independent variable, and four types of victimisations from sexual harassment as dependent variables. The multivariate test was significant, and the univariate tests were significant for all four types of sexual harassment. According to Scheffé's test, female respondents between 29 and 45 years of age were significantly more victimised from verbal sexual harassment than those between 51 and 61 years old, and respondents between 36 and 45 years old were also significantly more harassed than those between 46 and 50 years old. A similar pattern was found for the other three types of sexual harassment. Scheffé's test for males explored that the males aged 56-61 years old scored significantly higher than males in all other age groups on observations of female victimisation from verbal, nonverbal, and physical sexual harassment, as well as on sexual harassment based on social manipulation. There were no other significant age differences for male observations.

Victimisation from workplace harassment predicted low political participation. The most common single behaviours were as follows; for verbal sexual harassment: admired your dress or make-up, appreciated your figure, and admired your face or hair; for nonverbal harassment: stared at you from head to toe with dirty looks, tried to flirt with you, and offered you a lift in his car; for physical harassment: collided with you while passing by, tried to have body touch with you while sitting and working, and tried to touch your hand while giving you something; and for harassment based on social manipulation: tried to make you sit with him with some lame excuse, withheld or delayed your work so that you might go to him again and again regarding that work, and assured you of

promotion in the job or of some other benefits if you would fulfil his immoral demands

3.3 Study III: Workplace Harassment and Political Participation among Representatives to the Union Parishads in Bangladesh

The aim of Study III was to explore the relationship between victimisation from workplace harassment and political participation among the elected peoples' representatives to the rural local governance, the Union Parishads in Bangladesh. A questionnaire was completed by 821 representatives (412 women, 409 men). The mean age was 42.5 years ($SD = 6.5$) for women and 44.2 ($SD = 6.3$) for men.

All the six scales of workplace harassment were found to be correlated with each other. A within-subjects multivariate analyses of variance (WSMANOVA) showed that for women, the most common type of workplace harassment they were exposed to was rational appearing aggression ($m = 3.2$) while the least common types were indirect social manipulation ($m = 2.3$). For men, the most common type of workplace harassment they were exposed to was verbal aggression ($m = 0.2$). The results of six within-subjects multivariate analyses of variance (WSMANOVA) revealed that the two most common single verbally aggressive behaviours were "to be exposed to words aimed at hurting" and "being unduly disrupted" (both $m = 1.7$). For the other scales, the most common behaviours were as follows. Nonverbal aggression: "refusal to hear the other person" ($ms = 1.8$); rational appearing aggression: "belittling of the other's opinions" ($m = 1.8$); social isolation: "unduly reduced opportunities to express oneself" ($m = 1.8$); indirect social manipulation: "having sensitive details about one's private life disclosed" ($m = 1.6$); and degrading treatment: "being given meaningless tasks" ($m = 0.4$).

Two multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVA) were conducted for men and women consecutively where age group was used as independent variable and the total scores of work harassment and political participation were used as dependent variables. It was found to be significant for both men and women. The univariate analyses were significant for both women and men, in the case of both dependent variables. Scheffé's test revealed that the women in the younger age groups were found to be victimised more than those of the women from the older

age groups. Men from the oldest age group (56-61 years) were found to be relatively more victimised comparing to all other groups. This age group also reported significantly lower political participation than all the other age groups. The multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) test was significant for sex, political participation group (converted to low and high dichotomous), and the interaction between them. Representatives belonging to the low political participation group scored significantly higher than those belonging to the high participation group on all six measures of victimisation. Women belonging to the high participation group reported the overall lowest scores ($m = 0.00$) on five of the measures of work harassment. Regression analysis revealed that all the six types of victimization from workplace harassment predicted active political participation negatively except degrading treatment.

3.4 Study IV: Cultural Hurdles and Family Restrictions on Female Political Participation among Representatives to the Union Parishads of Bangladesh

The aim of the fourth study was to explore the impact of cultural hurdles, family restrictions, and age on women's political participation among elected people's representatives to the Union Parishads of Bangladesh. Comparisons between male and female representatives were made. A questionnaire was completed by 680 representatives (347 females, 333 males) from 128 Union Parishads. The mean age was 42.6 years ($SD = 6.4$) for females and 43.9 ($SD = 6.2$) for males; the age difference was significant [$t(678) = 2.6, p = .009$].

A questionnaire was constructed for measuring political participation and experiences of females and observations by males of cultural hurdles and family restrictions on female political participation.

It was found that the level of political participation of the representatives in the Union Parishads correlated significantly negatively with experienced (for women) and perceived (for men) cultural hurdles for female political participation. Women with low levels of political participation had experienced high levels of cultural hurdles, and men with low levels of political participation had also perceived the cultural hurdles for women to be higher than men with high levels of political participation.

A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted with sex and political participation (high/low group) as independent variables and cultural hurdles to female political participation and family restrictions on female political participation as dependent variables, and age as a covariate.

The univariate analyses showed that reports by females about the amount of cultural hurdles they encounter to their political participation was significantly higher than the amount of hurdles males had observed that their female colleagues had been victimised from. The same was the case for family restrictions for female political participation. Representatives who themselves had low scores on political participation rated cultural hurdles to females to be significantly higher than representatives with high scores on political participation did. A tendency was found for representatives with low political participation to rate family restrictions on females to be lower than representatives with high participation did. An interaction effect occurred; women with high political participation made the lowest ratings for cultural hurdles to female political participation

Two multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVA) were conducted: one for women, and one for men, with age group as independent variable and cultural hurdles and family restrictions on female political participation as dependent variables. The multivariate analyses were significant in both cases. For both women and men, the univariate analyses showed a significant effect of age group for cultural hurdles to female political participation, but not for family restrictions. In the case of women, Scheffé's test revealed that the oldest age group (56 to 61 years of age) scored significantly lowest of all on experienced cultural hurdles to female political participation. Respondents 51–55 years of age scored significantly lower than those who were 36–45 years old. Those who were 46–50 years old broke the pattern by showing a tendency to score lower than the age group 51–55 years old. Respondents 41–45 years of age scored higher than all those who were older than themselves.

The youngest age group, 29–35 years old, scored significantly higher than respondents 46–50 and 56–61 years old. In the case of men, Scheffé's test did not reveal any significant age differences regarding observations of cultural hurdles to female political participation.

4. Discussion

4.1. Summary of the Findings

Study I compared females and males regarding their effective political participation in the local governance units of Bangladesh. Despite the legislative measures taken in order to enhance female effective political participation, it was found that female representatives to the local rural governments rated their ability to influence political decisions to be significantly lesser than males. This included being asked about one's opinion in specific matters, initiatives being positively received, and being asked to undertake specific tasks like selecting and deciding about beneficiaries. Shamim and Kumari (2002) also found that the opinions of female representatives were not duly accepted at the meetings. For both females and males, their perceived influence on political decisions correlated highly with the number of political commissions of trust that had been given to them, as well as with their own active political participation.

Females also scored lower than males on active political participation and initiatives. This included being able to freely express opinions and disagreement at a meeting, to participate in project implementations and relief allocations, to volunteer to undertake specific tasks and initiatives, as well as experiencing that one's initiatives lead to concrete actions or decisions. Zaman (2007) has also found that some females did not speak at all during the meetings.

Regarding attendance at meetings, it was found that almost all (95%) of the males participated in meetings regularly, while only one third of the females did so. One reason why females did not attend meetings was that they were not informed about them (17%), and as a consequence, almost half of them assumed that meetings were not held regularly. This is in line with findings by Shamim and Kumari (2002), who also found that female representatives were not informed about dates of the meetings. Another reason for not attending meetings was that they were not able to raise their voice there (8%). Zaman (2007) has also reported that one of the main reasons for females not to attend meetings was not getting floor time to speak at the meetings.

Females also scored lower than males on having been given political commissions of trust. This included not having been selected to be a member or a convener of a committee, not having been asked to sign the monthly account statement, not being member or chairman of a village court, or a convener of a project preparation and implementation committee. This result is in accordance with Zaman's (2012), who found that in the Narayangonj municipality in central Bangladesh, no female was assigned to be the head of a standing committee. He also found that the chairmen in general assigned less responsibilities to women. Systematic exclusion of women from council activities was found also by Prodip (2014).

Age group differences in political participation were overall small for males, while females 56–61 years of age showed a marked rise in activity. Previous studies have found a positive impact of age on political well-being (Burr, Jeffrey, Caro, & Moorhead, 2002; Hudson & Gonyea, 1990; Schneider & Ingram, 1993).

Influence on political decisions as well as active participation and commissions of trust correlated significantly negatively with how much the representatives were subjected to faulty meeting procedures. This was the case for both females and males.

Females rated themselves higher than males on being victimised from faulty meeting procedures. Such procedures included, e.g., not having one's divergent opinion included in the minutes of the meeting, getting informed about decisions only after the meetings, having been forced against one's will to sign the resolution of a meeting, or even having to sign the resolution of a meeting without having attended. Zaman (2012) has argued that females' reluctance to raise their voice in meetings is largely due to faulty meeting procedures.

It was further found that the committees did not use voting at the monthly meetings, and that almost all the males (95%) reported that decisions were taken through mutual understanding. In sharp contrast to this, over half of the females (65%) reported that decisions were taken by the chairman alone, or by the chairman and male members only (20%). Panday (2010) has pointed out that exercising the right to vote at a community level is as a tool for women's political empowerment.

A study by Hossain (2012) revealed proxy participation, i.e. that husbands or fathers participated instead of the women in meetings. In this

study, only 1.5% of the females reported proxy participation by the husband; the percentage was low, but not zero.

In Study II, quite significant discrepancies were found between reports of victimisation from sexual harassment made by female representatives, and the level of awareness of this victimisation of their male colleagues. For all four types of sexual harassment measured, reports by females on how often they had been victimised were significantly higher than reports by the males about how often they had observed their female colleagues being harassed. Females reported victimisation from verbal sexual harassment to be the most common type of harassment, followed by nonverbal harassment, and sexual harassment based on social manipulation; the least common type was victimisation from physical sexual harassment. For males, observations followed the same pattern, with the exception of sexual harassment based on social manipulation, which was the least observed type by males. Since social manipulation is by definition often perpetrated in secrecy, this finding was not unexpected. Younger women between 30 and 45 were significantly more victimised from all types of sexual harassment than those above 50. This is consistent with previous findings where women older than 50 were less likely to be victims of sexual harassment (Reese, & Lindenberg (2005). Males in the oldest age group, 56-61 years old, scored higher than males in all other age groups on observations of female victimisation from all types of sexual harassment. It has to be noticed that the number of participants in the oldest age group was very low; thus, the findings concerning this age group can be only indicative. This trend of increased perceptions of older male colleagues might be explained by the fact that, with age, they have become more experienced, and they might also have reached a higher level of morality. Any similar trend of increased perceptions of male colleagues has not to the knowledge of the authors been documented before, and this matter would be well worth further study. The presence of older male colleagues might prove to have a balancing effect on younger colleagues.

The aim of Study III was to explore the relationship between victimisation from six types of work harassment and active political participation and initiatives among representatives to the rural local governance of the Union Parishads in Bangladesh. In the present study, it was found that women had been more victimised than men from verbal, nonverbal, and rational-appearing aggression, as well as from social isolation and indirect social manipulation. Two previous studies (Begum,

2012; Panday, 2008) have found women in the local governance of Bangladesh to be more victimised from work harassment than men, which is in agreement with the present study. Begum (2012) found that verbal, attitudinal, and sexual harassment, and spreading negative rumours, were frequently experienced types of harassment by women of the local governance. Begum's findings are thus in close agreement with those of the current study. Attitudinal harassment, as described by Begum (2012), appears to have similarities with what in the present study has been referred to as rational appearing aggression. Women were mostly found to be victimised from rational-appearing aggression, followed by social isolation and verbal aggression. Victimization from indirect social manipulation and nonverbal aggression were experienced to a lesser degree by the women in the study. Men were found to be victimised mostly from verbal aggression; all the other types of harassment were experienced only to a very low degree. In general, women experienced less work harassment the older they became. Women in the oldest age group, between 56 and 61 years of age, had been significantly less victimized from work harassment compared to all other age groups. It should be noticed that women from the same age group, between 56 and 61 years old, have also been found to score higher on active political participation than younger women (Study I). Representatives in the same age group were also found to be less victimized from sexual harassment than female representatives between 29 and 45 years (c.f. Study I). The number of participants in the oldest age group was low; therefore, conclusions must be drawn cautiously. In the case of men, an opposite trend could be observed. Men from the age group of 56–61 years of age had been significantly more victimized from work harassment compared to all the other age groups. This age group also reported significantly lower political participation than all the other age groups. Overall, representatives who experienced more work harassment received lower scores on political participation. Regression analyses also showed that the six types of work harassment contributed as predictors of low political participation. Despite many legal provisions of the government to empower the women who take part to the local governance process of the country, the study showed a scenario of discrimination experienced by women in this arena. The laws passed to prevent violence against women are not being able to prevent silent aggression heeded towards women in the local governance. Ensuring the role of law, increasing the vigilance of the central

government, intervention of the civil society, and empowering women more with providing legal commission could improve this situation.

The aim of Study IV was to explore the effect of cultural and family hurdles on the active political participation of women peoples' representatives of the UPs of the country.

The correlation between cultural hurdles and level of political participation was negative. Women with high levels of political participation had experienced low cultural hurdles to female participation, while women with low levels of participation had experienced high cultural hurdles. This finding could be since women who encounter less cultural hurdles have a better possibility of becoming politically active, while women who live in circumstances where they experience severe cultural hurdles never get the chance to become politically active. The results also showed that older women experienced less cultural hurdles. Study I showed that the influence on political decisions was higher in the older age groups of women, while for men, there was almost no difference related to age. It could be that women who have not encountered severe levels of cultural hurdles have become more politically active as they grow older.

In contrast to the finding, family restrictions to female political participation increased with increased level of political participation. Women with high levels of political participation had experienced high levels of family restrictions, while women with low levels of political participation had experienced low level

4.2 Strengths and Limitations of the Studies

The most notable strength of the study is its quantitative nature, as this is the first scholarly endeavor to conduct studies in quantitative form on sex differences in political participation of the representatives of the Union Parishads of Bangladesh. The measurement scales were constructed first by making a literature review, then conducting a pilot study, and finally an item analysis. The study has covered a large sample ($N = 780$) in a wide area of the UPs (Total 128) of Bangladesh. Still, it may be debated whether the sample was fully representative.

4.3 Implications of the Studies

The studies have covered a vast area of sociocultural and institutional barriers of the UPs of Bangladesh in ensuring equal participation of both sexes, with a view to achieve a participatory and inclusive governance in the rural local governance of Bangladesh. The studies reveal that despite recent legislative measures, female political participation in Bangladesh still needs to be improved. As pointed out by Panday (2008), mere representation in the governance process does not necessarily ensure participation; therefore, female effective participation could be enhanced by for instance diminishing faulty meeting procedures. If female representatives would be informed correctly about meeting procedures, have their divergent opinions included in the minutes of the meetings, and if voting at meetings was introduced on a regular basis, female representatives could be encouraged to attend the meetings regularly and raise their voices without being embarrassed or afraid not to be accepted. By educating all members of the rural governance in sound meeting procedures, a change in female effective participation could perhaps be brought about. Due to undue power distribution, a patriarchal institutional climate, and an overall gender biased work environment, it is compelling for women to thrive in an often hostile organisational culture. Taking into account the overall high levels of sexual harassment reported by the women, it can be claimed that sexual harassment has become an institutional plague in the local governance body. Mutual honour among colleagues and a sound cooperative attitude could contribute to good governance in this lowest but very significant rural local level, the Union Parishads of Bangladesh. Showing due honour to female colleagues could ensure a positive institutional climate, which is essential for good governance of the country. To ensure good governance, equitable conditions for participation for both women and men are needed. Considering the high level of work harassment experienced by the women in the local governance, and their generally low level of participation in the core activities of the UPs, it seems obvious that work harassment and its impact on female participation has become an established institutional practice in the local governance. Only mutual trust, honour, and equal participation can ensure a harmonious institutional environment in the UPs, which is crucial to ensure functional governance. The goal number five of the Sustainable Development Goals, which strongly emphasises the participation of women to all the streams of the state machinery, can be

achieved through equal participation in the overall governance process. Effective participation can foster overall development and enable the country to develop.

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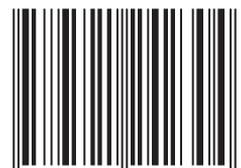
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Sex Differences in Effective Political Participation among Elected People's Representatives of the Rural Local Governance Units, Union Parishads, of Bangladesh: Workplace and Sexual Harassment, and Cultural Hurdles to Female Participation

In this PhD thesis, sex differences in political participation and related factors among people's representatives in the local governance of Bangladesh were explored. Representatives from Union Parishads, the rural local governance bodies of Bangladesh, 347 females and 333 males, took part in the study. It was shown that females scored lower than males on influence on political decisions, active political participation and initiatives, and political commissions of trust. They also scored higher than males on the victimisation from faulty meeting procedures. Women were also more victimised than men from five types of workplace harassment: verbal, nonverbal, and rational-appearing aggression, social isolation, and indirect social manipulation. Great discrepancies were found between reports by females of victimisation from sexual harassment at work and awareness of the ongoing sexual harassment by their male colleagues. Besides workplace harassment and sexual harassment, female political participation in the Union Parishads of Bangladesh was also hampered by both cultural hurdles and family restrictions. Male colleagues did not observe the full amount of hurdles that the female representatives experienced. It is concluded that despite recent legislative measures, women representatives still face far more difficulties than their male colleagues, and that female political participation needs to be improved further in Bangladesh.



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