

PERSONAL SECURITY IN PUBLIC TRANSPORT IN PALAWAN:  
WOMEN COMMUTERS ' EXPERIENCES

Abstract:

The issue of women's security in public transportation becomes even more critical ~~since it is because~~ ~~women who require depend on~~ public transport to meet their mobility needs. Women's safety is becoming a priority for the government authorities to take action. The ~~current~~ study investigated the personal security of woman commuters in public transport in ~~the province of~~ Palawan, ~~Philippines~~. It utilized a fieldwork approach using interviews and participant observation among fifteen (15) woman commuters from ~~all walks of life in~~ three municipalities within ~~a three-month~~ ~~three-month periods~~. ~~The findings~~ ~~It~~ concluded that the travel setting of woman commuters, such as the type of public transport, frequency of travel, travel time, duration, and reasons of travel ~~have~~ influenced their experiences in their access to and waiting in terminal, fear and experience of harassment, violence and accident, that disturbs their security in public transport. It was recommended that public transportation operators shall be required to have to advertise and enforce public safety measures, ~~and s~~ Schools should develop behaviour-change materials to raise awareness and sensitivity to harassment, violence and accident, and develop safety and security teaching materials targeted at secondary schools and tertiary education.

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Keywords: Personal security, Public transport, women commuter's experiences

UNDER PEER REVIEW

## INTRODUCTION

Freedom of movement, mobility rights or the right to travel is part of the concept of basic human rights that encompasses the rights of the individual to travel from place to place. Sustainable Development Goal target 11.2 states that by 2030 countries should provide access to a safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport system for all, improving road safety, and expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those vulnerable situations, women, children, a person with disabilities and older persons. The 1986 Philippine Constitution provides that "neither shall the right to travel be impaired except in the interest of national security, public safety, or public health, as may be provided by law" (Art. 3 Sec. 6).

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~~All over the world~~ Globally, women are frequent and regular users of public transport. In developing countries, women rely on some form of public transport as their only choice of motorized transport. It is, therefore, important that they perceived public transport as being safe and secure (Allen and Vanderschuren, 2016:2). The issue of women's security in public transportation becomes even more critical since it is women, rather than men, who most depend on public transport to meet their mobility needs.

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Empirical research has clearly established that the transportation needs and travel behavior of women are different from men. Women often work closer to home, make more trip chains between home and childcare or school and on to work, and are often accompanied by their children on the trips. Because they frequently have to do non-work-related chores, they need more travel flexibility than men (Loukaitou - Sideris, et al., 2009:2).

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Women have daily mobility patterns that are more complex than men, owing to their gender roles, which combine domestic and caregiving tasks with paid employment, income-earning activities, and community and social obligations. As primary caregivers, women are more likely to be responsible for accompanying children to school and medical services, and purchasing fresh produce and groceries from markets; hence, their daily mobility will involve travel to and from these services and locations, often with purchases in hand (ADB, 2013:1).

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This study anchored its framework on the provisions of RA 9710 known as the Magna Carta for Women in its Declaration of Policy that "*The state shall promote empowerment of women and pursue equal opportunities for women and men and ensure equal access to resources and to development results and outcome. Further, the state realizes equality of men and women entails the abolition of unequal structures and practices that perpetuates discrimination and equality* (Chapter 1, Section 2).

*Further, the State condemns discrimination against women in all its forms and pursues by all appropriate means and without delay the policy of eliminating discrimination against women in keeping with the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and under international instruments consistent with Philippine law. The state shall accord women the rights, protection, and opportunities available to every member of society.*

The current study investigated, explored, and analyzed the personal security of woman commuters in public transport in the Province of Palawan, Philippines. The following ~~it emphasized the following research~~ objectives are examined in this study:

1. Determine the public transport setting of women commuters in terms of the type of public transport, frequency of travel, travel time, duration of travel, and reasons for travel.
2. Examine ~~Analyze~~ the experiences of women commuters that ~~disturbs~~ disturb their personal security in public transport setting in Palawan in terms of access to and waiting in the terminal, fear and experience of harassment, violence and accident.
3. Assess ~~Determine~~ the implication of the personal security of women commuters in public transport to education.
4. Propose a model to strengthen the personal security of women commuters in public transport.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study ~~it~~ utilized a field work approach by way of using interview and participant observation to investigate the experiences of women in public transport in northern Palawan. Fifteen (15) woman commuters were interviewed from all walks of life in three municipalities such as Roxas, Taytay and El Nido and among bus/van operators/ liaison officers, drivers, terminal guards, police officers and barangay officials. Observation was conducted on separate travels from Puerto Princesa City Terminal to Roxas, Taytay and El Nido Terminal or vice versa, within the span of three months.

**Comment [PAB7]:** This section of the study is inadequate and requires more information for a scientific study.

The following issues are missing from this section of the study:

1. Description of the sampled respondents
2. Research protocol
3. How the data will be analyzed (including verification of findings and triangulation of findings)

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## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### *Public Transport Setting*

Commuters are faced with situations such as the type of public transport, the frequency of travel, travel time, duration of travel and reasons why they need to move from a place to another.

The succeeding data are gathered from fifteen (15) woman commuter participants in northern Palawan. These results are not intended to represent the entire woman commuters in the said locale.

Commuters are usually dominated by women and oftentimes bring along children. They used different types of public transport in Northern Palawan either by Public Utility Bus (PUB) or vans.



*Figure 1. Commuters boarding public transportation*

**Type of Public Transport.** As commuters move from a place they need to use some mode of transportation such as buses, vans, and jeeps as case maybe. Women are part and parcel of these commuters.

Data gathered from fifteen (15) woman commuter participants revealed that they either took buses under San Isidro Bus Express, the RORO Bus Lines, and or Cherry Bus Lines that travel north of Palawan (from the city of Puerto Princesa to Roxas, Palawan, to Taytay, Palawan and El Nido, Palawan and vice versa). On the other hand, shuttle vans are under the DASEK, CAMARIH, FORTWALLY, LEXUS, Eulen Joy, PALSHUTEX, NATURE etc. traversing the same route as the case may be.

Hence, strictly confining the study to Public Utility Buses (PUB) was not possible. Despite the lower fare rate among buses, yet, some commuters prefer to travel by van. This is true, especially among tourists and working groups who made a direct trip to the city.

Data were supplemented by an observation made by the researchers within three months of alternate travels in these public transports on the aforementioned routes. Commuters are usually dominated by a woman and oftentimes bring along with them children. This is supported by an interview with a bus inspector claiming that in general, woman commuters are far greater than male commuters.

Since the locale of the study is in rural geographical area, there are different challenges of mobility for women and hence by what the research was able to cover issues with regards to woman commuter's safety while commuting through public transport.

This means that woman commuters used different types of public transport in

Northern Palawan either by Public Utility Bus (PUB) or by vans. Jeep is no longer part of this type of public transport taking longer trips; instead, said vehicles take shorter trips to barangays.

Woman commuters take trips regularly. Their trips can either be shorter or longer or trip chain from Roxas, Taytay or El Nido to Puerto Princesa City and vice versa. Oftentimes, they took cutting trips (trip chaining) or series of travel segments that follow one another based on the home location and place of work or school.



Figure 2. Bus unloading women commuters

**Travel time** of woman commuters especially those who took early trips in the morning and last trips in the evening are more prone to risk as far as their security is concerned. Due to high risk during those week hours, women commuter employs some means to keep themselves safe.

Data revealed that eleven (11) of the fifteen (15) participants usually travel during the daytime. However, taking the first trip of the van/bus will start travel at four thirty (4:30) to five (5:00) in the morning especially when trips are bound to Puerto Princesa City. Trips by van from Roxas, Palawan to Puerto Princesa City will take two hours (2) to two (2) hours and thirty (30) minutes; from Taytay, Palawan to Puerto Princesa City for three (3) hours to three (3) hours and thirty (30) minutes; and from El Nido to Puerto Princesa City for four (4) hours and thirty (30) minutes to five (5) hours. However, by bus it will take long hours of travel such that from Roxas to Puerto Princesa City it will take three (3) hours to three (3) hours and thirty (30) minutes; from Taytay to Puerto Princesa City for five (5) hours; and from El Nido, to Puerto Princesa City it will take six (6) to seven (7) hours. The said travel time is also applicable when travelling back to these northern destinations.

It was observed that commuters who took their first trips via van have to be fetched from their homes as early as four o'clock in the morning or wait at the terminal before departure while those by bus have to be at the terminal or other bus stops earlier than the departure or loading time. However, the last trips in the evening from Puerto Princesa City terminal are usually at eight o'clock (8:00) in the evening for shorter trips such as those bound to Roxas, Palawan and ten o'clock (10:00) in the evening for those bound to Taytay and El Nido, Palawan.

This implies that the travel time of woman commuters especially those who took early trips in the morning and last trips in the evening are more prone to risk as far as their security is concerned.

In coping these travel schedules, woman participants as much as possible travels with companion or at least with someone familiar to them; by going to the terminal when bus/van are about to depart, and only wait at lighted part of the terminal; and by not leaving bags/luggage unattended while waiting. This implies that due to high risk in those wee hours, woman commuters employ some means to keep themselves safe.



*Figure 3. Van and bus at terminal*

**Duration of travel** is both shorter and longer, depending on the routes they are taking and the frequency of stops while on the road which influences their security due to frequent stops and long travels. Their reasons to travel are family, school or work-related considering their role as homemakers and home providers as well.

Those who commute one way from Roxas, Palawan to Puerto Princesa City by van travel within the duration from two (2) hours to two (2) and half (1/2) hours. While those from Taytay, Palawan to Puerto Princesa City travel within three (3) hours to three (3) and half (1/2) hours; and those from El Nido, Palawan to Puerto Princesa City travel for five (5) hours to five (5) and half (1/2) hours. However, when they travel by bus, there will be one (1) to one (1) and half (1/2) hours longer travel duration. The above duration of travel will double if the woman commuters have to travel back and forth on the same day.

The aforementioned duration of travel is sometimes influenced by circumstances such as stops at the terminal to rest or eat, stops along the highway to load and unload passengers and cargoes, repair or change of tires and machine malfunction. It usually took fifteen (15) to twenty (20) minutes for buses at terminal or bus stops, and one (1) to two (2) minutes or longer to load and unload passengers and cargoes along the highway. For vans, it took a shorter time for stops at the terminal. In Taytay Terminal, it was observed that from morning until afternoon, every ten (10) to twenty (20) minutes a van arrives and leaves the terminal either to or from El Nido, Palawan.

This means that women commuters have different duration of travel both shorter and longer, depending on the routes they are taking and the frequency of stops while on the road. Such differences may influence their security while travelling due to frequent stops

and long travels.

***Reasons for Travel.*** Woman commuters give varied reasons why they travel.

The study revealed that out of fifteen (15) participants, seven (7) woman commuters' reasons for travelling is a visit to family members (husband, parents, or children). Six (6) of them travel due to work such as attending meetings, and seminars, submitting reports, remitting funds and other work-related activities. Two (2) of them travel to relax and have some time for leisure activities in the city and three (3) of them said they travel due to medical checkups of a family member, to buy products for business and to get an allowance from parents (in the case of a student).

Further, it was observed that travelling by bus on thoroughfares is a combination of commuters from all walks of life, men and woman, young and old, professionals and students and even ordinary people due to several reasons. Adult woman sometimes are bringing with them young children who are usually free of fare, senior citizens and students who claim for fare discounts, and adult commuters who are either employees,

This means that women commuters have different reasons to travel, which are either family-related, school-related or work-related. This implies that these women are taking their role as homemakers and home providers when they travel.

### **Experiences of Women Commuters**

There are situations or circumstances that woman commuters met that affects their personal security in public transport such as access to, waiting in terminal, fear, and experience of harassment, violence and accident.

***Access to and Waiting in Terminal.*** Commuters usually wait for public transportation at stations or terminals and by that, and some circumstances affect their security. Data are categorized into two (2), police visibility, lighting and CCTV cameras; and the transport infrastructure and services.

There are four (4) terminals that the study cover, which includes Puerto Princesa Terminal, located at Barangay San Jose, Puerto Princesa City; Roxas Terminal located at Barangay 2, Roxas, Palawan; Taytay Terminal located at Poblacion, Taytay, Palawan; and El Nido Terminal located at Barangay Corong-Corong, El Nido, Palawan.

#### **Insufficient Police visibility, lighting and CCTV cameras**

Data revealed that four (4) woman participants from Taytay, Palawan and Roxas, Palawan experienced that terminal in the said municipalities are dimly lit. Further, two (2) of them declared that there is no security guard or police on duty in the said terminal especially at night,

Two (2) participants from Roxas, Palawan recalled and supplemented this,

Participant 4

*“Ahh yon nga po, may guard dapat tapos yong CCTV parang di ko napapansin na may CCTV. Ahm, ano lang din naman po, kasi malapit lang naman din po yong police station, siguro guard lang din. (Yeah, that’s it, there is a guard but I didn’t see a CCTV. Ahm, since the PNP station is nearby to the terminal, maybe a guard is enough)”*.

## Participant 5:

*“Magkaroon ng CCTV camera, kasi isa yon sa mga pinakasource sa mga investigation in case na magkaroon ng mga insidente na hindi maiwasan. (A CCTV camera should be available because it is a source of information in case of unavoidable incident in the terminal)”*.



Figure 4. Bus terminal during nighttime (Puerto Princesa City)

A woman participant recalled an experience on the lines of,

## Participant 6

*“Safe naman ako sa terminal pag umaga, o may araw pa dahil maraming mga tao pa. Pero sa gabi, kagaya ko na matatakutin palagay ko kapag gabi ay hindi safe kasi hindi natin alam kung anong mangyayari sayo lalo na kung gabi. Lalo na pag madilim ang terminal tapos kaunti ang tao. Sa akin po, tingin ko kahit ganito lang sya pampubliko dapat meron syang security guard. Para kahit mapagabi man maging safe. (I am safe at terminal in the morning or during the day because of the presence of people. But at night, it is not safe because I am afraid of darkness, because we do not know what will happen at night, especially when the terminal is dimly lit and only few people are around. For me, even it is public, there should be a security guard)”*.

Another woman participant had a similar view. She said,

## Participant 11

*“Ang nakikita kong suliranin sa terminal ay hindi masyadong visible ang mga security officer natin o ang mga police. Parang wala akong nakikitang ganun sa terminal siguro mas maganda kung meron. Ay! sa Puerto pala meron pero sa Taytay at Roxas wala akong naobserve na merong police sa terminal. (The problem that I observed at the terminal is that security officers or police is not always visible, and maybe it will be better if there is. But, at Puerto Princesa City San Jose terminal, I observed an officer at terminal but not in Taytay and Roxas Terminal)”*.



Figure 5. Bus terminal during nighttime (Left: Taytay, Center: El Nido & Right: Roxas)

With the observation made by the researchers, it was revealed that commuters (both men and women, local and foreign) has to wait for the scheduled departure of vans and buses. At Puerto Princesa Terminal, it took one (1) hour of waiting time for commuter before vans/buses depart. Daily schedule of departure of van starts at four (4:00) o'clock in the morning and last arrival at twelve (12:00) midnight; while for buses, departure at five (5:00) o'clock in the morning and last arrival at eleven (11:00) o'clock in the evening.

As shown above, the participants have apprehensions as far as safety while waiting at bus terminal especially at night is concerned. It should be noted that they all agreed for the visibility of security or police officers in the area; though one of them declared that it is safe especially at daytime.

However, at night, it was observed that only streetlights are functional making the terminal dimly lit. Further, the presence of police or security officer in the area was evident. An interview with the Terminal Tourist Police revealed that their 12-hour patrol duty starts at 8:00 a.m. and until 10:00 p.m.

In the absence of terminal lights, woman as much as possible do not go out after dark and return home before dark. Dark or dimly lit terminal or streets increase fear and suspicion to encounter drunker men (passenger) prowling the terminal.

In like manner, for parents, safety of the children remains an important concern, when they go out to wait at terminal or bus stops for work or studies and comes home after dark. If it is raining and muddy road and there is no terminal light or street lights at bus stops, it is almost impossible for women to step out after dark.

### **Insufficient transport infrastructure and services**

Three (3) of the participants in Taytay, Palawan revealed that there is no waiting shed for passengers in the area, while another (1) commented that sometimes they waited too long in the terminal due to the irregular schedule of bus/van and that the arrival and departure of the bus and van is not organized. While one (1) mentioned of availability of a smoking area and proper comfort room; however two (2) of them also concluded that they feel safe at the stopover.

In this aspect, a woman participant recalled,

#### Participant 9

*“Hindi po safe, kasi wala pong formal na waiting shed na safe, ang problema din po paggabi ay walang ilaw, walang guard na nagbabantay ng terminal tapos kung sinu-sino lang din ang mga tao doon, ang iba hindi mo kilala, mamaya adik pala. (It is not safe, because it has no waiting shed; at night there is no light and security guard at the terminal and you did not know the people there)”.*

*“Sa terminal gusto ko magkaroon ng shed na safe din at tsaka kahit guard*

*lang po. Pwedeng barangay tanod, na pwedeng pagsumbungan, o mapagsabihan na makakasecure ng aming kaligtasan. Magkaroon ng ilaw at tsaka po shed na may bubong. Kasi samin po walang bubong. (At terminal, I wish to have safe shed and guard or even Barangay Tanod, so that we have someone to report to in case problems. Then, lights and shed because so far we don't have those)".*

Another participant supported this statement. She declared,

Participant 2

*"Medyo o minsan hindi organize or systematic ang pag-alis ng bus or van, wala sa tamang oras ang kanilang pagbyahe. Dati every one hour to one hour and thirty minutes ang pagitan ng pag-alis pero ngayon na experience ko minsan napapatagal o napapabilis depende sa dating ng pasahero o punuin muna. (Sometimes van or buses departures are not organized or systematic, it did not follow the schedule of travel. Before, it only take one hour to one hour and thirty minutes trip interval, and at the present, it takes longer depending on the arrival of passengers)".*

Another participant commented on the same issue, she said

Participant 5

*"Doon sa terminal o sa bus station hindi lang lahat babae but also some kids di ba? Which is one of the concern eh yong health ng mga bata, even nga matanda eh. Di ba? Lalo na kapag may asthma, pangalawa smoking area talaga and then pangatlo comfort room, proper comfort room. Ang mga commuters, drivers, dispatchers at konduktor, both hindi safe, na dapat ang isang bus station at terminal dapat meron talagang intended place for smoking area. (Not all people in the terminal are women. There are kids and older ones. One of the concern is their health especially those suffering from asthma. Smoking area should be identified and as well as proper comfort room)".*

These seemed to suggest the availability of police/security guards at this terminal every hour of the day and the installation of functional closed-circuit television (CCTV) in the area for security and monitoring purposes. Proper lighting in these bus stops; clean, comfortable and separate restrooms for men and women; and the availability of waiting for sheds, especially in Taytay, Palawan are also emphasized.

In like manner, reported incidents of woman commuters generally pertains to lost baggage, persistent tricycle drivers and van/bus conductors, fare rate, and arrogant terminal dispatchers, among others.

The availability of commuters' assistance desk and functional CCTV cameras are not evident during the time the study was conducted.

At Roxas Terminal, it was observed that the travel schedules of vans and buses have an interval of one (1) hour. The first trip for vans to depart Roxas Terminal starts at 4:30 in the morning and the last to arrive from Puerto Princesa is at 10:00 p.m. While the schedule for buses to leave said terminal starts at 5:00 a.m. and the last to arrive is between 8:00 to 9:00 in the evening, both from southbound and northbound. This does not include Cherry Bus which does not stop at the terminal instead at Rickza's and Halfway stops over at Palwood, Barangay

4, Roxas, Palawan.

To ensure the safety of commuters, the terminal has the clock guard on duty; has installed three (3) CCTV cameras though not functional, and has incandescent bulbs in the terminal waiting for area but not in the parking or loading/unloading area.

This implies that despite the effort of women to skip late travel, but if it is necessary to work/hold classes late evenings, they have to take late evening trips. Usually parents need to pick daughter from the main road or terminal. Thus, this unsafe environment increases women's dependency on parent especially male members as they need to escort and protect them from harassment by men.

A women always try to come home early from work or school, they get less work done and earn less money; or leave school early and earn lower grades. If women need to go after dark, they are usually accompanied by parents or elders. They also take torch or flashlights if they need to go out in the evening or if there is a chance of coming back late.

This means that the safety of commuters especially women at the terminal in northern Palawan is strengthened to ensure the optimum security of all travellers that pass through the area.

**Fear and Experience of Harassment.** There are uncertainties experienced by woman commuters in public transport relative to some form of harassment.

Data revealed that out of fifteen (15) woman commuters, nine (9) of them experienced fear and harassment while on board in public transportation. Commonly, this harassment is experienced inside the bus while on travel. These includes sexual assault, deliberate contact/groping, remarks with sexual innuendos, and overcrowding.

#### **Sexual assault**

A woman who experienced sexual assault during an early morning trip declared,

Participant 1

*“Ang kabuay da ang malam na ameng ing sundo, ingapros na ako, una akeng bag anang nakapetan, dason pag abot doman sa balay ang isa pang pasahero, dege ren anang hipo, pataas den, tapos dason sa isa pang pasahero, bakbak tana apros sa akeng likod, tapos dason doman pagtadeng sa is aka pasahero, apros doman akeng likod, ako ingadlekan,ing pabayaang ko ron, isara pa ako naeya, akeng isip aga iba iba ren, pag abot sa terminal ing toladan na akeng iteng, tapos akbay, duto ako asilag kanana. (The old man that we picked up at her home took longer than necessary, so while waiting the van dispatcher started touching/groping my back. Then when the van awaits another passenger he touched again my back until we picked another two (2) passengers, he continued doing that to me. I was so afraid and ashamed that's why I did not make any reaction. When we reached the terminal, he touched my shoulder, and in doing so, her hands unintentionally reached my breast)”.*

This is a manifestation of a sexual assault with a van driver. The woman participant reported the incident after three (3) months of mulling over the issue. She has to consider the reactions of her family and relatives. Most especially the effect to her husband and children. However, in the end she also received due process and properly compensated for the abuse.

#### **Deliberate contact/groping**

Other times, when a woman was seated beside the driver, her legs had unintentional contact or were groped by the driver when hitting the brake or changing gear. Though

unintentional, women felt uneasy and ashamed of the behavior resulting to fear in travelling especially in occupying front seats.

A woman with similar experience noted,

Participant 1:

*“Sa front seat ako ra, pwedi bang dito ako? diba darwa ka pwesto, pwedi bang dito ako sa tabi ng bintana? Ako sa muro ingdadagat, ay kabilin-bilinan ng nagpareserve dyan siya. Een, agatepad kami dato ingkwanan ng lagi akeng ita pag tadeng na kanda Kumay \_\_\_\_\_ eng kukundan. (I was seated in front seat, I asked him if I can seat near the window. Because I feel bad when I travel and I noted when I asked for reserve seat to sit in front. Yes, I was seated beside him (dispatcher) and when we stopped to pick Kumay \_\_\_\_\_, he touched my left leg like this (the woman showed how she was touched)”.*

This working mother participant experienced harassment from a van dispatcher when she took an early trip (first trip) from Roxas, Palawan to Puerto Princesa City and occupied the front seat. Since the first trip passengers/commuters are picked up from the residence and she was the one fetched first, resulting to be alone with the driver for a time. The driver started touching her left leg, her back and finally the shoulder and eventually touching the upper part of her breast. These made her afraid and uncomfortable. When she thought of whether or not to make a report to authorities, she considered the reactions of family and friends.

In like manner, a student participant shared the same experience, and said,

Participant 4

*“May mga byahe ako iilan ilan lang ang pasahero, minsan ako lang pasahero. Yun, tsaka kahit hindi ko po kilala ang konduktor minsan tumatabi sa akin. Maraming mga bakanteng upuan, doon talaga tatabi sa akin, siguro style lang nila yun. Nakikipag-usap, humihingi ng cellphone number, hindi ko pinapansin nagtutulong tulugan ako. Tapos nanantsing sila sa simpleng paraan, yung siko nya ikinikiskis sa braso ko o sa ilalim. (I have travels when only few passengers are on board or sometimes I am the only around. The bus conductor will seat beside me though there are several empty seats. He started conversation, or asked my cellphone number. I pretended to be asleep, then he simply brushed his elbow to mine)”.*

This implies that these women have experienced being deliberately touched or groped by the van/bus personnel while on board of public transportation.

#### **Remarks with sexual innuendos**

When there are extra seats beside a woman passenger, bus conductors took the opportunity to occupy the seat. The conversation was initiated by inquiring about the woman's name or cell phone number. They felt harassed because perpetrators of harassment are so persistent for them to respond. They found these disturbing especially when they feel nauseous and nervous because of the long travel, or they prefer to rest.

This is supported by another statement from a participant, who said,

Participant 5

*“Sinabi ng konduktor sa isang dalaga, “ang sexy mo naman ga’, pwede ka ba mamayang gabi, tapos sasabihin nila “joke lang” nasa sa iyo lang yan kung*

*seseryusuhin mo.*” (The bus conductor said to a lady “you are so sexy honey, are you free tonight”, and then comment “just kidding”, it’s up to you if you will take it seriously”).

Similar instances occur especially with young female passengers who wear revealing clothes. The bus conductor persistently talked to these women or if not gave some lewd comments to get attention. As a result, these women feel harassed and uncomfortable.

A participant who observed such an incident said,

Participant 11

*“May isang beses akong bumyahe na may isang babaeng sumakay na maikli ang damit nya tapos lagi siyang inaasar ng konduktor, tingin ko dahil sa suot nya rin kasi nagbibigay sya ng motive kaya ganun.* (In one of my trips, there was a lady passenger wearing revealing clothes. The conductor teased her maybe due to her attire”).

Further, one of the participants said,

Participant 8

*“May byahe ako na tinabihan ako ng konduktor, akala nila estudyante lang ako. Wala man lang karespe-respetong magsalita. Basta na lang hihingin ang cellphone number ko at one time, sumakay ako at naka-front seat. Nasalubong namin ang jeep na nagbayahe din sa amin. Sabi ng konduktor “kaya pala nakangiti ang driver ng jeep, kasi ‘chicks’ ang nakaupo sa harap.”* (I had a travel when the conductor seated beside me presuming that I am a student, and was so disrespectful in asking of number. Once, as I seated front and we met a jeepney along the highway. The conductor commented that the reason the driver is smiling it is because a “chicks” is seated in front”).

Another participant revealed similar experience, and said,

Participant 9

*“Minsan po kapag madaling araw, yung pagpauwi dito sa Roxas yung nararanasan ko po at naobserbahan ay kaunti lang ang sumasakay pag madaling araw. Madalas tumatabi saakin ang konduktor, tapos nagtatanong ng mga wala namang kwentang tanong”* *Ano ang pangalan mo? Tagasan ka? Ano ang cellphone number mo? na dapat wala naman sila doong pakialam”.* (When I travel early in the morning, I observed that only few of passengers are boarding, oftentimes, the bus conductor will seat beside me and asked nonsense questions about my name, address, and cellphone number which not his business anyway”).

These claims are supported by the observation made by the researchers in one of the buses where a bus conductor made a casual talk with the woman commuter even though she ignored him by not responding to the talk or pretending to be busy listening to music, texting or playing video games.

They are among others who claimed to have experienced fear and harassment while travelling in public transportation. Most of them had experience with bus conductors and dispatchers. Though they seemed to be negative in this aspect of their travel experiences, they continue of availing the services of public transport.

An interview with the management of the bus lines confirmed that there are few

complaints made by woman commuters but these are limited to lost baggage or cargoes but not harassment.

Further, data revealed that among those who experienced harassment, four of them are students. Since seats for men and women are not separated, chances are women can seat beside or in between male passengers. Due to the long travel, the woman participant felt dizzy and eventually blows up, thus the man beside her massaged her back and shoulder making her uncomfortable because she does not know the man.

### Overcrowding

This is supported by another statement from a participant and said

Participant 7

*“Ay ganyan po pag minsan maraming pasahero madalas po ay nakatayo kami, gawa na hinahabol naming ang oras basta makarating lang kahit nakatayo. Minsan nagkakaroon din ng takot pag overcrowding. Sakin okay lang naman nakatayo syempre kung sino ang mauna sya mauupo, kapag may bumaba at mabakanteng upuan bago makakaupo. Okay lang yung ganun. Huwag na masyadong siksikan kung ano lang sana ang seating capacity ay dapat yun lang. (Sometimes if there are several passengers, we opted to stand and wait when seats are vacated especially when we are running with time. There are also fears in overcrowded bus but for me it is also okay because those who come first should sit first. But it should not be that overcrowded, it must be within the seating capacity)”*.

Participant 14:

*“Mahirap kumilos mainit tapos syempre over tawag dito overcrowded na, tapos pag mga foreigners pa halos nasakop na nila lahat halos di kana makagalaw pareho naman ang binayaran. (It’s difficult to move if overcrowded, especially when seating with foreigners because they almost occupied the seats)”*.

Participant 6:

*“Kapag papunta ako ng Port Barton sumakasakay ako sa San Isidro Bus, madalas punuan, loaded, pakiramdam ko tatagilid tapos matutumba kung may ibang option lang hindi talaga ako sasakay doon. Yung tipong loaded na nga, mabilis pa tapos, yung parang may makakasalubong siya. Tapos biglang magbibreak siya, minsan may motor na mag-overtake. Nakakatakot kasi nga, paano kung nabunguan niya yun, paano kung pati kami doon sa loob diba, kaya katakot talaga yung bus. (I went to Port Barton via San Isidro Bus; usually it is loaded with passengers and at the same time it is fast, as if the bus will tilt along the highway. Sometimes there are motorists who overtook the bus; it causes fear for collision among passengers)”*.



*Figure 6. Passengers on board*

As to reporting to authorities, these women have thoughts of doing the same but decided to do otherwise, with the belief that it might bring shame to them and their report might not be given appropriate justification. However, the woman participant who experienced sexual assault filed a complaint against the driver despite her hesitancy which lasted for three (3) months. Even though she received discouragement from family members, she did the right thing in filing a case in court, which in return favoured her claims, and the abuser was meted appropriate penalty.

An interview with barangay officials and Philippine National Police officers in the three municipalities supported the above findings that their respective offices do not have records/files regarding harassment of woman commuters. The same result was also revealed during interviews with terminal desk officers or terminal guards.

Woman commuters response to these experiences are to travel with someone familiar or refrain from seating beside a male passenger; by travelling during the day, or bring along some weapon of self-defense if necessary; by not trusting anybody on board; and by not wearing revealing clothes.

In general, women's response to misbehaving of men was usually "ignore and leave" when they were alone. A few of them shared that they started using some self-defence to deal with rogue elements making physical contact inside buses. Generally, response to misbehaving men and unpleasant situations was passive avoidance and retreat.

This lack of active resistance may be due to the kind of behaviour expected of a woman by society. They did not want people to take her for a woman of "loose character"; or they are reluctant to draw attention to themselves and try to pretend that nothing happened. By this, the harasser may feel free to repeat the cycle of harassment.

This implies that woman commuters have experienced different forms of harassment in public transportation in northern Palawan. Such harassment could be incurred while on board the public transport or waiting at the terminal.

Relative to this, the state affirms women's right as human rights and shall intensify its efforts to fulfill its duties under international and domestic law to recognize, respect, protect, fulfill, and promote all human rights and fundamental freedoms of women, especially marginalized women, in the economic, social, political, cultural, and other fields without distinction or discrimination on account of class, age, sex, gender, language, ethnicity, religion, ideology, disability, education, and status. The State condemns discrimination against women in all its forms and pursues by all appropriate means and without delay the policy of eliminating discrimination against women in keeping with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and other international instruments consistent with the Philippine law. The State shall accord women the rights, protection, and the opportunities available to every member of society.

Section 4 (k), paragraph 2 of the Magna Carta of Women provides "Violence Against Women" includes paragraph (2) Physical, sexual, and psychological violence occurring within the general community, including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment, and intimidation at work, in the educational institution and elsewhere, trafficking in women, and prostitution; and

paragraph (3) Physical, sexual, and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the State, wherever it occurs. Section 31 provides the services and intervention as necessary such as, but not limited to (k) transportation assistance.

**Violence.** Some forms of uncertainties are experienced by woman commuters in public transport due to force or intimidation and the like.

Data revealed that eight (8) out of fifteen (15) participants have experienced some form of force or intimidation while travelling on public transportation. It is categorized into ambush/shootout, harassment and theft.

Due to her experience, a woman participant stated,

### **Ambush/shootout**

Participant 13

*“Minsan pa lang naman ako nakaexperience na natakot talaga ako sa RoRo yung may nakasabay kami na may dalang sako na may lamang mahahaba, basta alam ko mahaba yun. Sumakay sa El Nido sa alanganing lugar papunta sa Abongan. Tingin ko ay baril yun. Tapos bumulong ang konduktor sa driver na meron nga sa dulo. May mga naririnig akong pangyayari na tinatambangan, madalas sa parting Itabiak at Ibanglely inaabangan. So far mga isolated cases. (I experienced once while travelling via RoRo Bus when there were passengers who boarded at uninhabited area along El Nido highway going to Abongan, Taytay, who brought with them sack containing something long with I presumed to be guns. Then the conductor whispered to the driver about the presence in the bus. I heard of isolated incidents of ambush to military personnel in between Itabiak and Ibanglely)”*

This reveals that a participant experienced travelling in a bus at night with male passengers bringing with them concealed guns. This brought fear and uncertainties during the trip for an impending encounter with the military.

Another participant who declared a related incident supports this,

Participant 5

*“Sumakay ako ng bus that night along Taytay at Ibanglely. Binaril ang bintana ng driver so napahinto kami, sumigaw ang mga pasahero na “kuya dumiretso ka na lang” huwag na ninyong babain hindi ninyo alam ang lugar na to, madilim at walang ilaw. Saka walang mga bahay. Hindi natin kilala kung sino ang mga nasa paligid. (I was travelling by bus that night along Taytay and Ibanglely. The driver’s window was shot so the driver stopped the bus. A passenger shouted to the driver to continue driving because the area is too dark and inhabited. We do not know the people around us)”*

*“September 2017 naranasan ko kasama ang ibang pasahero around 2 to 3 am sa Ibanglely din nasa pagitan kami ng barilan ng taong labas at militar” (It was September 2017 that I experienced a shoot out between the military and unidentified persons, between two to three o’clock in the morning at Ibanglely, Taytay, Palawan).*

Further, one of them experienced a shootout in an uninhabited part of the highway between Taytay, Palawan and Roxas, Palawan on separate date and times. The first was a

bullet hitting the driver's window while the other was when the van was caught in between unidentified people and a military shootout. Both incidents happened at night, which brought fear and traumatic experience to the passengers.

### **Harassment**

A woman participant relayed an experience, and said,

Participant 4

“Hindi rin safe ang ibang pasaherong babaeng nakatayo, hindi nila napapansin na sila natsatsansingan na ng mga nakatayong lalake, siguro hindi na lang nila pinapansin dahil sa sobrang punong puno na. (It is not safe for standing woman commuters while travelling because chances are they can be harassed by standing male passengers)”.

It was further observed that the circumstances most experienced by these women is standing inside the bus due to overcrowding. This made them vulnerable to injury especially when the bus made urgent stops/brakes. They are prone to physical harassment also because most often they are standing in between male passengers. Male passengers do not give up seats to standing women, elderly or children inside the bus.

### **Theft and loss of baggage**

Another woman participant shared her experience, and said,

Participant 3:

“*Yung mga kasamahan ko meron talaga, may kasamahan ako bag talaga ang nawala. Nagkapalitan, tapos nung hinanap na nawala na daw. Ayon ang konduktor nagbayad. (I remember my companion, she lost her bag and according to bus conductor it was lost, so the bus personnel paid the corresponding amount)”.*

This experience was supported by another participant, who said,

Participant 4:

*Ahmm, oo minsan medyo maraskal sila magdrive, tapos kahit yung mga konduktor maraskal din, may time na nawalan ako ng wallet na purse lang naman siya, hindi ko alam kung nalaglag ba siya o kinuha talaga siya sa bulsa ng bag ko. (Yes, sometimes they drive recklessly, and also the conductor. Once I lost my purse, I didn't know if I dropped it or it was stolen from my bag).*

Interview with terminal dispatcher/liason officers supported this claim by stating that in most cases, complaints of passengers are lost baggage or cargoes, valuables such as purses, wallets, cellphones etc. In like manner, an interview with the terminal operation manager revealed that one of the public transport conveying from El Nido, Palawan to Puerto Princesa City drop-off students far from their destination late at night because of insufficient fares to pay.

These accounts clearly show these woman commuters are vulnerable to violence as they travel in public transport. Despite these experiences which brought worries and shame to them, they still commute if the need arises. This situation may cause fear or hesitations, so precautions during travel are necessary.

Another instance was a woman commuter seated beside or in between male passengers who are under the influence of liquor, a smoker or a harasser. Added to this is the

absence of Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) inside the buses which made them hesitant to make a complaint.

Pursuant to the Memorandum Circular No. 2015 – 002 of Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) all Public Utility Bus (PUB) operators are strictly required to tag their passengers' baggage with a blank sticker with a corresponding tags indicating the name of the baggage owner and half of the blank sticker tag shall serve as claim stub of the passenger/s upon disembarking.

This implies that woman commuters have experienced different forms of violence while travelling on public transport. Said violence can be categorized as slight or grave, yet it brought discomforts and uncertainties to commuters, especially women.

Due to these, woman commuters no longer insist on boarding when the bus is already overcrowded; made report of violence to authorities if necessary; they do not expect male passengers to give their seats because it is on a first come first serve basis and both male and female passengers are paying fare dues; and by being calm because it might distract passengers or even the driver.

Similar study conducted by the University of the Philippines found that there are unique factors in a public transport setting that can lead to harassment such as overcrowding which leads to frequent physical contacts; overcrowding which raises doubts if the physical contact is in purpose and acceptable; and harassment in an overcrowded vehicle.

The state through the LTFRB issued last 2007-005 a Memorandum Circular providing penalties for offences such as overloading of passengers.

**Accident.** Circumstances experienced by woman commuters in public transport, endangers their life and properties.

The study revealed that twelve (12) out of fifteen (15) woman participants experience fear of accidents while in public transportation. One of the sources of fear is when the bus travels fast (speeding), especially at night and the weather is not good or raining. Since the road to Northern Palawan has several curves and some on either side of the road, it is very risky for buses to travel fast. This creates fear in passengers especially when the bus changes gear or stops shortly.

Data showed that six (6) of the participants has experienced an accident as they travel on public transport. One of the participants declared,

### **Vehicular Accident**

#### **Participant 2**

“Unang una ko talaga na naexperience yung mga luma pang bus noon naranasan kong masiraan, hindi na makaakyat sa matarik na kalsada, ang nangyari ay huminto at ibinaba kami at naghintay ng sumunod na bus para makarating kahit late na sa school.”(The first time I experienced accident was while boarding old bus; it failed to ascend the sloping part of the road. The bus was forced to stop and passengers has to wait for the next bus arrive)”.

Another participant supported the above statement, and said,

#### **Participant 3**

“Ang mahirap sa sasakayan ay yung napuputukan ng gulong, mabuti na lang nakakapreno agad ang bus. Minsan may mga hayop na tumatawid sa kalsada,

biglang preno. (In case of wretched tire/s it might result to accident when the driver failed to stop the bus; or oftentimes due to astray animals crossing the road)”.

In like manner, another participant recalled her experiences,

Participant 10

*“Yung time na yun nakikinig ako ng music sa earphone tapos napansin ko nagsisigawan ang mga tao at ang bus liku-liko, zigzag zigzag na ang takbo. Aruy patay! sabi ko parang aksidente na ang dating nito. Iba na ang takbo ng bus hindi na sya sa proper way na pag drive ng driver dapat sana straight lang sya tatlong beses kaming hinampas hampas bago tumaob. Namalayan ko na lang... nasabi ko buhay pa ba ako? Naramdaman ko parang namanhid ang buong ng katawan ko. Ang naririnig po sigaw, humihingi ng tulong, kahit po humihingi kami ng tulong wala pong lumalapit sa amin. Nakuha lang po kami pagdating ng rescue at mga ambulance. (That time, I was listening to music and then observed that other passengers are already shouting, the bus is running zigzag. Then I realized, we had an accident. The bus toppled upside down, leaving the passengers trapped inside. I felt numbness all ovey my body. I heard people crying for help but nobody is coming until rescue arrived)”.*



Figure 7. An accident witnessed by the researchers during data gathering

Further, three (3) woman participants’ revealed similar experiences. One of them experienced an accident while on board one of the buses bound to Northern Palawan in 2016. It caused five deaths and several injuries to the passengers. The accident happened in a sloping part of the highway where the bus descended. Added to these circumstances is the change of driver by the conductor from some point of travel on the highway. Today, such change of driver due to fatigue is discouraged through the Memorandum Circular No. 012–2017 directing all Public Utility Bus operations to observe in the dispatch of their drivers" PUB drivers are required to drive for six (6) hours only; more than the six (6) hours period an alternate driver on standby shall take over, and the conductor cannot be an alternative driver to provide continuous assistance to passengers.

Buses/van operators whom the study has covered have shown compliance to the mandates of the law to ensure that travels in the said thoroughfares are safe to both the bus/van and the commuters, but still, accidents do happen.

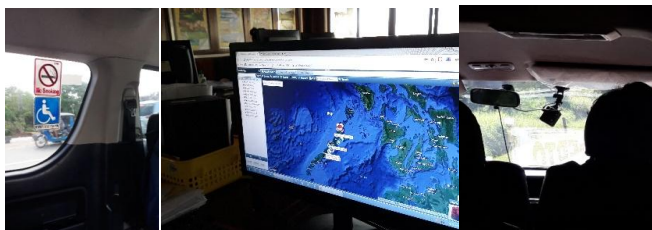


Figure 8. Installed Dash Cam, GPS Monitoring, and sets for PWD

### Over speeding

In a situation where it is over-speeding, five (5) woman participants declared that they asked the driver to slow down because it's risky, especially at night; to use a seat belt if available; by being calm; be awake during travel; and or asked for a bus hotline or change bus.

Some of their experiences are presented below:

#### Participant 6

*“Minsan nakikita ko ang driver na inaantok, sinasabihan ko na “kuya okay ka lang ba?” kung mabilis sinasabihan ko naman ang driver “Huwag po masyadong mabilis” (Sometimes, I observed that the driver is sleepy, so I talked to him; and if he drives too fast, I ask him to slow down)”.*

#### Participant 14

*“Mabilis magpatakbo, yun lang. Yung minsan naka angat na ang puwet mo kasi parang wala ng kurbada, natatakot ako minsan baka kung mapano. (Driving too fast that sometimes you feel that your bottom no longer touch your seat especially if the bus is turning curves in the road)”.*

#### Participant 15

*“Hindi ko lang talaga malimutan na byahe namin ng anak ko ay yung driver na...mabilis talaga magpatakbo.. lalo na nun umuulan-ulan..(I can't really forget when the bus runs too fast and it was raining that day)”.*

These participants claimed that accident do happen in public transport. Further, it revealed that most of these accidents concern the driver of the bus or van.

These experiences are supported by the observation that buses and vans are conveying the same route that runs fast or beyond the speed limit of eighty (80) kilometres per hour (kph) as mandated by Memorandum Circular No. 2015 – 021 of Land Transportation and Franchising Regulatory Board (LTFRB). An interview with terminal personnel confirmed that some buses/vans travel more than the speed limit especially when there are passengers/tourists who are catching flights.

Another circumstance related to this is the experience of travelling in overcrowded buses/vans. Buses still board passengers even when no seats are available and passengers have to stand whether the trip is short or long distance. Sometimes, the vehicle has to carry cargoes/pieces of baggage more than the capacity of the bus compartment, so their cargoes are placed under the seats or in the vehicle's aisle. These cause discomfort to passengers as they seat or alight or disembark the bus/vans. Overloading causes some difficulty to the bus itself as it ascends or descends slopes on the highway.

Overcrowded bus makes travel unsafe for women. The overcrowding inside the bus gives the opportunity to men to not only stand close to women but for unnecessary pushing, shoving and rubbing bodies. Women do not feel bad about unintentional pushing due to the

crowd but when someone starts taking benefit from the situation, it becomes irritating. The same situation happens when four (4) people setting in the seat made for three (3) buses and vans. There is always a chance of falling for the person who sits at the edges. By these, women are forced to be in close proximity to men who sometimes use the chance to misbehave.

As woman do not prefer to seat into crowded bus sometimes they will wait for less crowded. They also try to start their journey early morning so that they could get less crowded bus. For waiting less crowded bus, it also increase their travel time that resulted to being late to work or school.

This also includes risks of those female passengers who are boarding or disembarking along the highway that while doing the bus is already moving/running. This resulted in bumping or falling of women passengers due to imbalance as they ascend or descend the bus.

The researchers also observed the said experiences of the commuters during the data gathering. Added to this observation is when drivers of buses and vans reply to text messages or answer phone calls while driving even though the talking is done for a very short period. Said behavior of drivers is prohibited under section (4a) of Republic Act No. 10913 or the "Anti-Distracted Driving Act declaring unlawful the use of mobile communication device to write, send, or read a text-based communication or to make or receive calls, and other similar acts while a motor vehicle is in motion or temporary stopped at a red light.

Further, it was observed that only the driver wear seat belt despite the mandate of the law that drivers and front seat passengers of a public or private vehicle are required to use their seat belts while inside a vehicle of running the engine on any road or thoroughfare (Section 4 of RA No.8750). The same act defines front seat passenger of persons on board a public utility vehicle (PUV) seated at the right side beside the driver for public utility jeeps (PUJ) and to passengers seated at the right side beside the driver and those at the first row immediately behind the driver in the case of public utility buses (PUB) and to passengers seated on the right side beside the driver for private motor vehicles.

It implies that accidents do happen on public transport. Whatever the cause/s of these incidents, it endangers both life and property of commuters. Though laws are implemented to ensure the safety of passengers, yet accidents cannot be avoided.

In response to these, interviews with bus/van personnel revealed the following:

The RoRo Bus lines have dash cam installation inside and outside the bus for the protection of the driver, especially in cases of accidents and to check the behaviour of the bus conductors. Fire extinguishers, seatbelts and persons with disabilities (PWD) seats are also provided inside the bus; warning devices, complete tools and reserve tires are available; tire bolts, brake, and fuel are checked before departure.

These are all provided to ensure the safety of the travel, especially of the commuters. In line with this, Republic Act Number 8750 requires mandatory compliance by a motorist of private and public vehicles to use seat belt devices and requires vehicle manufacturers to install seat belt devices in all their manufactured vehicles. The driver and front seat passengers of a public or private motor vehicle are required to wear or use their seat belt devices while inside a vehicle running engine on any road or thoroughfare, front and back seat passengers are likewise required to use their seat belt devices at all times. Any passengers who refuse to wear seat belts shall not be allowed to continue his/her trip.

Further, Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board Memorandum Circular No. 2010-023, provides that the State promote the mobility of persons with disabilities (PWD), as well as generate public awareness of the rights of PWDs and foster understanding of their special needs. Public Utility Bus shall have a display of the

International Symbol of Accessibility in the designated seats inside all units. Regular buses shall have at least five (5) while air-conditioned buses shall have at least four (4) designated seats for PWDs near entrance doors. Other passengers may use those designated seats if not occupied but shall yield them to incoming PWDs whenever the occasion arises. Owners or operators of Public Utility Bus operating in highly urbanized cities shall install in their units audio-visual aids such as buzzers, and bells flashing lights to inform the driver of any alighting passengers.

In like manner, Cherry Bus Line has seven inspectors checking at different points of travel from Puerto Princesa City to El Nido, Palawan and vice versa. This is to make sure that the number of passengers manifested in the tickets is similar to the actual head count. Routine procedures such as cleaning the bus, checking tires and brakes, and regular meeting of drivers and conductors are also conducted before departure. Instead of a dash cam, Global Positioning System (GPS) and speed limiter are installed inside the bus. In cases of overspeeding, the speed limiter will serve as an alarm. They adhere to the belief that customers/passengers are always right.

Further, an interview with CAMARIH Operation Manager revealed that they practice online booking so that a passenger (tourist or local) has the freedom to choose a favoured seat and the passenger beside him/her.

Drivers have to undergo one-week training under senior drivers to be familiar with their travel patterns, and how to talk with guest/tourist passengers. Routine procedures such as checking of brake and brake pad, extra tire, fire extinguisher, trash can, and tools are made before departure.

For maintenance, the brake pad is replaced once forty thousand (40,000) kilometres (km) of travel was consumed while the brake shoe is replaced after eighty thousand (80,000) kilometres (km) of travel. This is to ensure the safety of the travel and avoid accidents. Further, a speed limit of ninety (90) kilometres (km) per hour is expected, otherwise, drivers are called for suspension or termination. Accidents can be easily monitored through the Global Positioning System (GPS) locator. The GPS device informs the operators about the proper routes and the speed at which the van is travelling. Should a van go missing for any reason, the device can help bus operators and authorities to recover it. It can help operators quickly send a replacement bus to convey the passengers stranded by a broken-down bus. The management is open to suggestions and complaints. Their priority is the safety of the passengers.

The study implies that each bus company/operator has different policies as far as transportation business is concerned; it has similarities in routine procedures, however, the bottom line is the safety of the passengers, and passenger safety is their primary concern.

As far as driving hours, Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board Memorandum Circular Number 2017-012 (1) requires Public Utility Bus drivers to drive for six (6) hours only. (2) In excess of the six (6) hour period, an alternative driver on standby shall take over; and (3) the conductor cannot be an alternate driver in order to provide continuous assistance to passengers;

Further, the said agency requires operators of any public land transportation service to equip, install and provide devices such as Global Positioning System (GPS) device for all bus units. This is based on a study on Speed Control of Public Utility Buses where there is a very strong indication that accident severity is very much related to the speeds of colliding vehicles. This accident type is caused primarily by tailgating or miscalculation of speed. The GPS device can also help improve security and safety for passengers and drivers alike.

Similarly, the said memorandum circular indicate the speed limit for provincial bus shall be eighty (80) kilometers per hour (kph). The speed limit for city buses shall be sixty

(60) kilometers per hour (kph) except when travelling inside the expressways, in which case their speed limit should be eighty (80) kilometers per hour (kph).

In addition, Section (2) of the Republic Act No. 10916 requires mandatory installation of speed limiter in public utility and certain types of vehicles. This is to maintain at all times the safety and protection of the public, pursue a more proactive and preventive approach to secure the safety of passengers and the public in general on roads and highways.

This means that the buses/vans operators whom the study has covered have shown compliance ~~to~~ with the mandates of the law to ensure that travels in the said thoroughfares are safe for both the buses/vans and the commuters. It is likewise deduced that these transportation operators obediently follow transportation laws.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concluded that the travel setting of woman commuters such as the type of public transport, frequency of travel, travel time, duration and reasons of travel have influenced their experiences in ~~their~~ accessing to and waiting in terminal, fear, and experience of harassment, violence and accident, that disturbs their personal security in public transport. Such experiences have implications for education being the channel of learning for people and the fact that school personnel and students are all commuters.

With the conclusion of the study, the following recommendations are offered for consideration;

1. Public transportation operators shall be required to have, advertise, and enforce a public safety policy and related initiative to ensure that public transportation networks and related spaces are free from fear and harassment, violence and accident.
2. There shall be an improved coordination between transport security and police in monitoring, responding to, and tracking harassment cases, violence and accidents.
3. Sensitize transport company officials about handling gender-related cases so that women victims are more confident in reporting an offence.
4. Transport owners shall provide larger buses and increase the frequency of trips to reduce overcrowding, which is linked to increased fear and harassment.
5. The terminal operator shall make infrastructure changes such as installing closed-circuit television in buses and vans, in bus terminals and at bus stops.
6. Terminal operators shall provide lighting in dim areas, whether in bus stations, buses or vans. Parking areas also should be well-lit, especially at night.
7. Schools should develop behaviour-change materials to raise awareness and sensitivity to harassment, violence and accident in public transport.
8. Schools should develop safety and security teaching materials targeted at secondary schools and young adults in tertiary education. These materials should promote interactive learning and collective responsibility for safety in public spaces.
9. Schools should conduct regular passenger satisfaction surveys and safety audits. These data might be collected through apps or a website, with information on how to participate displayed on buses and vans. Results should be feedback for planning initiatives.
10. Concerned Local Government Units shall implement appropriate policies to ensure the safety and security of commuters, especially women.

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