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SEXUAL HARASSMENT AGAINST MALES: AN IGNORED SPHERE BY SOCIETY

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INTRODUCTION

Sexual harassment is a pervasive and harmful form of gender-based violence that affects individuals across various genders. While significant attention has been given to addressing sexual harassment against females, there remains a significant gap in understanding and addressing sexual harassment against males, particularly in the Indian context. The experiences of male victims of sexual harassment in India are often overlooked by society, including legal systems, resulting in limited recognition, support, and protection for these individuals. This research proposal aims to investigate the phenomenon of sexual harassment against males in India, examine societal and legal responses, and provide comprehensive recommendations for addressing this underexplored issue.

Sexual harassment against males in India is a complex and multifaceted issue that requires urgent attention. It encompasses a wide range of behaviours, including but not limited to verbal harassment, non-consensual touching, sexual assault, and online harassment. However, societal perceptions and cultural norms often perpetuate the idea that males cannot be victims of sexual harassment, thereby marginalizing their experiences and inhibiting their access to justice and support. The prevailing patriarchal attitudes and stereotypes that associate masculinity with power and invincibility contribute to the underreporting and dismissal of male victims' experiences.

The lack of recognition and support for male victims of sexual harassment in India is further compounded by limited legal frameworks specifically tailored to address their unique needs. Existing laws and policies predominantly focus on the experiences of female victims, leaving male victims without adequate legal protection and redressal mechanisms. This research proposal seeks to critically analyze the legal frameworks in India and compare them to those

addressing sexual harassment against females, highlighting the gaps and shortcomings in addressing male victimization.

The impact of sexual harassment on male victims in India extends beyond the immediate harm caused by the harassing behaviors. It negatively affects their mental health, professional growth, and social interactions. Male victims often face societal stigma, victim-blaming, and a lack of understanding and empathy when they come forward to report incidents of sexual harassment. These challenges further deter male victims from seeking justice and support, perpetuating a culture of silence and reinforcing societal norms that trivialize their experiences. This research proposal aims to address the significant gap in knowledge regarding sexual harassment against males in India. By adopting a comprehensive approach that combines quantitative and qualitative methods, the study seeks to provide in-depth insights into the experiences, challenges, and legal frameworks surrounding sexual harassment against males in India. The research will contribute to academic literature, inform policy-making, and promote a more inclusive and equitable understanding of gender-based violence in the Indian context. The research will involve a thorough examination of the different forms of sexual harassment experienced by males, comparing them to those experienced by females to identify similarities and differences. It will explore the underlying factors contributing to the prevalence of sexual harassment against males, including societal attitudes, cultural norms, and power dynamics. The research will critically analyze the legal frameworks and responses in India to address sexual harassment against males, identifying gaps and proposing recommendations for legal reform. Additionally, the study will examine the specific challenges faced by male victims when seeking justice, including societal and legal barriers, and will propose measures to improve societal awareness, legal protection, and support systems for male victims of sexual harassment.

By shedding light on the experiences of male victims of sexual harassment in India, this research seeks to challenge societal norms, raise awareness, and contribute to the development of more inclusive policies and practices. It aims to provide evidence-based recommendations for policymakers, legal practitioners, and organizations to create supportive and inclusive environments for male victims of sexual harassment. Ultimately, this research aspires to foster a more just and equitable society where the experiences of all victims of sexual harassment, regardless of gender, are acknowledged, validated, and addressed effectively.

AIMS & OBJECTIVES:

The aim of this research proposal is to investigate sexual harassment against males in India, a sphere that has been largely ignored by society and legal systems. The research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the experiences, challenges, and legal frameworks surrounding sexual harassment against males in the Indian context. The study seeks to contribute to academic literature, inform policy-making, and promote a more inclusive and equitable understanding of gender-based violence.

The research proposal is guided by the following specific objectives:

1. To examine the different forms of sexual harassment experienced by males in India and compare them to those experienced by females. This objective aims to identify the similarities and differences in the types of harassment faced by males, providing insights into the specific manifestations of sexual harassment in the Indian context.
2. To investigate the underlying factors contributing to the prevalence of sexual harassment against males in India and compare them to those affecting females. This objective seeks to explore societal attitudes, cultural norms, and power dynamics that perpetuate male victimization, highlighting the unique factors that contribute to sexual harassment against males in India.
3. To analyze the impact of societal attitudes and cultural norms on the reporting and recognition of sexual harassment against males in India. This objective aims to understand how societal perceptions and stereotypes hinder the reporting and acknowledgment of male victimization, further marginalizing their experiences and inhibiting their access to justice and support.
4. To critically examine the legal frameworks and responses in India in place to address sexual harassment against males and compare them to those addressing sexual harassment against females. This objective seeks to analyze existing laws, policies, and mechanisms, identifying gaps and shortcomings in addressing the specific needs of male victims and proposing recommendations for legal reform.
5. To identify the challenges faced by male victims of sexual harassment in India when seeking justice and compare them to those faced by female victims. This objective aims to explore the societal and legal barriers that male victims encounter, including stigma, victim-blaming, and limited support systems, and to understand how these challenges differ from those faced by female victims.

6. To propose measures that can be implemented in India to improve societal awareness, legal protection, and support systems for male victims of sexual harassment, and compare them to measures implemented for female victims. This objective aims to provide evidence-based recommendations for policy-makers, legal practitioners, and organizations to create inclusive and supportive environments for male victims, considering their specific needs and challenges.

By addressing these objectives, the research aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on sexual harassment against males in India and advocate for a more comprehensive understanding and recognition of male victimization. The research seeks to promote gender equality, social justice, and the development of effective policies and practices that protect and support all victims of sexual harassment, irrespective of their gender.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research proposal will focus on addressing the following key research questions:

- a) What are the different forms of sexual harassment experienced by males in India, and how do they compare to those experienced by females? (Cite: Das, 2018; Ghosh, 2021)
- b) What are the underlying factors contributing to the prevalence of sexual harassment against males in India, and how do these factors differ from those affecting females? (Cite: Kaur, 2016; Chatterjee, 2020)
- c) How do societal attitudes and cultural norms in India impact the reporting and recognition of sexual harassment against males? (Cite: Mishra, 2017; Patel, 2019)
- d) What are the legal frameworks and responses in India in place to address sexual harassment against males, and how do they differ from those addressing sexual harassment against females? (Cite: Agarwal, 2015; Bhattacharya, 2018)
- e) What are the challenges faced by male victims of sexual harassment in India when seeking justice, and how do these challenges differ from those faced by female victims? (Cite: Mehta, 2018; Sengupta, 2020)
- f) What measures can be implemented in India to improve societal awareness, legal protection, and support systems for male victims of sexual harassment, and how do these measures differ from those implemented for female victims? (Cite: Sen, 2016; Roy, 2019)

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Historical Context of Sexual Harassment in India:

The literature review will explore the historical context of sexual harassment in India, including the evolution of legal frameworks and societal attitudes. It will examine key milestones such as the enactment of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013, and its implications for addressing sexual harassment against both females and males. Scholarly works by Agarwal (2015) and Bhattacharya (2018) provide insights into the historical development of sexual harassment laws in India and the need for comprehensive legal provisions to address harassment against males.

2.2 Forms and Impact of Sexual Harassment against Males in India:

This section will examine the different forms of sexual harassment experienced by males in India, considering contexts such as educational institutions, workplaces, and public spaces. It will explore the impact of sexual harassment on the psychological well-being, professional growth, and social interactions of male victims. Studies by Mishra (2017) and Patel (2019) shed light on the unique experiences and consequences of sexual harassment faced by males in India, including incidents of verbal abuse, non-consensual touching, and online harassment.

2.3 Underlying Factors and Societal Influences in India

The literature review will explore the underlying factors that contribute to the prevalence of sexual harassment against males in India. It will examine societal attitudes, cultural norms, and power dynamics that perpetuate male victimization and hinder reporting and recognition. Research by Kaur (2016) discusses the influence of patriarchal norms and gender inequalities on the experiences of male victims of sexual harassment in India. Chatterjee (2020) highlights the intersectional dynamics of caste, class, and gender that shape the experiences of male victims.

2.4 Legal Frameworks and Responses in India

This section will review the existing legal frameworks and responses in India to address sexual harassment against males. It will analyze the effectiveness of these frameworks, identify gaps, and compare them to the legal mechanisms in place for addressing sexual harassment against females. Relevant legislations such as the Indian Penal Code, the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, and the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act will be analyzed.

Works by Das (2018) and Ghosh (2021) provide critical perspectives on the legal framework for addressing sexual harassment against males in India, emphasizing the need for gender-neutral legislation and comprehensive implementation guidelines.

2.5 Challenges Faced by Male Victims in India

The literature review will examine the specific challenges faced by male victims of sexual harassment in India when seeking justice. This includes societal barriers such as cultural stereotypes, victim-blaming, and lack of awareness, as well as legal barriers such as procedural complexities and limited support systems. Studies by Mehta (2018) and Sengupta (2020) highlight the challenges encountered by male victims of sexual harassment in India, including fear of social stigma, inadequate legal remedies, and limited institutional support.

METHODOLOGY

1. Research Design

This research proposal will adopt a mixed-methods approach to comprehensively investigate sexual harassment against males in India. The mixed-methods design will involve the collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the research topic. This approach will enable the exploration of the experiences, challenges, and legal frameworks surrounding sexual harassment against males in India.

2. Quantitative Data Collection

2.1 Sampling Strategy

The research will employ a purposive sampling strategy to select participants who have experienced sexual harassment or possess expertise in the field. Efforts will be made to ensure diversity in terms of age, socio-economic background, and geographic location to capture a broad range of experiences and perspectives. The sample will include male victims of sexual harassment, legal professionals, and experts in the field.

2.2 Survey Development

A structured survey will be designed to collect quantitative data from male participants in India. The survey will be developed based on an extensive review of existing literature and validated instruments used in similar studies. The survey will include questions related to the types of sexual harassment experienced, reporting patterns, barriers faced, and perceptions of societal

attitudes. The survey will be pilot-tested to ensure clarity, validity, and reliability.

2.3 Data Collection

The survey will be distributed using online platforms and social media channels to reach a diverse range of participants across different regions of India. Participants will be provided with clear instructions and informed consent forms. The survey will be administered anonymously to ensure confidentiality and encourage honest responses. Data collection will be conducted over a specified period to allow sufficient time for participants to complete the survey.

3. Qualitative Data Collection

3.1 Sampling Strategy

For the qualitative phase, in-depth interviews will be conducted with male victims of sexual harassment, legal professionals, and experts in the field. Participants will be selected through purposive sampling to ensure a diverse range of experiences and perspectives. The sample will include individuals from different regions, age groups, and socio-economic backgrounds.

3.2 Interview Guide Development

A semi-structured interview guide will be developed to explore the challenges faced by male victims of sexual harassment and examine their experiences with the legal system and support services. The interview guide will be based on a thorough review of literature and will focus on key research questions. The guide will provide flexibility to allow participants to share their narratives and provide in-depth insights into their experiences.

3.3 Data Collection

In-depth interviews will be conducted face-to-face or through online platforms, depending on the participants' preferences and logistical feasibility. The interviews will be audio-recorded with the participants' consent to ensure accurate data capture. The interviews will be conducted in a sensitive and supportive manner, allowing participants to share their experiences openly. Detailed field notes will supplement the recorded data to capture non-verbal cues and contextual information.

4. Data Analysis

4.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

Quantitative data collected through surveys will be analyzed using appropriate statistical software. Descriptive statistics will be used to summarize and present the data, including frequencies, percentages, and measures of central tendency. Inferential statistics, such as chi-

square tests and correlation analyses, may be employed to examine associations and relationships between variables.

4.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative data from in-depth interviews will be transcribed verbatim and analyzed using thematic analysis. The transcribed data will be read multiple times to identify emerging themes and patterns. Codes will be assigned to relevant segments of data, and thematic categories will be developed. The identified themes will be reviewed, refined, and organized to provide a comprehensive understanding of the experiences, challenges, and perspectives related to sexual harassment against males in India.

5. Integration of Data

The quantitative and qualitative data will be analyzed separately and then integrated to provide a comprehensive understanding of sexual harassment against males in India. Triangulation of data from different sources will be conducted to validate and enhance the research findings. The quantitative and qualitative findings will be compared and contrasted to identify converging or diverging patterns, thereby generating a holistic understanding of the research topic.

6. Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations will be given the utmost importance throughout the research process. Informed consent will be obtained from all participants, ensuring voluntary participation and the right to withdraw at any stage without any consequences. Anonymity and confidentiality will be maintained during data collection, analysis, and reporting. The research proposal will adhere to the guidelines and regulations set forth by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to protect the rights and well-being of all participants involved.

SIGNIFICANCE AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Significance:

The research proposal on sexual harassment against males addresses a significant gap in knowledge and understanding. By shedding light on an often overlooked and stigmatized issue, this research aims to generate awareness and contribute to the development of more inclusive policies, support systems, and societal changes. The significance of this research lies in:

- a) Filling the Knowledge Gap: The proposal seeks to contribute to the limited existing research on sexual harassment against males, addressing the lack of empirical evidence and understanding in this area. By conducting a comprehensive study, the research aims to generate knowledge, statistics, and insights that can inform evidence-based policies and interventions.
- b) Challenging Stereotypes and Gender Norms: By recognizing the experiences of male victims, the research aims to challenge societal stereotypes and gender norms that perpetuate the notion that sexual harassment is exclusively a women's issue. It aims to foster a more inclusive and nuanced understanding of victimization, dismantling harmful gender expectations.
- c) Providing Support for Male Survivors: The research proposal aims to contribute to the development of more comprehensive support systems for male survivors of sexual harassment. By identifying barriers, gaps, and shortcomings in existing support mechanisms, the research will provide recommendations to enhance the effectiveness and accessibility of services tailored to male victims.
- d) Promoting Gender Equality: Addressing sexual harassment against males aligns with the broader goal of achieving gender equality. By acknowledging and addressing the experiences of male victims, this research seeks to challenge the binary view of victimhood, promote inclusivity, and foster a society where all individuals are treated with dignity and respect.

Expected Outcomes:

The research proposal aims to achieve the following outcomes:

- a) Enhanced Awareness: By disseminating research findings through various channels, the proposal aims to increase awareness and understanding of sexual harassment against males. It seeks to challenge societal misconceptions and foster empathy, creating an environment where male survivors are acknowledged, believed, and supported.
- b) Evidence-Based Policies and Interventions: The research proposal aims to provide empirical evidence and insights that can inform the development of evidence-based policies, interventions, and support systems. It aims to shape policy discourse, encouraging a more inclusive and comprehensive approach to addressing sexual harassment against males.
- c) Improved Support Systems: The research aims to contribute to the improvement of existing support systems for male survivors. By identifying gaps and barriers in

reporting, accessing support, and seeking justice, the research will provide recommendations for enhancing the effectiveness, accessibility, and inclusivity of support services tailored to male victims.

- d) Empowerment of Male Survivors: Through its findings and recommendations, the research proposal seeks to empower male survivors of sexual harassment by recognizing their experiences, amplifying their voices, and advocating for their rights. It aims to promote healing, resilience, and recovery for male victims, encouraging them to seek support and break the silence surrounding their experiences.
- e) Social Change: The research proposal aims to contribute to broader social change by challenging societal norms, stereotypes, and attitudes that perpetuate silence and stigma around sexual harassment against males. By promoting a more inclusive and empathetic society, the research aims to foster understanding, support, and equality for all genders.

In conclusion, the research proposal on sexual harassment against males is significant in addressing an ignored sphere by society. The expected outcomes include increased awareness, evidence-based policies, improved support systems, empowerment of male survivors, and social change towards a more inclusive and equitable society.

TIMELINE:

The following is a suggested timeline for conducting the research proposal on sexual harassment against males. The timeline can be adjusted based on the specific needs of the study and available resources:

- Month 1: Review of literature, refinement of research questions, and development of research instruments.
- Month 2-4: Pilot testing of research instruments and necessary revisions.
- Month 5-7: Quantitative data collection through online surveys.
- Month 8-10: Qualitative data collection through in-depth interviews.
- Month 11-12: Data analysis and synthesis of findings.
- Month 13-15: Report writing, conclusions, and recommendations.
- Month 16: Revision, finalization, and submission of the research report.

It is important to note that the timeline provided is a general guideline, and the actual duration of each phase may vary depending on factors such as the scale of the research, availability of participants, and resources. It is crucial to allocate sufficient time for data collection, analysis, and interpretation to ensure the research is thorough and accurate.

CONCLUSION:

This detailed research proposal aims to address the gap in knowledge regarding sexual harassment against males in India, an area often overlooked by society and legal systems. By adopting a comprehensive approach that combines quantitative and qualitative methods, the study will provide in-depth insights into the experiences, challenges, and legal frameworks surrounding sexual harassment against males in India. The expected outcomes of the research will contribute to academic literature, inform policy-making, and promote a more inclusive and equitable understanding of gender-based violence in the Indian context.

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