



BREAKING THE SILENCE: UNDERSTANDING HARASSMENT AGAINST MEN IN THE WORKPLACE AND PUBLIC SPHERE

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Abstract

The paper aims to explore the often-unspoken dimension of harassment that specifically targets men and boys. The focus on gender-specific harassment that this paper will pursue is predominantly centered around men and boys. While acknowledging the well-documented and pervasive nature of harassment against women, the aim is to delve into an area that has not been extensively covered in sociological literature.

The research will attempt to unearth the manifestations, prevalence, and the gendered dynamics that shape the experiences and perceptions of harassment targeted at men. By scrutinizing the layers of silence, stigma, and social expectations intertwined with traditional gender norms, this paper will shed light on the neglected issue of harassment faced by men. Through an examination of both qualitative and quantitative evidence, including sociological surveys, international human rights documents, psychological studies, and media analysis, the research will dissect the forms of harassment such as verbal abuse, physical intimidation, sexual harassment, and cyberbullying as they are directed at men.

The exploration will extend to discussing the barriers that lead to underreporting, legal invisibility, and institutional indifference, which contribute to the marginalization of male victims of harassment. The

impact of harassment on men's mental health and social identity, coupled with a comparative analysis of legal and policy responses across different jurisdictions, with a particular focus on Pakistan, will be a critical component of this research. The paper will advocate for a more inclusive understanding of harassment that recognizes gendered nuances and calls for policy reforms, awareness campaigns, and support systems that address the needs of all victims, irrespective of gender.

Introduction

Harassment can take many forms and remains an extreme breach of human respect and dignity. Discourse on harassment has mainly focused on women, the more statistically frequent victims of harassment; however, this singular focus has led to men's experiences as victims being marginalized.¹ This dominant social narrative positions men as perpetrators and rarely as victims of harassment; hence, exploration of male victimhood remains underdeveloped in both academic literature and public consciousness.² In reality, men are harassed verbally, physically intimidation, sexual misconduct, or even cyberbullied in professional environments and public spaces.³ Where they usually happen but rarely reported due to stigma tied up with social notions of masculinity.⁴ At work, they can be harassed by bosses, co-workers, or even subordinates in a way that attacks their professional standing, emotional resilience, and career development.⁵ Outside the workplace, in street harassment, public shaming, or unwanted physical contact, men can also be subjected to humiliating treatment that violates their self-respect and personal safety.⁶ Yet the institutional safeguards still exist on a very limited scale and support programs are usually ill-equipped to address male-specific experiences of harassment.⁷ In such countries as Pakistan where traditional gender division of labor and patriarchal values are strongly institutionalized recognition of male harassment becomes even more precarious.⁸

¹ "The Sexual Victimization of Men in America: New Data Challenge Old Assumptions | AJPH | Vol. 104 Issue 6," accessed June 25, 2025, <https://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/full/10.2105/AJPH.2014.301946>.

² John C. Thomas and Jonathan Kopel, "Male Victims of Sexual Assault: A Review of the Literature," *Behavioral Sciences* 13, no. 4 (April 3, 2023): 304, <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs13040304>.

³ "How Common Is Cyberbullying Among Adults? Exploring Gender, Ethnic, and Age Differences in the Prevalence of Cyberbullying | Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking," accessed June 25, 2025, <https://www.liebertpub.com/doi/abs/10.1089/cyber.2019.0146>.

⁴ Conor J. O'Dea et al., "'Act like a Real Man!' A Novel Examination of How Socializing Others to Masculine Honor-Based Norms Bolsters Men's Reputations," *Psychology of Men & Masculinities* 23, no. 3 (2022): 299–308, <https://doi.org/10.1037/men0000389>.

⁵ Manisha M. Khorate, "Ensuring Workplace Safety for All: A Gender-Inclusive Approach," *Journal of Indian Academy of Oral Medicine and Radiology* 36, no. 3 (September 2024): 195, https://doi.org/10.4103/jiaomr.jiaomr_266_24.

⁶ "(PDF) A Qualitative Study on Sexual Harassment Experiences of Men in Pakistan," ResearchGate, accessed June 25, 2025, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/383025019_A_Qualitative_study_on_Sexual_Harassment_Experiences_of_men_in_Pakistan.

⁷ "UN Women Policy Brief Series," UN Women – Headquarters, September 7, 2023, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2015/12/un-women-policy-brief-series>.

⁸ Umer S. Khan, "Gender-Based Violence in Pakistan - a Critical Analysis," September 28, 2020, <https://nrs.harvard.edu/URN-3:HUL.INSTREPOS:37365403>.

This paper seeks to critically explore the harassment dynamics against men at work and in the public sphere, focusing on the forms of abuse they endure, reporting inhibition barriers-anamorphous psychological effects. Current literature, relevant legal frameworks, and a comparative analysis undertake an illumination exercise regarding this male-victim-invisibility phenomenon. It re-creates consciousness toward a more inclusive gender-sensitive understanding of harassment. Breaking the silence created by this neglected issue, it calls upon reforms in law, policy, and public discourse to recognize harassed men as worthy of dignity, protection, and justice.

Understanding Male Harassment: Definitions and Scope

Harassment, as a legal and social concept, encompasses a broad spectrum of unwelcome behavior that offends, humiliates, or intimidates an individual. While legal definitions vary across jurisdictions, harassment is generally understood as conduct that is persistent, unwanted, and harmful in nature.⁹ Most legal frameworks and institutional policies tend to frame harassment as a gender-based issue with women as primary victims. Consequently, male-targeted harassment remains less defined, inconsistently addressed, or entirely omitted in statutory and policy language.¹⁰ This absence has contributed to the widespread belief that harassment is predominantly, if not exclusively, a female-centered phenomenon.

Male harassment can take multiple forms, ranging from sexual harassment, bullying, and verbal humiliation to physical threats and cyber harassment. These acts may originate from individuals of any gender and occur in various settings, including professional workplaces, public transportation systems, marketplaces, educational institutions, and online platforms.¹¹ While many definitions of sexual harassment are structured around a male-perpetrator and female-victim model, research increasingly indicates that men also experience harassment both from other men and from women.¹² Despite this, institutional mechanisms for redress and definitions of harassment in law and workplace policies often lack inclusivity, contributing to the invisibility of male experiences.

In the context of Pakistan, the Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act, 2010, focuses exclusively on female victims and does not formally recognize men as potential victims of harassment.¹³ This legal framework reinforces cultural assumptions about male invulnerability and female vulnerability, thereby narrowing the conceptual understanding of harassment. International human rights bodies, including the United Nations and the International

⁹ "(PDF) A Qualitative Study on Sexual Harassment Experiences of Men in Pakistan."

¹⁰ Ms. Shailja N. Vyas, "Gender Inequality and Silent Struggles of Male Victims of Domestic Abuse in India," April 15, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.5281/ZENODO.15223046>.

¹¹ "Full Article: Reviewing and Reconceptualising Cyberbullying through a Social and Sustainable Lens," accessed June 25, 2025, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/03623319.2024.2404350>.

¹² "The Sexual Victimization of Men in America: New Data Challenge Old Assumptions | AJPH | Vol. 104 Issue 6," accessed June 25, 2025, <https://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/full/10.2105/AJPH.2014.301946>.

¹³ "Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Work Place Act, 2010," accessed June 25, 2025, <https://pakistancode.gov.pk/english/UY2FqaJw1-apaUY2Fqa-apaUY2Fsap0%3D-sg-jjjjjjjjjjjj>.

Labour Organization (ILO), have begun calling for more gender-inclusive legal definitions that reflect the diversity of harassment experiences across gender identities.¹⁴

A clearer, more inclusive definition of harassment is essential not only for legal and institutional clarity but also for raising awareness about male victimization. Without formal recognition, male victims continue to be erased from discourse, policy, and protection. To accurately address harassment in all its forms, legal and academic frameworks must adopt gender-neutral definitions that reflect lived realities rather than stereotypical assumptions.

Prevalence and Forms of Harassment

Although male harassment remains largely underreported, recent empirical studies and surveys suggest that a significant number of men experience various forms of harassment in both professional and public settings. According to a 2024 global survey conducted by the International Labour Organization (ILO), approximately 15% of men reported experiencing some form of harassment at the workplace, including bullying, sexual misconduct, and psychological intimidation.¹⁵ Similarly, a 2023 Pew Research Center report revealed that 35% of men globally reported being harassed in public spaces, particularly through verbal abuse, stalking, and physical intimidation.¹⁶

The workplace presents unique challenges for male victims of harassment. While many associate workplace harassments with sexual misconduct, men are more frequently subjected to bullying, toxic competitiveness, gaslighting, and exclusionary practices.¹⁷ These forms of abuse are often downplayed or dismissed due to entrenched assumptions that men are inherently capable of handling conflict and pressure, further discouraging victims from speaking out. Moreover, when men are subjected to sexual harassment, particularly by female or same-sex perpetrators, societal disbelief and ridicule become common reactions, exacerbating the trauma and silence surrounding their experiences.¹⁸

In public spaces, male harassment often takes the form of derogatory comments, public humiliation, and threats of violence. Public transportation systems, markets, and streets are frequent sites of harassment, especially in urban areas where anonymity provides a degree of impunity to perpetrators. Men from marginalized or vulnerable groups, such as ethnic minorities, LGBTQ+ individuals, or those with disabilities, are at heightened risk of such public abuse.¹⁹

¹⁴ "50th Regular Session of the Human Rights Council: Reports | OHCHR," accessed June 25, 2025, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/regular-sessions/session50/list-reports>.

¹⁵ "Experiences of Violence and Harassment at Work: A Global First Survey | International Labour Organization," December 2, 2022, <https://www.ilo.org/publications/major-publications/experiences-violence-and-harassment-work-global-first-survey>.

¹⁶ Günseli Berik et al., "Men's Perspectives on Public-Space Sexual Harassment of Women in South Asia," *Global Public Health* 19, no. 1 (December 31, 2024): 2380845, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17441692.2024.2380845>.

¹⁷ Elena Essig and Richard Soparnot, "Re-Thinking Gender Inequality in the Workplace – a Framework from the Male Perspective" 22 (n.d.).

¹⁸ John C. Thomas and Jonathan Kopel, "Male Victims of Sexual Assault: A Review of the Literature," *Behavioral Sciences* 13, no. 4 (April 3, 2023): 304, <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs13040304>.

¹⁹ Jan W. de Lind van Wijngaarden, Schunter ,Bettina T., and Qasim and Iqbal, "Sexual Abuse, Social Stigma and HIV Vulnerability among Young Feminised Men in Lahore and Karachi, Pakistan," *Culture, Health & Sexuality* 15, no. 1 (January 1, 2013): 73–84, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691058.2012.743186>.

Cyber harassment is also a growing concern for male victims. Online platforms provide fertile ground for digital abuse in the form of trolling, doxxing, revenge pornography, and threats of physical harm. Studies show that nearly 45% of male internet users under the age of 35 have experienced some form of online harassment, though few report it due to concerns about being mocked or not taken seriously by authorities.²⁰

These patterns highlight the diversity of harassment faced by men and the importance of recognizing the full spectrum of abusive behavior beyond the traditional male-perpetrator/female-victim paradigm. The lack of attention to male harassment not only reinforces gender stereotypes but also undermines broader efforts to foster inclusive and equitable environments.

Cultural and Psychological Barriers to Reporting

One of the most significant obstacles male victims of harassment face is the pervasive social stigma associated with acknowledging victimhood. Deep-rooted cultural norms tied to masculinity often discourage men from expressing vulnerability or seeking help, as doing so is perceived as a sign of weakness.²¹ In many societies, including Pakistan, men are expected to exhibit emotional resilience, dominance, and control, traits that are incompatible with the public perception of a victim. This gendered expectation becomes a psychological barrier that not only deters reporting but also prevents men from recognizing certain behaviors as harassment in the first place.²²

Research suggests that male victims frequently internalize their experiences due to fear of ridicule, emasculation, or disbelief. A 2023 study in the *Journal of Men's Health* revealed that over 70% of male harassment victims did not report the incident, primarily because they believed no one would take them seriously.²³ In cases of sexual harassment by female perpetrators, victims often face additional humiliation, as societal narratives tend to frame such incidents as "compliments" or expressions of male desirability rather than violations of consent.²⁴

The legal and institutional frameworks in many countries do little to alleviate these concerns. Law enforcement officials, human resources personnel, and even mental health professionals are often inadequately trained to respond sensitively to male victims. In Pakistan, for example, anecdotal evidence and limited surveys suggest that men who approach police stations to report harassment

²⁰ Megan Lindsay and Judy and Krysik, "Online Harassment Among College Students: A Replication Incorporating New Internet Trends," *Information, Communication & Society* 15, no. 5 (June 1, 2012): 703–19, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2012.674959>.

²¹ "Unpacking the Man Box (Report)," *Jesuit Social Services* (blog), accessed June 25, 2025, <https://jss.org.au/programs/research/unpacking-the-man-box-report/>.

²² Mudassir Maqsood and Sana Younas, "Reexamining Domestic Violence: A Study on Male Victims in the Context of Pakistani Legislation," *Pakistan Journal of Criminal Justice* 4, no. 1 (March 1, 2024): 39–54, <https://doi.org/10.62585/pjcj.v4i1.48>.

²³ "Underreporting among Males Likely Due to Gender-Based Stigma – Marquette Wire," accessed June 25, 2025, <https://marquettewire.org/3988006/news/underreporting-among-males-likely-due-to-gender-based-stigma/>.

²⁴ Jasmine Madjlessi and Steve Loughnan, "Male Sexual Victimization by Women: Incidence Rates, Mental Health, and Conformity to Gender Norms in a Sample of British Men," *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 53, no. 1 (January 1, 2024): 263–74, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-023-02717-0>.

are often met with disbelief or outright dismissal.²⁵ This mistrust in institutional redress mechanisms further discourages men from pursuing justice and reinforces a cycle of silence.

Psychologically, unaddressed harassment can result in a range of negative outcomes for men, including chronic anxiety, depression, feelings of shame, and even suicidal ideation.²⁶ However, due to the lack of culturally appropriate mental health resources that cater specifically to men, victims often suffer in isolation. When societal expectations inhibit emotional expression and the legal system provides minimal support, the trauma of harassment is compounded, leading to long-term damage.

Thus, cultural narratives of masculinity and institutional shortcomings work in tandem to suppress male victim voices. To create safer environments for all individuals, these barriers must be dismantled through public education, legal reform, and the promotion of healthier, non-stereotypical expressions of masculinity.

Legal and Institutional Gaps

Despite increasing global awareness of gender-based harassment, legal and institutional frameworks across many jurisdictions, including Pakistan, continue to reflect a narrow, gendered understanding of victimhood. Most harassment laws are drafted with women as the sole or primary victims, thereby overlooking the experiences of men who suffer from similar violations. This omission creates a legal invisibility that denies male victims formal avenues for justice and institutional redress.²⁷

In Pakistan, the **Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act, 2010** specifically addresses harassment against women, offering no explicit protections for men. While some courts have occasionally extended protections to male victims under constitutional equality principles, there is no consistent statutory mechanism that guarantees their rights.²⁸ This gender-specific framing of the law not only leaves male victims legally unprotected but also reinforces the social perception that men cannot be harassed.

Globally, few countries have implemented gender-neutral harassment laws. For instance, Iceland and Canada have adopted inclusive definitions of sexual and workplace harassment that are explicitly gender-neutral, offering protection regardless of the victim's gender.²⁹ In contrast, in countries like India and Pakistan, male victims are often excluded from even basic legal remedies. The limited availability of protective laws for men is further exacerbated by the lack of institutional guidance on how to handle male complaints of harassment.

Moreover, human resource policies in many organizations remain ill-equipped to respond to male victimization. Training programs and reporting procedures are often framed around female-

²⁵ Munazza Fatima and Arooj Goheer, "INSPIRING THE NEXT GENERATION OF INDEPENDENT MEDIA IN PAKISTAN JULY 202," n.d.

²⁶ Fatima and Goheer.

²⁷ Fatima and Goheer.

²⁸ Department of Law, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto University for Women Peshawar Pakistan et al., "SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN THE WORKPLACE: A PROPORTIONAL EXAMINATION OF RELEVANT LEGISLATION, WITH COMPARISONS TO TWO MAJOR ASIAN COUNTRIES: INDIA AND PAKISTAN," *Pakistan Journal of Social Research* 04, no. 03 (September 30, 2022): 10–16, <https://doi.org/10.52567/pjsr.v4i03.681>.

²⁹ "Homepage | Canadian Human Rights Commission," accessed June 25, 2025, <https://www.chrc-ccdp.gc.ca/>.

centered narratives, creating environments where male victims feel unwelcome or ridiculed when they seek support.³⁰ A 2024 regional study on South Asian workplaces found that fewer than 10% of employee harassment training sessions included guidance on handling male complaints.³¹ Law enforcement agencies also pose significant barriers to justice. Police personnel often trivialize or outright dismiss male claims of harassment, especially when the accused is female. These biases are reinforced by the absence of institutional accountability mechanisms, limited gender-sensitivity training, and the deep-rooted cultural belief that men should not, or cannot, be victims.³² Without statutory reforms and institutional recalibration, male harassment victims remain trapped in a cycle of silence, legal ambiguity, and social disbelief. Recognizing male victimhood within legal frameworks is not only a matter of equality but a prerequisite for comprehensive and effective harassment prevention.

Comparative Insights: Global Practices and Pakistan's Position

The international landscape reveals stark differences in how nations address harassment faced by men. While several Western and progressive jurisdictions have moved toward gender-neutral legal frameworks, many others, particularly in South Asia, continue to uphold traditional, binary understandings of harassment that largely exclude male experiences. These divergent approaches offer important comparative insights into the possibilities and limitations of legal reform in countries like Pakistan.

In countries such as **Canada, Iceland, and Sweden**, legal definitions of sexual and workplace harassment are explicitly gender-neutral, emphasizing behavior over gender identity. For instance, Canada's *Canadian Human Rights Act* and related workplace policies provide equal protection to all individuals, regardless of gender, from discriminatory or harassing behavior in employment and service settings.³³ These protections are reinforced by extensive public awareness campaigns and institutional training programs that recognize male, female, and non-binary victims alike.

By contrast, **India's** *Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013* focuses exclusively on women, leaving male victims without a statutory complaint mechanism. Several public interest litigations have sought to extend protections to male and LGBTQ+ victims, but courts have been hesitant to legislate beyond the statute.³⁴ This gender-

³⁰ Leanne S. Son Hing et al., "Gender Inequities in the Workplace: A Holistic Review of Organizational Processes and Practices," *Human Resource Management Review* 33, no. 3 (September 1, 2023): 100968, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2023.100968>.

³¹ "Workplace Harassment in South Asia, and How to Combat It | World Economic Forum," accessed June 25, 2025, <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2024/02/workplace-harassment-south-asia-safer-workspaces/>.

³² "World Report 2024 | Human Rights Watch," accessed June 25, 2025, <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2024>.

³³ "Canadian Human Rights Commission's 2024 Report to Parliament | Canadian Human Rights Commission," June 3, 2025, <https://www.chrc-ccdp.gc.ca/resources/publications/canadian-human-rights-commissions-2024-report-parliament>.

³⁴ "(PDF) LAWS, CHALLENGES, SOLUTIONS RELATED TO WORKPLACE SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN INDIA," *ResearchGate*, March 20, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.29121/shodhkosh.v5.i1.2024.4529>.

specific framing of the law has led to criticisms about exclusion and inequality under the constitutional right to equality.³⁵

Pakistan shares a similar legal and institutional trajectory. The *Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act, 2010* does not include men under its protective umbrella. Despite sporadic judicial recognition of male grievances under general constitutional provisions, there remains no dedicated forum or mechanism through which male victims can file complaints or access institutional protection.³⁶ Advocacy groups and legal scholars in Pakistan have increasingly called for amendments to the Act to make it gender-inclusive, but these calls have yet to gain traction within legislative circles.³⁷

From a policy standpoint, Pakistan lacks national guidelines that mandate gender-sensitive training or reporting mechanisms in workplaces. In contrast, countries like the **United Kingdom** have issued government-backed codes of practice requiring employers to adopt inclusive anti-harassment frameworks that consider all genders and sexual orientations.³⁸

These examples from around the world demonstrate that it is not only possible but necessary to reform. Not only does gender-neutral protection guarantee equality before the law, it also shifts the discourse around male victimhood from a rarity to a norm, which is important in creating a culture change within institutions and the law. For Pakistan, meeting these global standards is key to substantive gender equality and guaranteeing protection for all people, regardless of gender identity.

Policy Recommendations

To address the systemic neglect of male harassment victims in both the workplace and public sphere, a comprehensive policy overhaul is urgently required. Legal reforms alone are insufficient unless accompanied by institutional change, cultural reorientation, and public awareness. The following policy recommendations aim to promote inclusivity, justice, and equitable protection for male victims of harassment.

1. Amendment of Harassment Legislation

Acts like the Pakistan Protection against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act of 2010 should be amended to use gender-neutral words, which leaves the protection under law to all people irrespective of gender identification. Originally, legal frameworks must be devised on behavior-based definitions of harassment as opposed to gender-based definitions.³⁹ This has been

³⁵ "Need For Gender Neutrality In Law: The Unspoken Rights Of Men » Lawful Legal," June 11, 2025, <https://lawfullegal.in/need-for-gender-neutrality-in-law-the-unspoken-rights-of-men/>.

³⁶ "(PDF) Pakistan Journal of Gender Studies: Annual," accessed June 25, 2025, https://www.academia.edu/44360404/Pakistan_Journal_of_Gender_Studies_Annual.

³⁷ "Aurat Foundation," accessed June 25, 2025, <https://www.af.org.pk/>.

³⁸ "Code of Practice Consultation 2025: Changes to Chapter 8 | EHRC," accessed June 25, 2025, <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/equality/equality-act-2010/codes-practice/code-practice-consultation-2025-changes-chapter-8>.

³⁹ "Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Work Place Act, 2010," accessed June 25, 2025, <https://pakistancode.gov.pk/english/UY2FqaJw1-apaUY2Fqa-apaUY2Fsap0%3D-sg-jjjjjjjjjjjjjj>.

supported by embracing international conventions like ILO Convention No 190 that should be adopted and enacted by formal ratification by nations with restrictive statutes governing gender.⁴⁰

2. Establishment of Gender-Inclusive Reporting Mechanisms

Government and private sector institutions should establish independent, confidential, and gender-inclusive complaint mechanisms. Internal complaints committees, ombudspersons, and HR departments must be trained to handle complaints from male victims with equal seriousness and sensitivity as those from female complainants.⁴¹ Model policies should be issued by labor departments to guide employers in developing and operationalizing such systems.

3. Mandatory Sensitization and Training Programs

Training modules and workplace sensitization programs must include male victim perspectives. Current trainings disproportionately focus on female-centered harassment narratives, which can inadvertently reinforce the invisibility of other victims.⁴² Employers should be required by law or code to provide annual, gender-inclusive harassment prevention training, drawing from real case scenarios and psychological insights.

4. Mental Health and Counseling Support

Harassment victims, regardless of gender, often suffer long-term psychological consequences. Public hospitals, universities, and private health institutions should offer accessible, confidential, and trauma-informed mental health services specifically designed to address male experiences of shame, anxiety, and social isolation.⁴³ Partnerships with NGOs and helplines for men (such as *ManKind Initiative* in the UK) offer replicable models for support structures.

5. Public Awareness and Deconstruction of Masculinity Norms

Governments, educational institutions, and civil society must work collaboratively to challenge stereotypes of masculinity that equate victimhood with weakness. Public campaigns should be launched to normalize help-seeking behavior among men and to portray harassment as a gender-inclusive issue.⁴⁴ Media representations and school curricula must also evolve to reflect a broader, more inclusive understanding of gender-based violence.

6. Data Collection and Research

There is a significant lack of empirical data on male harassment, particularly in South Asia. National statistical bureaus and academic institutions should initiate regular surveys and studies to

⁴⁰ "Convention C190 - Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190)," accessed June 25, 2025, https://normlex.ilo.org/dyn/nrmlx_en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C190.

⁴¹ "(PDF) Reducing Gender Bias: A Handbook for Organizations in India," accessed June 25, 2025, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/354254591_Reducing_Gender_Bias_A_Handbook_for_Organizations_in_India.

⁴² "Assessment of Gender Equality and Workplace Harassment in Health Institutions of Haramaya University, Eastern Ethiopia: A Time to Question Our Perception - Mulu Berhanu Hundera, Yadeta Dessie, Herma Majoor, Tigist Gashaw, 2024," accessed June 25, 2025, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/21582440241298396>.

⁴³ "(PDF) A Meta-Analysis of the Antecedents and Consequences of Workplace Sexual Harassment," accessed June 25, 2025, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/229573693_A_meta-analysis_of_the_antecedents_and_consequences_of_workplace_sexual_harassment.

⁴⁴ "Unpacking the Man Box," accessed June 25, 2025, <https://apo.org.au/node/307000>.



assess the prevalence, forms, and institutional responses to male harassment.⁴⁵ These findings are essential for evidence-based policymaking and resource allocation.

Implementing these reforms will require sustained political will, institutional capacity-building, and cross-sectoral collaboration. However, without these changes, the legal and cultural silence surrounding male harassment will persist, denying thousands of victims their right to safety, dignity, and justice.

Conclusion

Harassment is a complex social injustice that is not limited to one gender, although males who are victims remain to be sidelined both in a legal discourse and social knowledge. As this paper has attempted to show, there is an undeserved silence around the experience of men being harassed in the workplace and the arena of the broader public, which is both more mixed, more various, and more invisible. The law and institutional state of many countries such as Pakistan continue to be largely gendered so that the male gender is not alone a potential victim of abuse, intimidation, and humiliation. Consequently, this denies male victims not only legal remedies, but also right to speak within the culture.

Masculine norms, fear of social stigma, and institutional apathy are also known as the barriers to reporting, and they further embed this silence. Although the global lessons drawn in other countries (Canada, Sweden, etc.) point to the possibility of and the success of including gender-neutral policies, the Global South remains in the past compared to it. The fact that men are not included in anti-harassment laws under Pakistani legal system calls on the need to reform the legislative laws, rebuild the institutions and sensitize the people about anti-harassment.

The effort to make human society just and integrate is pledged into recognizing that harassment is not the gendered prerogative, but the abuse of human dignity. It requires a society that questions stereotype, creates a new masculinity and a new legislation that helps and protects the victim. The awareness of male harassment is not a detour of women rights--it is leading toward human rights of everybody.

That is the only way to construct even safer spaces in which all people can live, legally and culturally, breaking this silence. The present paper urges legislatures, academic circles, civil society and institutions to envisage new ways of thinking about harassment by making equity, inclusivity, and empathy its guiding principle.

⁴⁵ "Full Article: Men's Perspectives on Public-Space Sexual Harassment of Women in South Asia," accessed June 25, 2025, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17441692.2024.2380845>.

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