

UNDERSTANDING THE DARKER SIDE OF ICTS: GENDER, SEXUAL HARASSMENT, AND MOBILE DEVICES IN PAKISTAN

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Research Aims

Sexual harassment by ICTs is a global phenomenon, and this research intends to better understand as such in the patriarchal structure of Pakistan. Research on digital and online sexual harassment in poorer countries pay surprisingly little attention to issues of digital or online harassment. Therefore, this study aims to address attitude towards and experiences of sexual harassment to which young people in Pakistan are subjected through their mobile devices.

Sample

a largely quantitative online survey in Pakistan was constructed and distributed and data were collected from 530 participants 313 Males (59.5%) and 211 Females (40.1%). students, age ranged between 20–24, living in Islamabad, and using smartphones.



The commentary above on Mobilink's controversial advertisement at the time of this research, highlights some of the tensions in what is widely seen as being a tightly constrained society with very traditional values.

Key Findings

- Facebook and WhatsApp are the most frequent means through which mobile devices are used for sexual harassment.
- Women especially highlighted increased vulnerability to be harassed by men indicating the power of patriarchy and family honor.
- About 48% of women and 18% of men in survey had reported to be sexually harassed through their mobile devices.
- Around 17.5% of respondents who were harassed claim to be receiving daily text messages harassing them sexually, and 11.9% receive daily phone calls doing likewise.
- The impact of sexual harassment through mobile devices on people living in Pakistan has a terrible cost. For example 53% of respondents claimed that they knew someone personally who had tried to commit suicide.
- One of the most striking findings concerns blame attribution: 54% of all respondents thought when a woman is sexually harassed through her mobile device she is always or sometimes to blame. Only 38% of respondents thought that a man was to blame when he is harassed sexually.



Implications

- Requiring social media companies to monitor and delete users who sexually harass others.
- Increasing penalties for sexual harassment; and requiring mobile operators to provide a free reporting service. With respect to the last of these, the Digital Rights Foundation (<https://digitalrightsfoundation.pk/>) opening a toll-free hotline (0800-39393) in December 2016 for victims of online harassment and violence.
- Moreover, to counter digital violence against women, more collaborative work is required to understand and address online abuse.

Table 1. Who Is to Blame When Men and Women Are Harassed (n=530).|

Ranked in order of mean and weighted average score	Mean	Standard deviation	Score	Mode (frequency and percentage)
Who is to blame when men are being harassed				
A man doing the harassing	3.93	1.24	0.93	Usually = 233 (44%)
A woman doing the harassing	3.28	1.43	0.47	Sometimes =146 (27.5%)
The man being harassed	2.82	1.40	-0.18	Rarely = 137 (25.85)
Who is to blame when women are being harassed				
A man doing the harassing	4.28	1.20	1.28	Usually = 340 (64.2%)
A woman doing the harassing	3.33	1.43	0.32	Sometimes = 176 (33.2%)
The woman being harassed	3.34	1.53	0.34	Rarely = (32.3%)

Conclusion

Findings of this study need sharing to accentuate reasons for sexual harassment in Pakistan to ensure safer use of ICTs for men as well as women.

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