
TITLE- A STUDY ON "WOMEN'S OPINIONS ON SEXUAL HARASSMENT ON SOCIAL MEDIA"

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ABSTRACT

The study "Women's Perspectives on Sexual Harassment on Social Media" explores the prevalence and impact of online sexual harassment on women across social media platforms. It highlights the need for legal reforms to tackle this issue effectively.

The research identifies various forms of online sexual harassment, such as unwanted messages, explicit content sharing, cyberstalking, and revenge porn. While existing legal provisions, like Section 354A of the Indian Penal Code, address these offenses, enhancements may be necessary for better protection.

Through a descriptive research design, the study gathers insights into women's experiences and opinions on social media harassment. Key findings indicate a significant number of respondents facing offensive comments, inappropriate images, and harassment. Many advocate for stronger laws and greater awareness of existing legal protections.

Recommendations include public education initiatives, stricter law enforcement, and support platforms for victims. Addressing patriarchal views and challenging the normalization of harassment are also emphasized.

In conclusion, the study emphasizes the urgency of legal reforms and societal interventions to combat online sexual harassment effectively. Heightened awareness, law enforcement, and support for victims are essential steps in addressing this pervasive issue on social media platforms.

I. INTRODUCTION

Online sexual harassment refers to unwelcome sexual behaviour on digital platforms that causes feelings of threat, exploitation, coercion, humiliation, and discrimination. This report focuses on peer-to-peer harassment among young people, highlighting its varied impact on mental health and well-being. Long-term effects can be exacerbated by the re-sharing of content or resurfacing of trauma. Such harassment is often gendered, disproportionately affecting women and girls, and marginalized groups such as those based on gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, or disability, who face unique and severe harassment with additional barriers to support.

Cyber sexual harassment involves harmful behaviours causing emotional distress, gender-based harassment, and privacy invasion. Perpetrators may induce fear, issue threats, spread defamatory material, or fabricate pornographic content. Although not explicitly defined by law, it is recognized as sexual harassment through digital means like emails, texts, and social media. Section 354A of the Indian Penal Code defines and penalizes sexual harassment, criminalizing unwelcome physical advances, soliciting sexual favours, forcing a woman to view pornography, and making sexually suggestive remarks, with penalties ranging from fines to imprisonment.

Cyber-sexual harassment includes:

- Unwanted sexual comments or messages
- Sending explicit content without consent
- Cyber stalking
- Revenge porn
- Sexual blackmail
- Harassment or bullying

- Impersonation to intimidate
- Unwanted sexual advances

Legal Provisions

Under Section 345C of the IPC, capturing and sharing non-consensual intimate images is punishable by imprisonment and fines. Section 354A deals with sharing pornographic material without consent, with similar penalties. Section 292 prohibits distributing obscene material, with increasing penalties for repeated offenses. Section 294 penalizes indecent acts or language in public places with imprisonment or fines.

Social Media Harassment- Women are particularly vulnerable to technological crimes like morphing, fake profiling, and cyber bullying on social media. Despite legal efforts, online spaces remain male-dominated, with feminist activists facing severe harassment. This restricts women's freedom of speech and expression. Platforms are working on better reporting mechanisms, content moderation, and awareness campaigns, but ongoing efforts are needed to combat this issue.

Women face various forms of harassment on social media, including:

- Unwanted sexual advances
- Sexual comments and objectification
- Sexualized trolling and cyber bullying
- Revenge porn and non-consensual image sharing
- Sexual coercion and blackmail
- Stalking and harassment
- Harassment in online gaming communities

II. METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the research methodology used in this study, which investigates the impact of social media sexual harassment on women.

Objectives of the Study

- To examine the demographic profile of the respondents.
- To explore women understand of factors contributing to social media sexual harassment.
- To analyze the extent of the impact of online sexual harassment on women.
- To identify potential preventive measures or strategies suggested by women to combat social media sexual harassment.

Research Design

The study employed a descriptive research design aimed at understanding women's opinions on sexual harassment on social media.

Scope of the Study

The findings will provide insights into the impact of social media sexual harassment on women.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The study was conducted in India with a sample size of 100 respondents selected through convenient sampling.

Data Collection Tool

Data was collected using Google Forms with a 25-question questionnaire addressing the study's objectives.

Coding Analysis

Data variables were manually coded in a Word document, with similar responses to open-ended questions grouped and converted into percentages for analysis.

Statistical Analysis

Data from the coding sheet was analyzed using Word documents and graphical representations such as pie charts, bar graphs, and tables to interpret primary results and potential solutions.

Limitations

- The findings cannot be generalized to the entire population.
- Results may lack complete reliability and validity due to convenient sampling.
- Not all subjects answered every question.
- There may be errors in subjects' interpretation of statements.
- Some responses lacked clarity.

III. ANALYSIS

FINDINGS

- Most respondents (49%) are aged 14-20 years.
- The majority (88.9%) live in urban areas, with 11.1% from rural areas.
- Most respondents (82.8%) are students.
- 66.7% have not faced sexual harassment on social media, while 33.3% have.
- 65% have chosen not to speak about their experiences; 6% have received inappropriate pictures; 2% have received comments about their bodies.
- 62.2% have experienced offensive comments on their pictures; 37.8% have not.
- 48.7% haven't received offensive comments; 4% have faced death threats.
- 56.7% have received obscene videos and images; 43.3% have not.
- 22% believe women are physically weaker and gullible; 17% think women are more vulnerable.
- 61.2% have received body-related messages; 38.8% have not.
- 55% have chosen not to say anything; 8% have been bribed.
- 79.4% are comfortable discussing these issues; 20.6% are not.
- 72% have not spoken out; 13% feel humiliated; 10% confide only in close people.
- 30% have not said anything; 19% have occasionally been assessed on their appearance.
- 47% felt they were being bribed to engage in sexual behaviour.
- 49.5% think repeated sexual comments and advances constitute harassment; 50.5% disagree.
- 54.3% believe there are laws against sexual harassment on social media; 45.7% do not.
- 40% have not mentioned any laws; 13% mentioned the POSCO Act.
- 38% would file a complaint; 23% would delete the app; 18% would block and report; 21% have not responded.
- 37.6% have a neutral stance; 24.7% strongly agree; 8.6% disagree.
- 35% think stronger laws are needed; 10% are unsure about preventive measures.
- 35% believe the punishment should be severe; 5% suggest fines.
- 55.9% consider Instagram the safest app; 10.8% prefer other platforms.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the analysis and interpretation of this research, the following suggestions and recommendations are proposed:

- Educate the public about the sexual harassment women face on social media.
- Enforce stringent laws against all forms of sexual harassment on social media.
- Inform people about the severe consequences and impacts of sexual harassment.
- Develop programs to help people understand the challenges women endure.
- Encourage women to be cautious about their online posts to avoid unnecessary risks.
- Work towards changing the patriarchal views that portray women as gullible and weak.

- Ensure the government provides adequate compensation and support for victims of sexual harassment, addressing their psychological needs.
- Create platforms for victims to share their experiences and insights.
- Make a concerted effort to end the normalization of sexual harassment in society.

V. CONCLUSION

This study, examines the experiences of women facing online harassment on social media platforms. The results highlight the urgent need for legal reforms to combat sexual harassment.

A thorough analysis of survey data revealed that a majority of women believe that laws should be strengthened to better protect victims of sexual harassment. Additionally, many women feel that they are targeted for harassment online due to societal perceptions of their vulnerability and perceived weakness.

The research also uncovered that a significant number of women experience humiliation and objectification based on their appearance. Furthermore, existing laws in various jurisdictions do not effectively prevent online sexual harassment.

Some respondents also indicated a lack of awareness regarding relevant laws. Given the prevalence of online harassment, there is a pressing need for initiatives such as prevention videos, posts, and articles on social media to raise awareness and educate the public about this issue.

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