INSTITUTE OF BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

ME TOO:THE UNTOLD STORIES OF MEN

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Sexual Harassment of Men: Exposing a Silent Crisis in Pakistan

2. Introduction :

Sexual harassment, an insidious violation of one's boundaries and dignity, is a gendered phenomenon in many ways, focusing largely on the victimization of women. The reality, however, is more complex. Men too are victims of sexual

harassment, a grossly underreported and stigmatized experience, particularly in the socio-cultural political economy of Pakistan. Dependent on patriarchal norms and rigid gender roles, male victims are disregarded, mocked, or dismissed when they complain. This report attempts to unveil the experiences of the largely overlooked male victims in Pakistan, employing survey data and data on social attitudes, barriers to reporting, and the extreme emotional toll of such harassment. The report documents cultural stereotypes, masculinity, and systemic loopholes in dealing with male victims. Employing an examination of the available data, this report aims to highlight the importance of dealing with and acknowledging sexual harassment against men in Pakistan, and effecting systemic changes and raising societal awareness.

2. Methodology :

Data was gathered through an anonymous questionnaire with over 65+ respondents. The questionnaire had most essential sections on:
  ● Demographics (age, gender, social class).
  ● Beliefs and awareness (societal perceptions of male victimization, societal responses, and reporting barriers).
  ● Personal experience (optional emotional impact and grounds for silence section).

The majority of participants were 18–25 years old (85%), female (60%), and middle class (70%). There were also upper-class (15%) and lower-class (5%) participants.

3. Major Takeaways :

I . Male Harassment Beliefs and Awareness
  ● Belief in Male Victimization
  ● 85% of the interviewees concurred that men can be victims of sexual harassment.
  ● Yet, 70% felt that society doesn't take male victims seriously.
  ● Perceived Frequency of Reporting
  ● 65% said men "rarely" report harassment.
  ● 20% believed men "never" reported.

Barriers to Reporting :

The most frequent reasons for not reporting were:
  ● Fear of judgment (80%)
  ● Concerns about masculinity (75%)
  ● Shame/embarrassment (70%)
  ● Poor support systems (60%)
  ● Impact of Social Class:
  ● 55% concurred that a man's social class dictates how seriously his case is treated.
  ● Upper-class interviewees felt slightly safer reporting.

- Gendered Stereotypes:
- 80% attributed social skepticism to traditional conceptions of masculinity ("men are strong, can't be victims").
- 40% indicated that men's harassment is often dismissed as a "joke" or "harmless".

II. *Typical Settings for Harassment :*

Respondents named the following as high-risk environments:
- Educational institutions (schools, universities) – 90%
- Public transport (taxis, buses) – 75%
- Internet/social media – 60%
- Family/domestic settings – 50%

III. *Emotional and Mental Health Impacts :*

- ☐ **Normal Responses:**
  - Self-blame, guilt, and shame (e.g., "I wondered if I was a participant or victim").
  - Mistrust, depression, and anxiety (e.g., "It made me avoid certain places").
  - Long-term trauma (e.g., "I still feel disgusted years later").
  - Gender Bias in Responses
  - 30% indicated that they felt "less sympathy" for male victims due to stereotypes (e.g., "Men should tough it out").
  - Others insisted on equality: "Harassment is wrong, no matter what gender.".

IV. *Male Victims' Needs for Support :*

Participants highlighted the need for critical support systems:
- Emotional validation (e.g., "Being heard without judgment").
- Confidential reporting systems (e.g., anonymous websites, trusted officials).
- Campaigns against toxic masculinity to raise awareness.

* Specifically targeted legal and counseling services to men.

4. Sociological Analysis

- ☐ Patriarchy and Masculinity
- ☐ Pakistan's patriarchal culture identifies masculinity with invulnerability and dominance. Men internalize shame in the sense that they believe they will become "weak" if they report. As one participant explained, "Log kehtay hain, 'Mard ban!'" ("People say, 'Be a man!'"). This stigmatizing silences the victims and creates cycles of abuse.
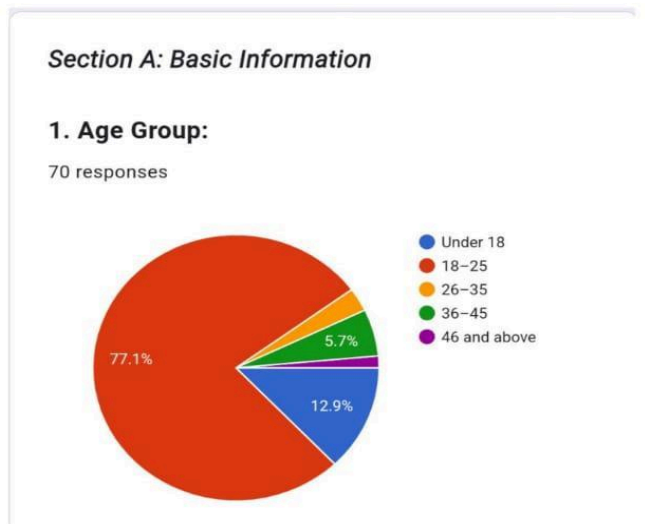- ☐ Cultural Stigma

Sexual harassment is widely seen as a "women's issue." Male victims present particular challenges, such as:
- Minimization: "People laugh and comment, 'Men like it'.".

- Lack of Legal Frameworks: There are no specific laws or male victim support centers.
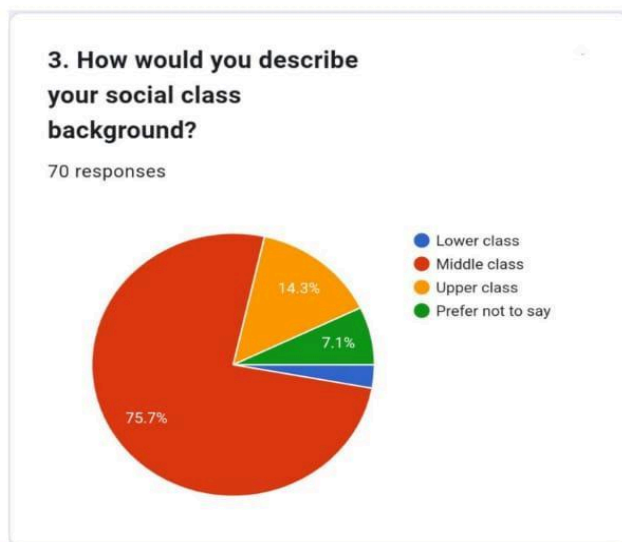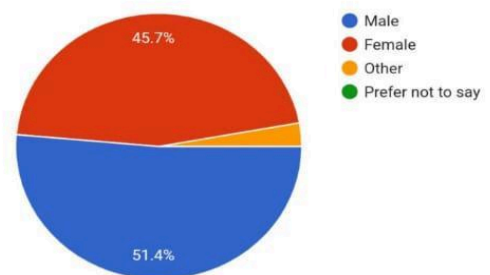- Class and Vulnerability

Middle and lower-class men indicated heightened susceptibility based on restricted access to resources. Upper-class respondents, despite slightly higher level of confidence in revelation, were also subject to societal judgment.

5. Survey Charts:

Section A: Basic Information

1. Age Group:
70 responses

- Under 18
- 18–25
- 26–35
- 36–45
- 46 and above

77.1%
5.7%
12.9%

2. Gender:
70 responses

- Male
- Female
- Other
- Prefer not to say

45.7%
51.4%

3. How would you describe your social class background?
70 responses

- Lower class
- Middle class
- Upper class
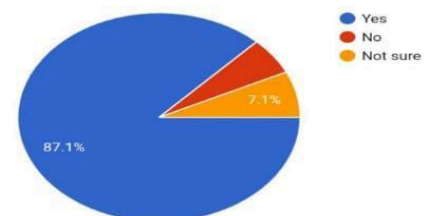- Prefer not to say

14.3%
7.1%
75.7%

Perceptions of Sexual Harassment Against Men Across Social Classes

Section B: Awareness & Beliefs

4. Do you believe men can be victims of sexual harassment?
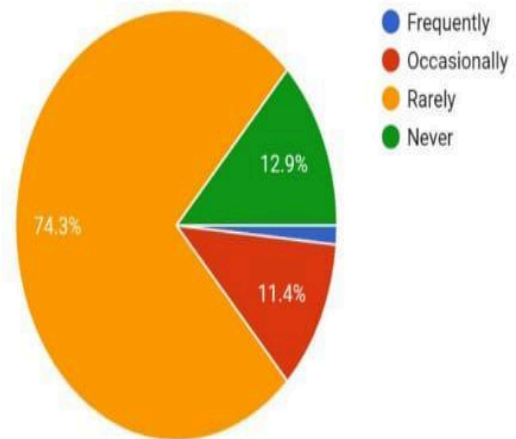70 responses

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

87.1%
7.1%

5. Do you think male victims are taken seriously by society?

70 responses

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes
- Not sure

35.7%
61.4%
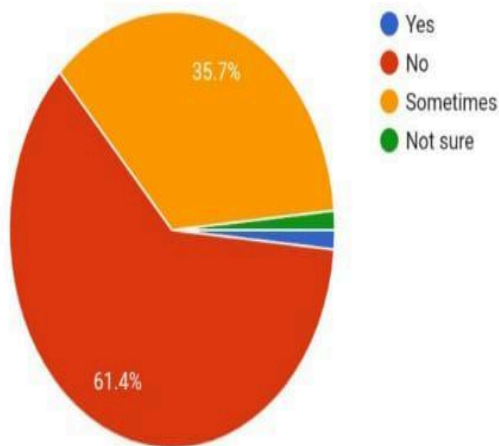
6. In your opinion, how often do men report being harassed?

70 responses

- Frequently
- Occasionally
- Rarely
- Never

74.3%
12.9%
11.4%

7. What do you think stops men from reporting sexual harassment?

70 responses

- Shame or emba... — 43 (61.4%)
- Fear of being ju... — 38 (54.3%)
- Lack of support — 34 (48.6%)
- Concern about... — 41 (58.6%)
- Log bharosa nhi... — 1 (1.4%)
- All of the above... — 1 (1.4%)
- They don't want... — 1 (1.4%)
- — 1 (1.4%)

0   50   100
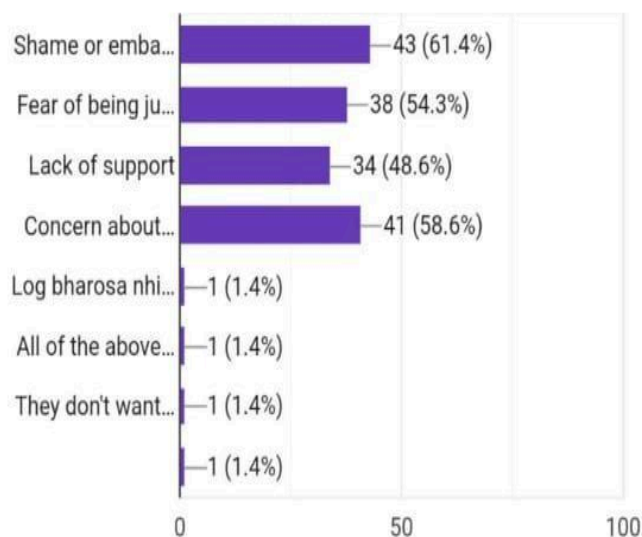
8. Do you believe a man's social class affects:

a) Whether he feels safe reporting it?

70 responses

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

31.4%
17.1%
51.4%

6
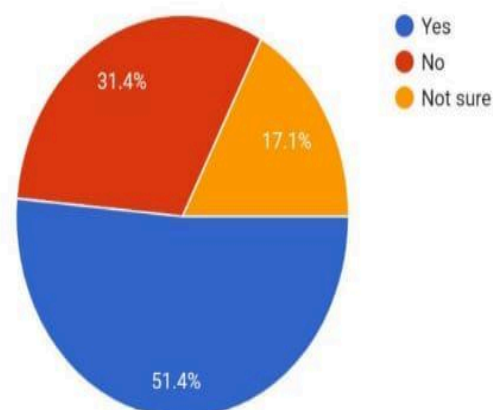
6. Case Studies from Responses :

- *A Male Student's Experience*
  - "My classmates were bullying me. I did not report it because nobody would have believed me."
  - Impact: Avoidance of social gatherings, emotional withdrawal.
- **Childhood Trauma:**
  - "A relative harassed me. I did not report it until adulthood.".
  - Consequence: Endless suspicion, inability to build relationships.
- **Online Harassment:**
  - "I was blackmailed with naked photos. I was too embarrassed to ask for assistance.".
  - Consequences: Anxiety, isolation.

7. Recommendations for Change :

The issue of sexual harassment of men in Pakistan has to be tackled through a multi-pronged approach to deal with societal culture, legal frameworks, and support systems. On the basis of findings and the imperative to reform, the following changes are necessary :

- *Policy Changes:*
  - Enact law firmly criminalizing sexual harassment of a man.
  - Create gender-neutral support centers that can facilitate the special needs of male survivors. These support centers should facilitate access to counseling, legal aid, and other necessary resources within a safe and non-judgmental space.
- *Awareness Programs:*
  - Launch mass public education campaigns to combat poisonous masculinity and deconstruct the negative stereotypes that fuel the stigma around male victimization.
  - Provide education courses at schools and universities to encourage empathy and sensitivity towards male harassment experiences.
- *Community Support:*
  - Train counselors and mental health care providers to provide treatment for male survivors' individual trauma.
  - Set up forums for open dialogue between communities and families in order to diminish stigma surrounding male victimization and to get more men to report and seek services.
- *Research:*

* Facilitate further research to generate an estimate of sexual harassment of men in Pakistan and to trace country trends.

* These investigations will provide a clearer image of the issue and direct the establishment of targeted support and intervention services.

8. Conclusion :

Sexual harassment of men in Pakistan continues to remain under wraps, abetted by cultural attitudes and systemic apathy. It requires dismantling stereotypes, cultivating empathy, and establishing inclusive support systems to end this vicious cycle. The findings of the survey and the poignant personal accounts add strength to the imperative of surmounting society's attitudes, dismantling the reporting barriers, and providing holistic support to male victims. As the sole respondent urged, "Harassment has no gender—validate all victims". Embracing this principle is the initial step towards the creation of a more equitable and just society for everyone.