



# Experiences of Sexual Harassment and Precautions to be taken by The Girl Students: A Study

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## **Introduction:**

Since long time, girls and women have been facing sexual harassment irrespective of the place and a person. As girls are gaining freedom regarding their education, decision making, choosing life partner and their daily routine, they have started living more in a world outside their homes. As a result, chances of their sexual harassment inside and outside their homes are rising. Seeing the injustice and exploitation faced by the girls, the government have established many agencies and organizations which play a key role in creating awareness about sexual harassment as well as helping girls get justice, if she has faced any act of sexual harassment. So, in this research study the researcher studied the experiences of sexual harassment girls had faced and what precautionary measures they would take to protect themselves from being sexually harassed.

## **Objectives of the Study:**

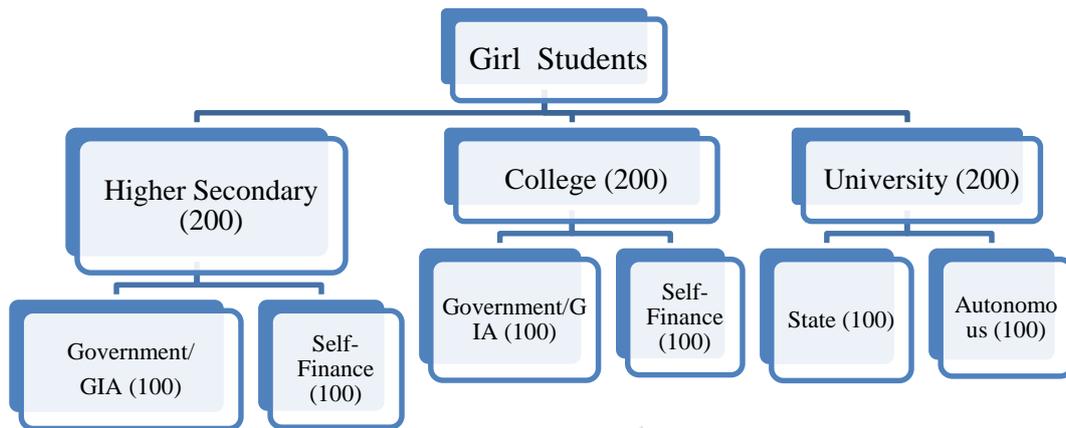
1. A study on experiences of sexual harassment of girl students
2. A study on precautions to be taken by the girl students against sexual harassment

## **Limitations of the Study:**

- Only Rajkot city was taken for the research work.
- Educational institutions were selected in such a manner that every area of the city gets covered in the research work.
- Girl students of regular courses were selected as respondents.
- According to the title of the research work, only girl students were taken for this research work.

### Research Design:

Here, the researcher has carried out the research work quantitatively and all the information regarding the work was collected by personal visits at various educational institutions and by the Google form filled by the respondents. For this research, researcher selected 600 samples as respondents.



**Classification of Students**

The researcher took an equal number of respondents based on students studying in granted and non-granted institutions.

Government and Grant-In-Aid institutions were taken combined and Universities were bifurcated into State and Autonomous University.

The final output of the research was obtained by using MS Excel.

### What is Sexual Harassment?

Sexual Harassment includes anyone or more of the following unwelcome acts or behaviour whether directly or by implication, namely:

- Physical contact or advances;
- A demand or request for sexual favors;
- Making sexually colored remarks;
- Showing pornography;
- Any other unwelcomed physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct of a sexual nature.

The Act defined Sexual Harassment as per the order of the supreme court as any unwelcome, sexually determined physical, verbal, or non-verbal conduct. Examples included sexually suggestive remarks about women, demands for sexual favors, and sexually offensive visuals.

### What are the possible circumstances and behaviour for Sexual Harassment?

- Implied or explicit promise of preferential treatment as quid pro quo for sexual favors;
- Implied or explicit threat of detrimental treatment in the conduct of work;
- Implied or explicit threat about the present or future status of the person concerned;
- Creating an intimidating offensive or hostile learning environment;
- Humiliating treatment is likely to affect the health, safety, dignity, or physical integrity of the person concerned.

According to the Handbook of Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (2015), the victim faces certain problems in their personal and professional life after being sexually harassed which are mentioned below:

Professional	Personal
Decreased work performance	Depression
Increased absenteeism, loss of pay	Anxiety and Panic Attacks
Loss of promotional opportunities, affecting the academics	Traumatic stress
Retaliation from the respondent, or colleagues/ friends of the respondent	Sleeplessness
Subjected to gossip and scrutiny at work/ study	Shame, guilt, and Self-blame
Being objectified	Difficulty in concentrating
Becoming publicly sexualized	Headaches
Defamation	Fatigue and loss of motivation
Being ostracized	Personal difficulties with time
Having to relocate	Eating disorders (weight loss or gain)
Job and career consequences	Feeling betrayed and/or violated
Weakened support network	Feeling angry
-	Feeling powerless/helpless
-	Loss of confidence and self-esteem
-	Overall loss of trust in people
-	Problems with intimacy

### Effect on the victim of sexual harassment

#### Review of Literature

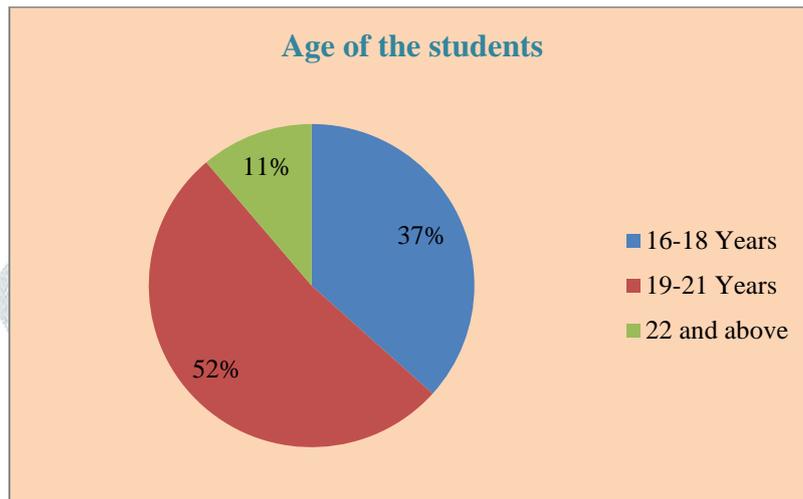
- According to **American Association of University Women AAUW (2006)**, on “Sexual Harassment at Colleges and Universities”, the AAUW claimed that while both men and women were targets of sexual harassment, "women are disproportionately negatively affected." 62% of female college students and 61% of male college students report having been sexually harassed at their university, 66% of college students know someone personally who was harassed, 10% or fewer of student sexual harassment victims attempt to report their experiences to a university employee, 35% or more of college students who experience sexual harassment do not tell anyone about their experiences. 80% of students who experienced sexual harassment report being harassed by another student or former student, 39% of students who experienced sexual harassment say the incident or incidents occurred in the dorm, 51% of male college students admit to sexually harassing someone in college, with 22% admitting to harassing someone often or occasionally, 31% of female college students admit to harassing someone in college.
- **Kaushal, A. (2016)** describes differentiation between **rape, molestation & sexual harassment** as “**rape**” is having sex with someone in a way that they didn't consent to whereas sexual assault is well-assaulting someone sexually, touching them inappropriately, or threatening them in a sexual context. The activities might be physical or verbal with a force. Whereas harassment is a "continuing act for a prolonged manner" whereby saying something inappropriate to someone repeatedly or interacting with them or their belongings and personal space in a way that is inappropriate or uncomfortable to a target. Generally, for it to be harassment the harasser has to ignore requests to stop or when requested to stop, switches to a different target. Rape, in most jurisdictions, requires penetration of the penis into the vagina, anus or mouth without the legal consent of the victim. Some jurisdictions consider anus and mouth penetration as "sodomy." On the other hand, “**Molestation**” means using things other than your penis (mouth, hands, and objects) to touch sexual areas of underage children. You cannot molest an adult. “**Sexual assault**” is the adult version of molestation. Using things other than a penis to touch/penetrate the sexual areas of an adult.
- **Leach (2013)** in his study reported that countries with weak educational setups, poverty, and gender discrimination have a high prevalence of sexual harassment cases in their higher educational institutes.

(Beninger, 2013) reported that sexual harassment is more prevalent in those institutes where teachers are not trained efficiently and are paid less.

**Result and Discussion:**

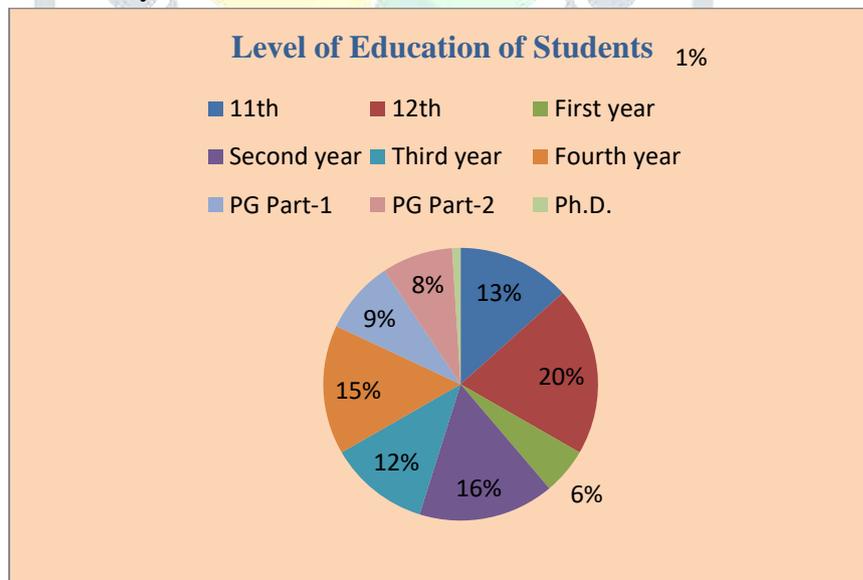
Researcher took girls age, their level of education, stream of education, whom does the institute teach, medium of instruction of their institutions, students’ stay while they were studying, what type of sexual harassment was faced and precautionary measures they preferred to protect themselves from sexual harassment.

**Primary Information about Students:**



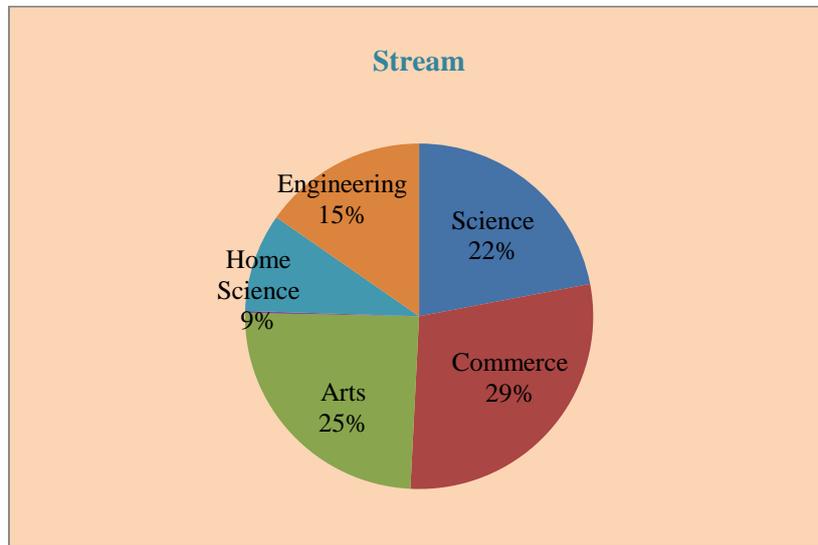
Age of the students (%)

The age group was classified into 3 groups. Students who belonged to 16-18 years of the age group were 37% and students belonging to 19-21 years of the age group comprised 52% while only 11% of students belonging to an age of more than 22 years.



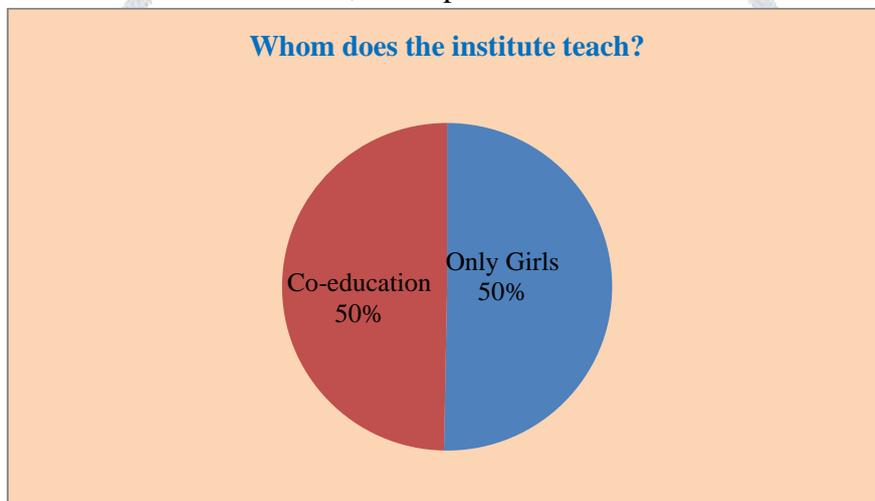
Level of Education of Students (%)

Based on educational qualification, students were classified into 9 categories. Students were from standard 11th to Ph.D. 13%, 20%, 6%, 16%, 12%, 15%, 9%, 8% and 1% belonged to standard 11th, 12th, first year, second year, third year, fourth year, PG 1, PG 2 and Ph.D. respectively.



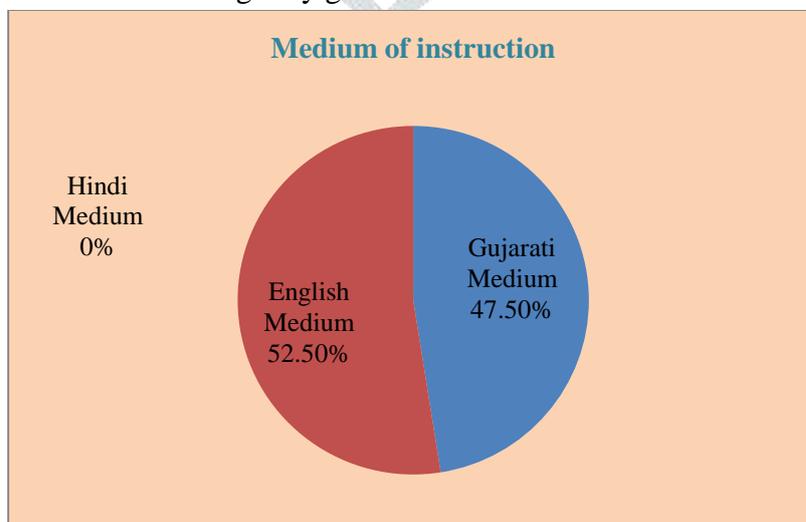
**Stream (%)**

Students were classified into 10 groups based on stream. The majority of students belonged to commerce i.e. 29% while 25% of students belonged to arts, 9% home science, 15% engineering and 22% science respectively. And from the rest of the streams, no responses were obtained.



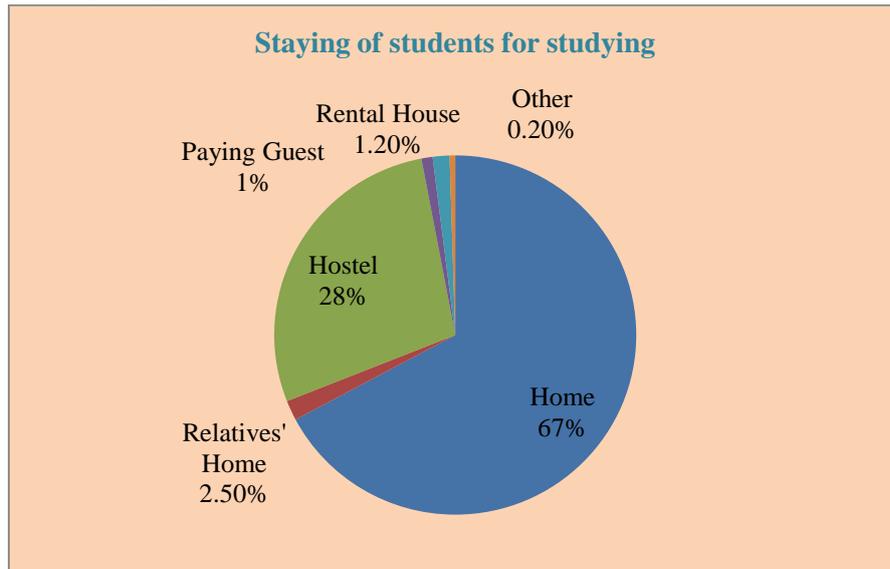
**Whom does the institute teach? (%)**

Based on whom does the institution teaches, the students were classified into 2 categories and students equally belonged to the institution teaching only girls as well as co-education i.e. 50% each.



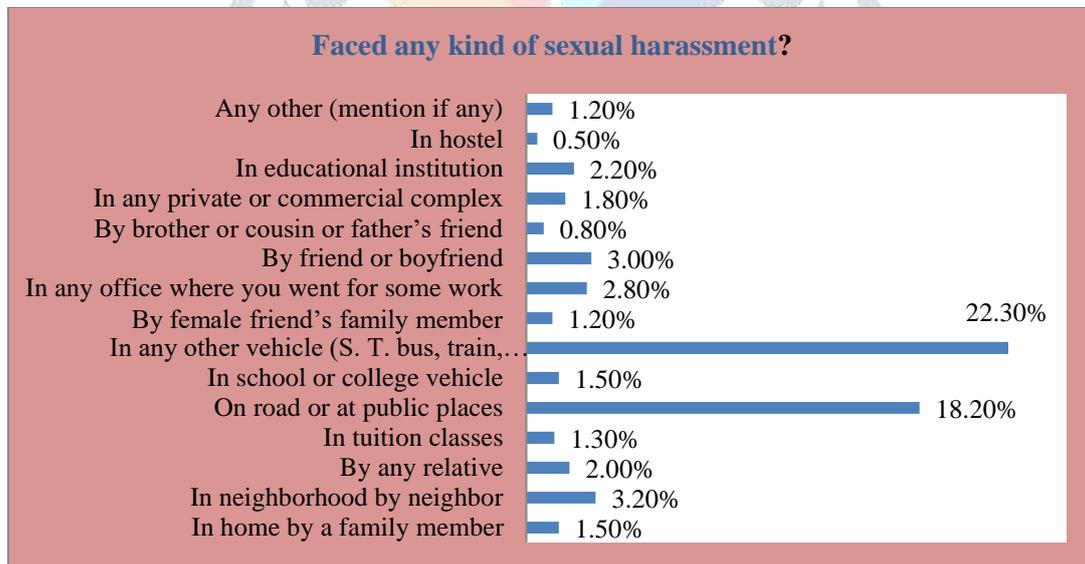
**Medium of instruction (%)**

Students were classified into 3 categories based on the medium of instruction of the institution given to students. 52.50% of students belonged to English medium and 47.50% of students belonged to Gujarati medium and no institution giving instructions in Hindi.



Staying of students for studying (%)

Based on where the students stayed during their studying years, they were classified into 6 categories. 67% students were staying at home while studying, while 2.50% students at relatives' house, 28% staying in hostel, 1% students were staying in paying guest and 1.20% in rental house, while other accommodation were 0.20%.



Faced any kind of sexual harassment? (%)

A total of 15 options were given to students in this optional section. Almost at every place, a student was sexually harassed from home to outside her home, by a relative to by an unknown person. Even their sexual harassment was observed in educational institutions and its vehicle, hostel, and tuition classes. But the majority of students experienced sexual harassment in public places and public transportations.

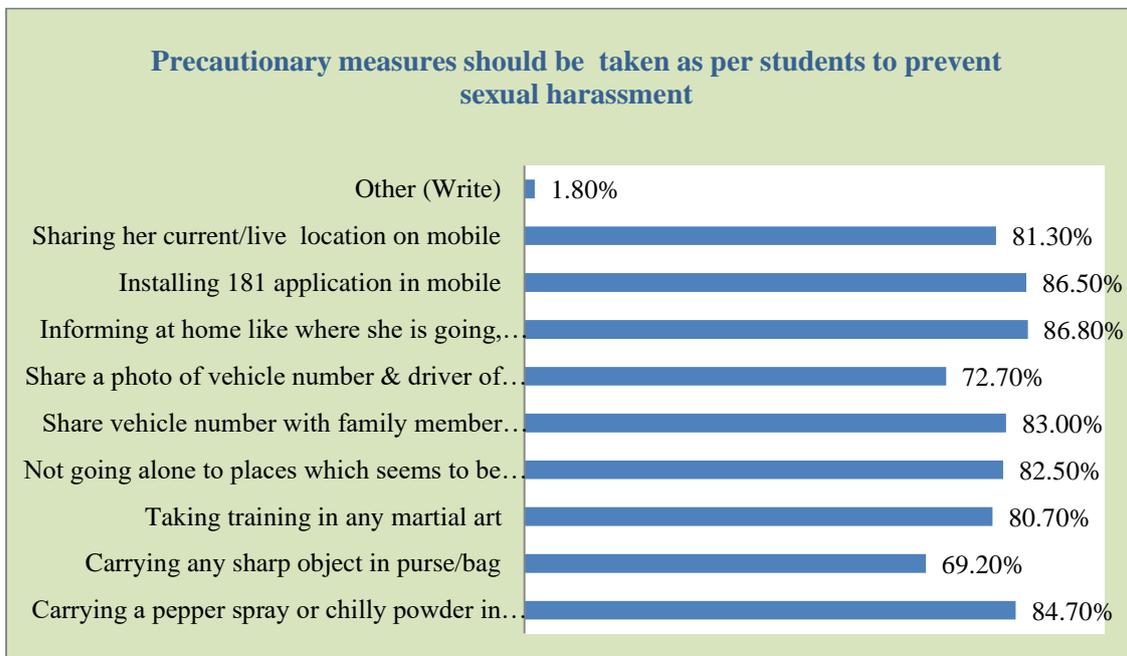
There was an option which the researcher kept which allowed the students to mention a place where she had experienced sexual harassment apart from the options given and they were:

- In hospitals by doctors
- During training programs
- On phone calls

- By an anonymous person while walking home from college
- During any sports event
- By doctors in their clinic

The researcher provided space at the end of the questionnaire so that the students could share their point of view or any experience regarding the topic. And responses of students were mentioned below:

- A friendly relationship between a child and parents can help to lessen the chances of sexual harassment.
- Society should first teach their sons to respect girls rather than commenting or taunting girls.
- It was observed by a student that sometimes doctor touches unnecessarily under the pretext of checking the patient. So please do not visit a doctor alone.
- Sex education might make a child aware that whatever he/she was facing was wrong and thus, he/she can inform his/her parents, and thus, their chances of being sexually harassed will be less.
- It is the parents' duty to give their children sex education in order to prevent their child's sexual harassment.
- Parents should trust their children and should support them in every situation.
- Sex education gives proper knowledge and satisfies a child's curiosity and thus, a child gets more mature.
- Police and the public should protect and support girls in their fight against sexual harassment.
- Sex education cannot completely abolish sexual harassment. Strict laws and quick judgment will create fear and make a person think twice.
- Sex education is helpful to prevent sexual harassment but counselling of the victim is more needed.
- Sex education provides a child an understanding of good touch and bad touch.
- There should be conduction of lectures, seminars, and programs in an educational institution so that one can know where to complain regarding sexual harassment.
- Though our country has strict laws against sexual harassment but due to people having money and power are somehow being declared not guilty and even though there are strict laws, there is an increase in incidents of sexual harassment rather than getting lesser.
- Not at all times do the CCTV cameras help as evidence because manipulation with CCTV is easy and happens often.
- Due to a lack of police support, the victim commits suicide.
- There are many mobile applications which can protection and help a woman.
- There are incidents where the accused threatens the victim and her family when she complains about her sexual harassment. Many times, the accused bribes and escapes from the judicial system.
- In one case, a girl shared an incident of sexual harassment in her primary school. The victim remembered that when she was in primary school, the principal of the school used to touch private parts of the girl including the breast area. She felt that children were sent to school by parents not for educating them but for the reason that they did not have time for their children. One day the victim was not able to bear such harassment and complained to her parents regarding this. Her parents asked her to leave studying. After convincing them for 3 years they gave her permission for studying on one condition that she will not tell anyone regarding the deeds of the principal.
- One respondent shared her experience of sexual harassment which she faced when she was a child. At that time she didn't know that what she was experiencing was sexual harassment but when she grew up, she came to know that what she faced was sexual harassment and thought to tell her mother. But when she conveyed her story to her mother, her mother silenced her by saying that 'Such things happen in a huge family and don't mention this thing to anyone else. And how long you're going to stay with us or we don't have much time to stay with this family. So, keep quiet and do not mention this anywhere.'



### Precautionary measures should be taken as per students to prevent Sexual Harassment (%)

This section comprised of 10 options as precautionary steps a student will choose to protect her from sexual harassment. It was observed that the majority of students agreed with the above-mentioned options as the way to protect them from sexual harassment.

There were other responses obtained from the students which are mentioned below:

- Usage of scarf to cover the face in order to keep the real age, looks, identity etc. hidden.
- To be ready and alert for any kind of upcoming circumstances.
- To engage one in talking continuously with family members while travelling to an unknown place or travelling with an unknown person.
- Not to keep pin, face, or any other password in one's phone so that someone can call and inform one's family in case of emergency.
- To share and discuss every matter with family members.
- While travelling in a share rickshaw, check whether any woman is travelling in it or not.
- To attack with whatever one is holding e.g. school bag, water bottle, etc. when someone tries to attack or harass.
- To hit with your footwear when someone tries to attack or harass.
- Shout out loudly when someone harasses in public places so that the public will gather and assault the person.

All in all, it was observed that students were highly aware of their protection.

### Conclusion

- Girl students were much more aware of sexual harassment because incidents of sexual harassment are increasing day by day.
- Girls were quite aware of their self-defence and raising their voice against sexual harassment.
- It was observed that girl students shared their experience regarding their sexual harassment apart from educational institutions quite openly with their teachers.
- Though there are many laws and act, there are many girls who are facing sexual harassment, both inside and outside their homes, but there are many girls who are quite aware about sexual harassment and ways to prevent them.

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3. Dr. M. N. Jivani, Professor, Electronics Dept., Saurashtra University, Rajkot
4. My respondents

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