

Understanding the gendered experiences of harassment among Pakistani young adults

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Harassment is a pervasive issue that affects individuals differently based on their gender, and this is especially pronounced in Pakistan, where cultural, social, and legal factors create a unique landscape for harassment experiences. Research has shown that women in Pakistan often face higher rates of harassment, both offline and online, compared to men [2, 3]. This disparity is influenced by deeply rooted gender norms and societal expectations that place women in more vulnerable positions, given that Pakistan ranks 142 out of 146 countries in the gender gap index [1]. Men, while also experiencing harassment, often face different forms and consequences. Prior work has shown that Pakistani men may be more concerned about financial frauds and hacking than harassment [4].

In this work, we aim to investigate the nuanced differences in how men and women in Pakistan define and experience harassment, both offline and online, with a specific focus on understanding the threat models associated with these harassment experiences. We are particularly interested in understanding the impacts of gender on how individuals experience and cope with incidents of harassment. This research aligns with the workshop's objective of exploring gender, sexuality, and online safety intersections to foster new research directions and collaborative efforts.

We plan to conduct semi-structured interviews with university students, focusing on young adults aged 18-26. Recruiting from a university will allow us to reach this demographic effectively and will ensure participants are within a similar socioeconomic range. We plan to explore their threat models, centering around four main areas:

- *Definitions*: How do men and women define harassment in both offline and online contexts?
- *Experiences*: What are the social, financial, and mental/emotional effects of harassment on men and women? How frequent are those experiences for men and women?
- *Perceived threats*: Who do they consider a threat in context of harassment, the likelihood and severity of harm to occur
- *Safety practices and resources*: What security practices do these young adults employ to protect themselves online? How do these practices evolve after experiencing harassment? and where do men and women learn about mechanisms for supporting their online safety?

This research will provide a deeper understanding of the gendered experiences of harassment in Pakistan, highlighting the unique challenges faced by men and women. The findings will offer valuable insights into the social, financial, and emotional toll harassment takes on individuals, with a particular focus on gender-specific impacts. These insights will inform the development of more effective support mechanisms and advice tailored to the distinct needs of Pakistani men and women. We believe that the workshop will significantly enhance our research by fostering discussions on how to better support such population. We are also interested in sharing and learning about the intersection of gender issues with other cultural aspects.

- Demographics:
 - Age
 - Gender
 - Education Level
 - Perceived Tech savviness
 - Major
 - University name
 - SES
 - Devices you hold (mobile, laptop, tabs, etc.)
 - * How frequently do you use each of them?
- Which social media platforms do you have an account on?
 - For each: how often do you use the platform
 - For each: how long each day?
 - For each: since when?
 - For each: what for?
- What are some of the main reasons you use social media?
- Do you have any preferred social media platforms, and if so, why do you prefer them?
- Which social media platforms do you use the least? Why?
- Have you ever experienced harassment?
 - (If they ask offline or online, say either. But generally let them describe it themselves)
 - Can you describe those experiences?
 - Can you recall a specific instance where you experienced harassment on social media? What happened?
 - (To elicit their definition, we should keep in mind whether they bring up offline or online harassment)
- How did experiencing harassment affect you?
 - Did the harassment have any practical implications on your daily life or activities?
- (if online) Have you experienced any offline repercussions as a result of this harassment?
- (if offline) Have you experienced any online repercussions as a result of this harassment?
- How severe do you think these experiences are?
- How often do these experiences happen (daily, weekly, monthly, once a year, etc.?)
 - with you
 - with people you know
 - Why do you think it is this frequent
- How worried are you that this might happen to you again in the future?
- Who did you turn to for support when you experience harassment, whether online or offline?
 - How did they help you?
 - How helpful was their support?
 - Did they give you any advice?
 - How effective is the advice?
 - What challenges have you faced while accessing the support?
 - Do you think you're getting adequate support? Why or why not?
- What was the first step you took after the incident?
 - Why didn't you report it to FIA, (we can measure their trust in different re-

- sources here. We can also see the prevalence of a certain recovery/reporting/support method)
- How did your behavior change after the incident?
 - Would you choose the same steps if it were to happen again?
 - How private do you keep such instances? (we are trying to understand if they hid the incident from people around them, say parents, siblings, or friends?)
 - Why is that?
 - What do you currently do to protect against harassment?
 - How helpful are these strategies?
 - How easy are these strategies?
 - What stops you?
 - Are there things you wish you could do to stop harassment that you currently don't?
 - Can you recall an instance when someone you know experienced harassment on social media? Tell me more about it.
 - Were you able to help offer any support to them? Or help them cope with it?
 - Has there been an instance when you witnessed someone you knew harassing anyone online? What happened? How did you respond to it?
 - What strategies or coping mechanisms have you found helpful in dealing with harassment?
 - Do you have any advice for people to protect against harassment?
 - In your opinion, what could social media platforms do to better address and prevent harassment?
 - What do you think it would take to get to a world free of harassment?
 - Are there any specific legal or policy measures you believe would be effective in combating harassment?
 - Some follow-ups if they are not brought up organically:
 - Do you think these experiences stay the same across different platforms such as [say the apps they mentioned, e.g., Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, etc?]
 - If they focused more on either offline or online harassment, be sure to touch the other area as well.

References

- [1] Global gender gap report 2023, World Economic Forum. https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2023.pdf.
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