

Is It Possible to Achieve Zero Tolerance on Sexual Harassment and Violence in Public Space? A Look Through the Lenses of Critical Social Work

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Abstract

This paper presents the research findings within the project “Banja Luka City with zero tolerance on sexual harassment and sexual violence” conducted by Foundation United Women that was supported from UN Women in Bosnia and Herzegovina within the initiative Safe Cities and Safe Public Places that was carried out in the city of Banja Luka as pilot project. In this paper we attempt to answer the question: Is it possible to achieve zero tolerance on sexual harassment and sexual violence in public space in city of Banja Luka? Our attempt to do so includes looking through the lenses of critical social work and use the theoretical framework of feminist theories, all under the umbrella of critical social theory, in order to have better understanding of social phenomenon of sexual harassment and sexual violence in public space. The research findings presented in this paper include analysis on data collected on regarding the following: opinions of citizens on the need to legally sanction sexual harassment and sexual violence in public space, how safe do we feel in public space, forms of sexual harassment and violence that can be recognised or have experienced, what is the level of public awareness, and how informed were citizens about the Campaign ‘NO means NO’ carried out in the city of Banja Luka.

Key words: critical social work, sexual harassment, sexual violence, public spaces.

Introduction

Sexual harassment (SH) and other forms of sexual violence (SV) in public spaces are universal issues which women experience in/on streets, schools, public transportation, workplaces, public washrooms, and parks in urban, rural, and

conflict/post conflict settings. It ranges from unwelcome sexual remarks and touches, to rape and femicide. It has taken place for quite some time, and occurs often in formal and informal contexts, as well as in public spaces.

In 2013, the United Nations Commission for the Status of Women (CSW 57) identified various forms of sexual violence against women and girls (SVAWG) in public spaces as a distinct area of concern and called on governments to prevent it. UN Women's Global Flagship Initiative "Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces for Women and Girls" builds were launched in November 2010 and includes a Global framework and accompanying global tools to support local government working with women's rights organizations and other parts to design and implement comprehensive initiatives to prevent and respond to SVAWG in public spaces.¹

UN Women in Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNWB&H) commenced working on the initiative Safe Cities and Safe Public Places in 2019, when the assessment on capacities and motivation in six largest cities in B&H for working on the above-mentioned initiative was conducted. After completing a very detailed consultative process, the UNWB&H selected the city of Banja Luka as the pilot initiative in B&H. The cooperation between the city of Banja Luka and UN Women was defined and formalised through joint signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The Consultive Group for supporting successful implementation of the initial phase was established, which included development of a Scoping Study and Program Document. The Group was consisted of seven representatives from different institutions/organisations (The B&H Agency for Gender Equality, The Major's Cabinet of the City of Banja Luka, The Security forum of the City of Banja Luka, Gender Centre of the Republic of Srpska, The Ministry of Family, Youth and Sport of the Republic of Srpska, The Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Srpska, Police Administration Banja Luka and UN Women).

Banja Luka is the largest and capital city of Republic of Srpska (entity of Bosnia and Herzegovina). It represents the political, administrative, financial, university and cultural centre of the Republic of Srpska. According to the 2013 B&H Census, the population in Banja Luka amounts to 185,059. There are 57 local communities in the area of the City of Banja Luka, which represent a territorial and functional unit. The Republic's Statistical Office (2019) has data on the number of inhabitants for a populated place, while data on the number and characteristics of inhabitants for areas of populated places are not collected separately.

¹ Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces: Flagship Programme. Available at: <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/how%20we%20work/flagship%20programmes/fpi-brief-safe-cities-and-safe-public-spaces-en.pdf?la=en&vs=221>

The first step in the initiative implementation process was to develop the Scoping Study. The Study was conducted in two intervention locations – Local community of Lazarevo and Local Community of Vrbanja. Based on estimates from the field, it was found that the local community of Lazarevo has 14,500 to 18,000 inhabitants with an average age range between 35 and 50 years. There is no gender-specific estimates. As for the data related to the local community of Vrbanja, it is estimated that there are 5,000 to 5,500 inhabitants with an average age range between 45 and 50.¹ The focus was predominantly on trying to understand the local context, experiences regarding sexual harassment (SH) and identifying weaknesses and potential solutions. The voices of women agencies of change/beneficiaries were included in the process from the very beginning, depending on the possibilities. It is worth mentioning that data collection was carried out in the peak time of the pandemic of COVID-19 virus, which resulted with overcoming different obstacles during the final phase. The Study was consisted of assessment on available data on sexual harassment and analysis on primary data on sexual harassment and other types of sexual violence (SV) in public places. The study was carried out using focus groups for discussion (FGD) and key informers interviewing (KII).

The development of the Program Document followed after completing the Scoping study results validation process with all interested parties and partners. The key inputs for the Program Document development² – a five-year plan with clearly defined outcomes, results, indicators and goals, all were collected during one consultative workshop held in Banja Luka on 10th September 2020. The Program Document and Results Framework were developed and validated by the Consultative Group and key actors. As anticipated by the Plan, the Baseline Study represented the final part of the preparations for Program implementation and is adding to all previous steps implemented within the Program. Baseline data helped to set achievable and realistic indicator targets for each level of results in the project's design, followed by determining and adjusting progress towards targets and their respective results.

“The city of Banja Luka with zero tolerance on sexual harassment and violence in public place” is a project being implemented by the non-government organisation Foundation *Udružene žene* (Foundation United Women), with the main aim to contribute to creating a safe environment and space for women and children, without sexual violence and sexual harassment in public places. Sexual violence and sexual harassment in public places are topics that do not get enough attention in B&H society. Also, problems and issues of victims/survivors hasn't been addressed

¹ The assessments were carried out by the City Administration of Banja Luka:

<https://www.banjaluka.rs.ba/gradska-uprava/mjesne-zajednice/>

² Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces: Flagship Programme. Available at: <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/how%20we%20work/flagship%20programmes/fpi-brief-safe-cities-and-safe-public-spaces-en.pdf?la=en&vs=221> (accessed on 4. 2. 2022).

appropriately. Having an extensive experience in suppressing and combating gender-based violence and sexual violence, the Foundation of Affiliated Women have created activities that would contribute to building-up safer environment for women and girls in Banja Luka, especially in the two already mentioned local communities that were recognised as high-risk local communities in the research conducted previously: Lazarevo and Vrbanja.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

The key terms are defined in accordance with the Global Program of the United Nations for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (UN Women) *Safe Cities and Free of Violence against Women and Girls*.

Sexual harassment (SH) is one of the most common types of sexual violence, easily tolerated and without proper sanctioning mechanisms within the majority of legislation. It includes unwanted sexual behaviours that does not necessarily involve physical contact, and the person gets into an uncomfortable and humiliating position, which can also result in feeling ashamed. It can be any unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical behaviour of sexual nature which aims or produces person's violation of dignity, especially if it creates terrifying, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. Examples for these unwanted behaviours are: unwanted sexual jokes, sexual remarks and comments about someone's body parts or appearance; unwanted deliberate touching, leaning, close physical presence or pinching; whistling, staling; trying to communicate without consent or leaving some objects behind, so they can be found; kiss (sound of kissing) or fondling without consent; exposing private body parts without consent; sexually suggestive acting out etc. (UN Women, 2019).

Sexual violence (SV) includes, but is not limited to: forced touching or forcing someone to touch in a sexual manner; trying to force sexual intercourse and forcing sexual intercourse. In accordance with the Istanbul Convention, sexual violence can be any unwanted acts: vaginal, anal or oral penetration of sexual nature with any part of the body or with object, without the other person consenting; other deeds of sexual nature with another person without getting consent from that person; influencing other person to participate without consent in deeds of sexual nature with a third party (UN Women, 2019).

Public space can be a street or any other public place in settlements (squares, small lanes etc.), markets, locations for water distribution, river bed; cemeteries; footpaths between different parts of settlements that go through dark and forest areas that have no lights; public transport (for example, buses, taxi, trains); routes to and from schools and other education facilities; temporary public spaces (for example, carnivals, festivals, fairs); internet cafes, public parks and other leisure and sport venues (football stadiums including playgrounds); and other public recreational areas, such as public buildings and infrastructure (for example, public toilets/washrooms and similar).

The **theoretical framework** chosen in this paper is underpinned by critical social theories presented in the following paragraphs. The framework can give us a broader understanding of possible paths towards achieving zero tolerance on sexual harassment and violence in public places, as well as understanding the phenomenon. The aim is to have a look through the lenses of critical social work perspective and see if it is possible to achieve zero tolerance on sexual harassment and violence in public places of city of Banja Luka?

Critical social theory has been developed in 1920s and is well known as the “Frankfurt School”. Brother history on the development of critical social theory can be explored in Jay’s writings (1996), influencing many other theories, including the theories and practice of social work. Critical social theory provides a broader framework for understanding the context in which social work practice operates, allowing professionals to make connections between the personal and political, or better to say, structural in given society. As Fook (2012a) summarizes from Agger (1998), recognizing the shared common grounds of different theorists within the critical social theories, “domination is both personally experienced and structurally created” (Fook, 2012a, Stephens, 2020:445). This can be interpreted in a way that individuals can participate in the creation of their believes about their position in society (social structure), their own power and possibilities to change. As Fook (2007) emphasizes, this means that social change must be “both personal and collective” (Stephens, 2020:445). If we are to agree with Fook, emphasizing that knowledge is usually grounded in empirical studies and researches, however, can be interpreted differently because it can be constructed both personally and socially, we can also agree that communication plays a very important role, especially when social constructing is concerned. According to Fook (2007, Stephens, 2020), communication and dialogue can create shared understanding and bring personal and social change. Critical social theory provides the possibility of change in awareness of forms of SH and SV that are present in the public space and are tolerated as part of the cultural structure in traditional environment such as Republic of Srpska.

Social wok theories and approaches were strongly influenced by critical social theories, starting with radical theories, but for the purpose of this paper, the influence of feminist ideas will be explored. Feminist ideas strongly attacked gender inequality, as well as class-based oppression. Dominelli (2002a:7, in Pease and Bob et.al, 2009:23) defines feminist social work as “practice that starts from an analysis of women’s experience of the world and focuses on the links between women’s position in society and their individual predicaments to create egalitarian client-worker relationships and address structural inequalities”. The connection and importance of this definition and research conducted and presented in this paper can be found in many strategies of feminist social work, summarized by Martin (2003, in Pease and Bob et.al, 2009:23), which includes defining personal problems as political and structural. This can lead towards good social change campaigns that request

allocation of funds for gender-specific programs with the goal to reach zero tolerance on sexual harassment and violence in public space. On the other hand, critical social work is enhanced by the recognition that human rights violations are directly connected to the social work practice and social policy documents, not only Constitutions and UN and other relevant international documents. Social workers are obliged by ethical and professional standards to challenge human rights issues and violations by engaging and combining advocacy for feminist movements fighting for zero tolerance on sexual harassment and violence against women in the broadest possible sense. As emphasized by Nipperess and Briskman (in Pease and Bob, et.al, 2009:58-69), human rights approach (as a critical social work approach) goes beyond the areas of practice, providing additional tools to analyze the world, being “vital in forging connections for social workers between the wider, and often global, forces and context of practice” (Pease and Bob, et.al, 2009:67). This theoretical framework underpins the interpretation of the study results presented in this paper.

Research Design and Methods

The methodology used in the baseline study was defined by the Program Document and Results Framework. Selected indicators depending on the level of influence, outcomes and results were included in the data collected for the purpose of baseline study. Some methods used for data collection and analysis were also used for defining the starting point for more than one indicator. Data from the Scoping Study and findings from the Workshop for program development, as well as from the scoping study validation meetings were used and further analysis was conducted when Baseline Study was developed. Data presented in the baseline study were not collected for all indicators because some of the basic data were already defined during previous activities within this initiative.

A specially created Survey was used for data collection in local communities of Lazarevo and Vrbanja. The Survey collected data regarding opinions and attitudes of citizens living in the above-mentioned local communities on sexual harassment and sexual violence. This survey was modified to fit the standards on mid-term researches and additional questions were added in order to monitor the results achieved through the activities implemented as part of the framework project “Banja Luka – City with zero tolerance on sexual harassment and violence”. The medium-term analysis on effects of certain activities implemented within this project was carried out for the territory of city of Banja Luka, without determining specific local communities. The majority of activities that were carried out referred to the whole territory of the city, especially the campaign “NO means NO”.

The sample that was extracted from the general population was consisted of 166 respondents that participated in the research accessing the survey online. It was assessed that approximately one third of Banja Luka population actively uses internet and social media where the online survey was created and launched. According to the

census from 2013, 36.2% of B&H population is informatically literate, out of which 51.1% are women (UN Women, 2021).

Data collection

The baseline data was collected using two methods: online and in person surveys, desk review of the case records and media content. The Baseline analysis also utilized information obtained in the scoping study, as well as information shared during the program development workshop.

For the purpose of medium-term analysis on effects of activities implemented within the project “Banja Luka – City with zero tolerance on sexual harassment and violence”, the survey was modified and added for data collection from general population in baseline study. Also, the findings from the baseline studies were used for the purpose of comparative analysis. Modified Survey was consisted of 19 questions, out of which 16 questions were mandatory (3 remaining questions were preconditioned by previous questions). Questions were created to be of open and closed type. The Survey was available online and sponsored on social media platform Facebook, via the official website of the Foundation of Affiliated Women who implemented the project.

The data collection as part of the research process was carried out for 10 days, from 10th February to 20th February 2022. The majority of respondents participated in Survey between the second and fourth day of the data collection period.

Research Findings and Discussion

The participants in this research were inhabitants of the city of Banja Luka, regardless of their residency location within the city territory. The respondents that participated in this research reside in 34 local communities of the city of Banja Luka, out of which 19 are within the city centre and 15 are located in the suburbs of the city of Banja Luka (which represents half of the local communities within the city, out of 57 local communities in total).

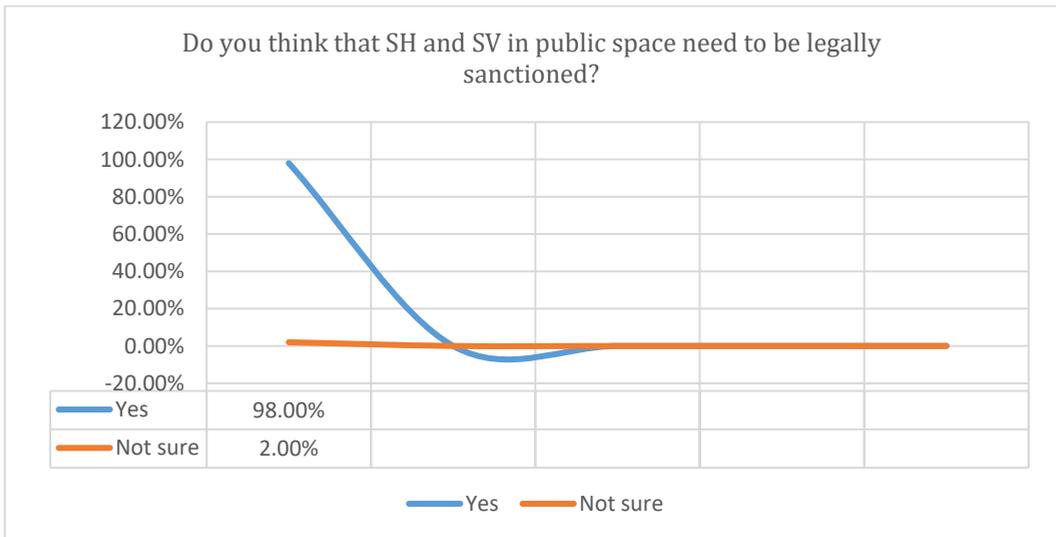
The age range of respondents show that the majority participants in the research are within the age-range between 30 and 40 (27.71%) and 40 and 50 years of age (33.13%).

As for the gender structure of respondents, a statistically significant domination belongs to women, with percentage just below 90%. Expressed in numbers, 149 women and 17 men participated in this research. Such gender distribution of respondents in an online survey clearly show that women are significantly more interested in questions regarding sexual harassment and sexual violence, comparing to men in city of Banja Luka. This fact confirms the premises of the feminist social work perspectives, which emphasize that issues concerning sexual harassment and sexual violence most commonly affect women and girls.

The survey covered opinions of respondents on the need to sanction and require criminal responsibility for committed acts of sexual harassment and sexual violence in public space. The respondents agree to a very high degree that such acts and behaviours should be sanctioned (162 respondents or 98.2%), while only 0.6% respondents are of the opinion that such behaviours should not be sanctioned (one respondent). The Baseline Study also showed the same attitude towards this problem.

Regarding the need to regulate and sanction such behaviours in public space by adapting adequate legislation, the same percentage of respondents believe that there is a need to introduce new legislation that would regulate sexual harassment and sexual violence in public space (98.2%), while the rest of respondents were undecided. Comparing with the Baseline Study, the percentage of respondents that believe that sexual harassment and sexual violence in public spaces should be regulated with adequate legislation and sanctioned was higher for 8%. Such an increase can be contributed to a higher consciousness of citizens due to implemented activities and campaign “NO means NO” that was carried out at the city of Banja Luka territory. The respondents’ opinions are presented in Chart 1 (below).

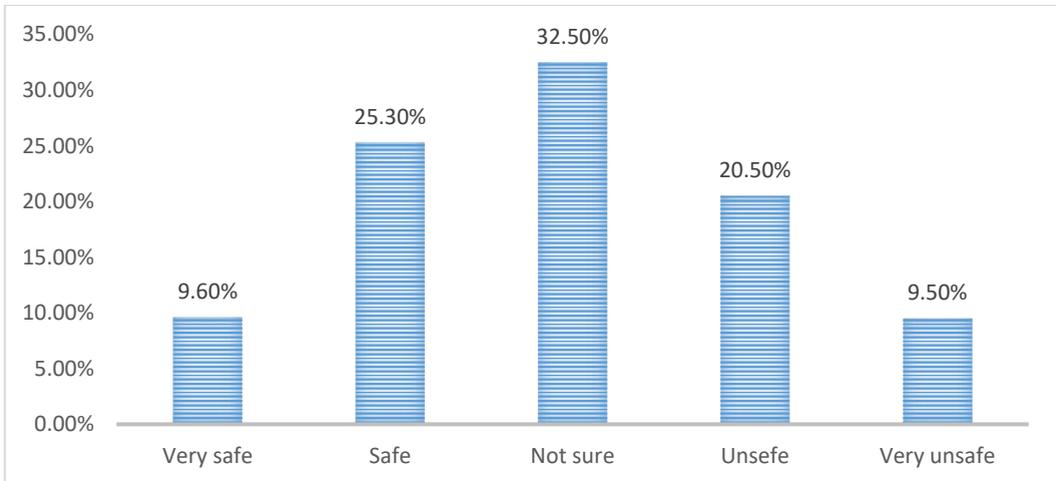
Chart 1. Opinions of citizens of city of Banja Luka on the need to legally sanction sexual harassment and sexual violence in public spaces



One of the aims of this research was to determine the level of safety citizens of city of Banja Luka feel. Using a five-point scale, all respondents expressed their subjective feeling of safety in public spaces in the city. The research results show that in relation to possibility to experience sexual harassment and sexual violence in public spaces, 34.9% of respondents feel safe (9.6% very safe and 25.3% safe), which is in line with

the results and findings from the Baseline Study (from the sample created in local communities of Lazarevo and Vrbanja, such opinion was expressed by 32% of participants). A significant difference was noticed in percentage of respondents that were not sure in assessing the level of safety they feel in public spaces. The percentage of such responses was decreased by close to 18% (the Baseline Study showed that such opinion was expressed by 50% of participants, while the medium-term research results show that 32.5% of participants expressed this opinion). These research findings can correlate with the increase in public consciousness on problems concerning sexual harassment and sexual violence in public spaces, and their manifestable types. The graphic presentation of participants' opinions on subjective feeling of safety in public space is presented in Chart 2.

Chart 2. Subjective feeling of safety in public space



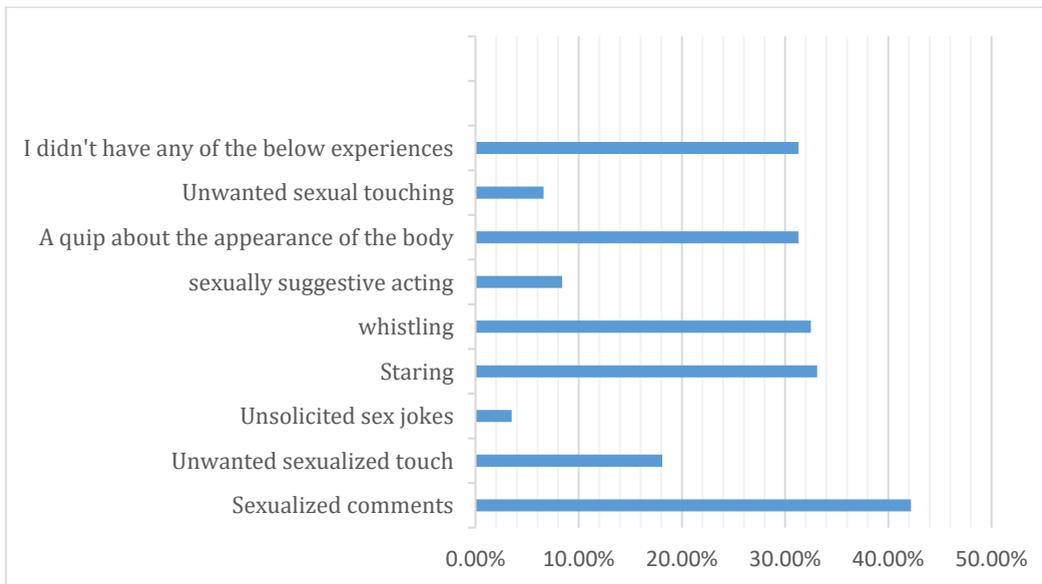
The alarming data and finding were that 38% of respondents avoid certain public spaces in the city, in order to secure a higher level of personal safety. When asked to state which public spaces they avoid, the respondents could name the actual public spaces. Synthesising the responses, it could be concluded that respondents named as unsafe public spaces those public spaces that are not illuminated enough, certain places where people gather in late-night hours (caffé bars and nightclubs), and taxi and public transport during late-night hours.

When asked what can be done in the public space of Banja Luka city in order to increase safety, the majority of respondents suggested that it would be good to increase the police presence during the late-night hours (41%). Also, a statistically significant percentage of respondents believe that video-monitoring is one of the possible measures that can be introduced to increase the feeling of safety (21.1%). An interesting result worth mentioning here is a fairly low percentage (8.4%) of responses regarding the need to increase the illumination in public space, having in

mind that the majority of respondents stated that they avoid less illuminated spaces due to feeling less safe. One third (1/3) of respondents replied in an open question type that all mentioned measures should be implemented.

The frequency of forms of sexual harassment and sexual violence in public space experienced by respondents is presented in Chart 3. As for the responses regarding sexual harassment and sexual violence in public space experienced during the past 12 months or earlier, the highest response detected was the experience of receiving sexual comments in public space (42.2%). Unwanted sexual jokes were experienced by 36.7% of respondents, while another high percent of respondents emphasized that they never experienced any of the offered responses. A significant finding of this research is that 18.1% of respondents have experienced unwanted touching, and unwanted sexualised touching was experienced by 6.6% of respondents. Comparing with the findings from the Baseline Study, there are no significant differences. The most dominant group of women that had experienced sexual harassment and sexual violence in public space are of the age between 30 and 40 years, which is in line with the results from the Baseline Study. This can lead to a conclusion that according to the research results in both research studies, the most exposed group (age range) to sexual harassment and sexual violence in public space are women between 30 and years of age.

Chart 3. Recognized (experienced) forms of SH and SV in public space



The experience of sexual harassment and sexual violence in public space most commonly appeared in streets (46.1%), while a significant number of experiences ,

according to the responses from participants, took place in public institutions (19.1%). This indicates the fact that sexual harassment is tolerated and not seen as a problem, and that places expected to provide safety to citizens do not have prevention mechanisms in place. One of the possible explanations might correlate with not recognising the manifestation of different forms of sexual harassment. This is indicating the need to implement structural changes in society, which includes activities on raising public awareness and other prevention activities (not just legislation related). This is underpinned by the fact that the University in Banja Luka is one of the rare public institutions in the city that has adopted regulations concerning activities in cases of sexual harassment and sexual violence, which came in effect in 2021. Comparing to the Baseline Study, a significant differences were noticed when it comes to the place where sexual harassment and sexual violence was experienced. The results show that the most common places where sexual harassment was experienced are: streets (74%) and public transport (34%).

When asked about the information shared in case of experiencing sexual harassment and sexual violence in public space, and the discourse of the communication, 21.4% respondents stated that they have never discussed the sexual harassment and sexual violence problems with their family. This can be an indicator of a very low awareness and consciousness about the sexual harassment and sexual violence in public space. Another explanation can be that recognising the feeling of shame and being victimised might trigger such behaviour to avoid stigmatisation and re-traumatisation. This can be brought in correlation with the extremely high percentage of responses expressing opinion on the need to legally sanction sexual harassment and sexual violence in public space. Looking through the lenses of critical social work, these findings also emphasize the need to implement both individual and social/structural changes through a variety of preventive programs.

The activities implemented as framework project “Banja Luka – City with zero tolerance on sexual harassment and sexual violence” by the Foundation of Affiliated Women were the only implemented activities on this topic. The main aim was to raise public awareness. The levels of awareness and opinions of respondents on sexual harassment and sexual violence in public space are presented in Chart 4 and Chart 5.

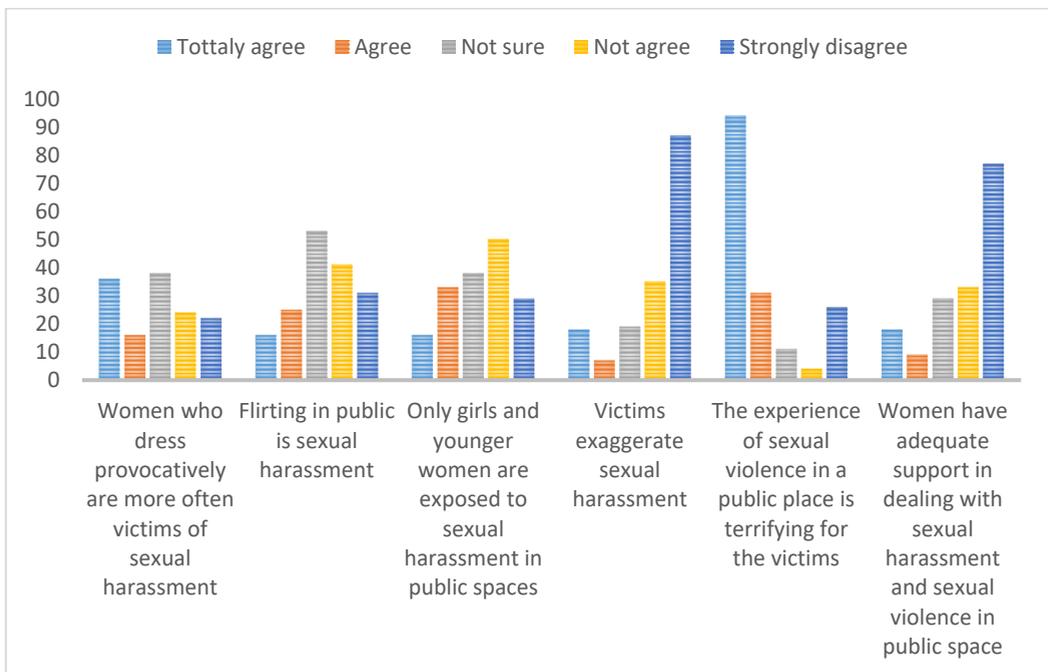
When asked about their opinion on statement “*Women that dress provocatively is likely to become victims of sexual harassment*”, 49.3% respondents agree, expressing their opinion as “fully agree” (21.68%) or “agree” (27.71%). Only 27.7% of respondents disagree with this statement. The Baseline Study showed that 62% of respondents agree with this statement, which indicates that the activities carried out within the campaign “NO means NO”, raised the public awareness connected to way of dressing and sexual connotations.

A very high percentage of respondents (43.36%) expressed their opinion that flirting in public space is not sexual harassment, while close to 1/3 (31.92%) were indecisive.

25% of respondents believe that flirting is one of the forms of sexual harassment. What is important here to acknowledge is that every act (verbal or physical) if unwanted falls under the definition of sexual harassment. Looking through the lenses of critical social work and the need for change, this is a very strong indicator that preventive activities and changes at the personal level are much needed too. This means seeing personal issues regarding gender-based violence as structural and political.

Analysed data also shows that sexual harassment and sexual violence in public space are more common in city spaces (39.14%) in comparison to rural (13.2%), while almost ½ of respondents have no opinion with regard to this question. These responses can be connected to the experience that participants had during the past 12 months or earlier.

Chart 4. Opinions on sexual harassment and sexual violence in public space (1)



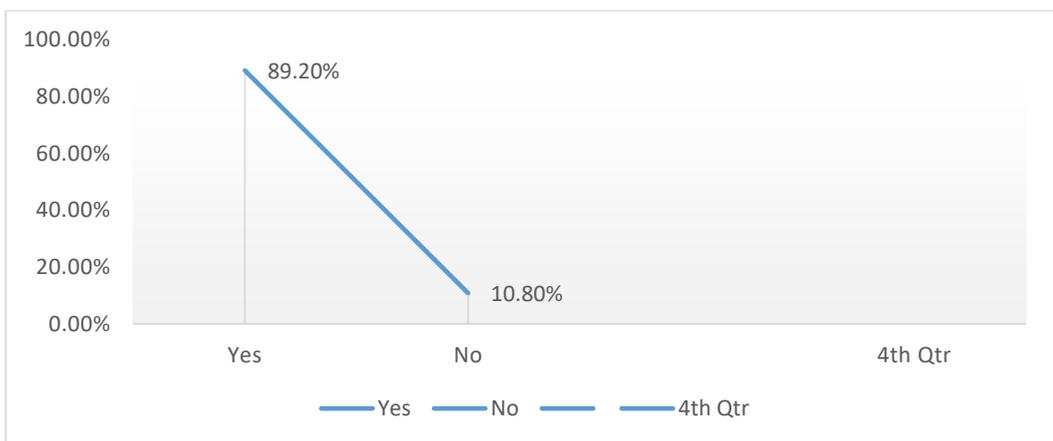
The analysis on opinions of respondents regarding the age range of women exposed to sexual harassment and sexual violence in public space show that all ages are affected. However, one of the important findings is that respondents in the age group between 30 and 40 years of age are among the largest percent of participants that experienced sexual harassment and sexual violence in public space. The Baseline Study findings show that the majority of respondents (83%) agree that the experience of sexual harassment and sexual violence in public space is terrifying for victims, which indicates a high level of consciousness regarding the problem of sexual

harassment in public space. On the other hand, the same study findings show a slightly lower percentage (75.29%) of those ones sharing the same opinion, which can be correlated with the fact that data was collected for the Baseline Study in two specifically chosen location (local community Vrbanja and local community Lazarevo). The research carried out for this study included the whole territory of city of Banja Luka.

Respondents also expressed opinion that women don't have adequate support when facing sexual harassment and sexual violence in public space (66.2%). The findings of the Baseline Study show that 76% of respondents share the same opinion. Another important finding of this study was that 55.21% respondents are of the opinion that sexual harassment and sexual violence in public space are common problems. Similar results came from the data analysis of the Baseline Study (52%).

This research study also included questions on how familiar they are with the models of support provided to victims of sexual harassment and sexual violence in public space. Alarming finding was that 89.2% of respondents expressed their opinion that they have no knowledge regarding the support services available for victims of sexual harassment and sexual violence in public space. This finding strongly suggests that there is a lot of space for raising awareness and informing citizens about specialised services and support offered by social protection systems. Even though these protection and support services are not specified for victims of sexual harassment and sexual violence in public space, these services are designed and provided within regular systemic services available to victims of violence. The graphic presentation of the responses regarding question on how familiar are citizens with the support available to victims of sexual harassment and sexual violence in the city of Banja Luka is presented in Chart 5.

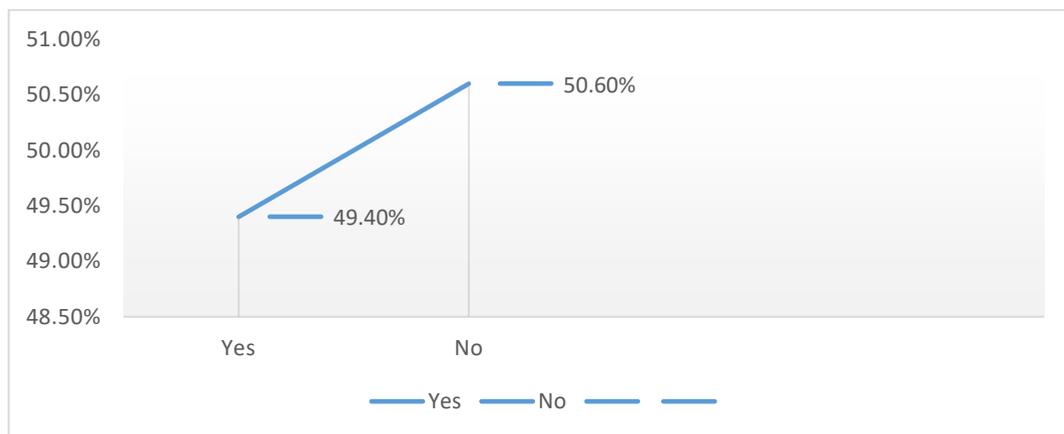
Chart 5. Responses on question: "How familiar you are with the support available to victims of sexual harassment and sexual violence in the city of Banja Luka?"



The respondents that stated that they are familiar with available support also noted the institutions and organisations that provide different services to victims of violence. When asked what they suggest in order to raise the public awareness in city of Banja Luka on sexual harassment and sexual violence in public space, the analysis show that respondents have preferences to few groups of measures suggested: informing public about the problem of sexual harassment and sexual violence and behaviours that qualify as sexual harassment; media campaigns on problems, rights and available services of help and support at the city of Banja Luka territory; education and sensibilisation of general public, with special attention paid to children in primary and secondary school; education of professionals that work with victims of sexual harassment and sexual violence, adequate sanctioning of perpetrators; effective response to sexual harassment and sexual violence from all competent institutions.

Chart 6 shows how informed respondents are about the activities within the campaign “NO means NO” implemented in the city of Banja Luka.

Chart 6. How informed were respondents about Campaign “NO means NO”



The research results show that campaign “NO means NO” attracted attention of 49.9% respondents, all of whom were able to define the messages of the campaign. A conclusion can be drawn here that implemented campaign had influence on raising general public awareness on problems concerning sexual harassment and sexual violence in public space, which means that the goal was achieved.

Conclusions

The intention writing this article was to try to answer the question: Is it possible to achieve zero tolerance on sexual harassment and sexual violence in public space in city of Banja Luka, looking through the lenses of critical social work. We also used the theoretical framework of feminist theories and critical social work to have better

understanding of social phenomenon of sexual harassment and sexual violence in public space, empirically researched as part of a UN Women B&H project within the initiative Safe Cities and Safe Public Places.

The gender distribution of participants in this research clearly points that women are more interested in issues regarding sexual harassment and sexual violence in public space, comparing to men. One of the explanations for this finding might be because women are also dominant gender with experience of being victim of sexual harassment and sexual violence in public space.

As theory informs us, social change must be “both personal and collective” (Fook, 2007, Stephens, 2020:445). This is confirmed by the research findings presented above. Some social/collective/structural changes that might bring changes might include, but are not limited to the following (emphasized as the findings of this research study): the vast majority of respondents expressed opinion that system of sanctioning and criminal responsibility in cases of sexual harassment and sexual violence in public space should be introduced in society; more than 1/3 of respondents avoid public places because they don't feel safe (mostly public places in city centre); respondents also emphasized that public places can be safer by introducing a set of different measures, such as police presence during late-night hours, video-monitoring in public places, better illumination etc. We can also observe here that women who are fearing more for their safety are also willing to give up on their privacy and believe that cameras and video-monitoring will make them feel safer. Also, the most common experience with sexual harassment and sexual violence in public space were labelled as sexualised comments and unwanted sexualised jokes in public space, while the age range of respondents that experienced sexual harassment and sexual violence in public space is between 30 and 40 years of age. This study, as well as the Baseline Study, confirm this finding, regardless the prejudice that much younger women and girls are exposed more to such experiences. The most common places are the streets, and public institutions (1/5 of respondents selected public institutions), which might be an indicator of a high level of tolerance of sexual harassments. This fact can also draw a conclusion that we are facing a long way ahead before having zero tolerance on sexual harassments and sexual violence in city of Banja Luka.

On the other hand, the research findings also indicate that citizens of Banja Luka have a relatively high level of awareness and consciousness when it comes to problems of

sexual harassment and sexual violence in public space. More than half of respondents agreed with the statement concerning provocative dressing up of women and its correlation with the sexual harassment in public space. Contradictory to this, almost half of the respondents are of the opinion that flirting in public space is not sexual harassment. From the feminist perspective and critical social work approaches, changes are needed at personal and collective level when it comes to raising of public awareness. Research findings also indicate that 2/3 of respondents are of the opinion that women who experience sexual harassment and sexual violence in public space do not have adequate support., which also emphasizes the need to design and introduce structural changes, primarily through legislation. A statistically extremely significant number of participants in this study (almost 90%) are not familiar with the types and models of support provided to victims of sexual harassment and sexual violence. This finding clearly points that citizens are not informed about the specialised services of help and support from relevant protection systems, which means that changes need to take place in promoting services that are offered to victims/survivors of sexual harassment and sexual violence in public space. This is another structural (both cultural and social) change that needs to be achieved. The Campaign “NO means NO” contributed to public awareness and consciousness on problem of sexual harassment and sexual violence in public space. Half of the respondents were familiar with the campaign and could recognise the messages sent in this campaign.

We can conclude that the implemented campaign had achieved the planned goal and that certain specific and planned social changes have been initiated. However, with a very high level of certainty, we can conclude that it is not possible to achieve zero tolerance on sexual harassment and sexual violence in public space in the city of Banja Luka. Some of the reasons for having such conclusions have been presented in this article, but there are many more to be researched.

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