

**BREAKING SILENCE WITH *ME TOO* CAMPAIGN AGAINST SEXUAL HARASSMENT OF WOMEN AT WORK PLACE: A NEW VISIBILITY TO WOMEN VOICE ON MEDIA**

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***Abstract***

Social media and the birth of global community connected through internet has made large distances and isolation of experiences insignificant. Connectedness of people and sharing experiences in new ways within and across societies has gained momentum on account of the process of globalization. Facet of globalisation is well reflected in the creation of global networks including social forums like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat etc, raising voice against violence and campaigning peace and justice. The impact of the global and social networks can be best seen in the explosion of online testimony to sexual harassment. *With the larger influx of women as workforce of India*, sexual harassment of women at the workplace has assumed greater dimensions. *Me Too* Movement which started against sexual harassment in the other part of globe also caught fire in India in 2018 when one of the Bollywood actresses made serious allegations against an actor recounting her past experiences. This ignited a conversation encouraging several women with different employment statuses to come forward and give an account of their harsh realities and engulfing several noted personalities. Soon enough, the viral hashtag became extensively used across all social media, where victims of sexual harassment and abuse, tweeted, posted or shared *#Me Too* showing empathy and solidarity with those at distance. This speaks of increased integration of Indian women into global discourses based on human rights. Having used social media to expose the frequency and widespread of sexual harassment in all sectors of work and providing a platform to several women to speak their truths has ongoing prevalent phenomenon. The continuity and inclusiveness of this movement echoes the transnational character but at the same time indicates at its fault lines for not reaching at the grass-roots level. However, the movement builds a sense of solidarity, encouraging more women to break the long buried silence by sharing many personal stories of anger and guilt in public and seeks to shift the discourse from morality to human rights of women to work in public. The present paper attempts to look at the linkages between popular mobilizations against violence with a focus on the specific mobilization *#Me Too* that addresses sexual harassment against women. It traces the activism that is based on access to use of social media as a platform for social change and its outcomes.

**Keywords: Sexual Harassment , Women, Me Too Movement, Social Media Social Change**

This is not a male thing or a  
female thing, it is not a Hollywood thing or a political thing, this  
is a human thing”.

Comedian and talk show hostess Ellen DeGeneres <sup>1</sup>

## **Introduction**

The above quoted statement is an epitomic illustration of systemic gendered binary/polarized gendered realities created by patriarchal social structures. This systemic problem fueled by gender roles and power differences influencing safety, equality, and benefit has so far been ignored for long years but Me Too having generated with hashtag in several countries evolved as a global movement. Sexual harassment at the workplace has become ubiquitous, transgressing all limits and borders. It's marked presence at every workplace across the globe has given sudden rise to # Me Too Movement. The historic movement raising several questions has prepared the ground to bring fundamental shift in the work culture and gender equations. It served as breaking point for women across the globe, as women in numbers are coming forward, joining hashtag Me Too, speaking out and breaking the silence against the issue of sexual harassment. # Me Too campaign/movement has exposed the deep-rooted systemic problem which accounts for gender inequities in the workplace. Across the globe an increasing awareness that sexual harassment is not an individual's problem but a widespread social, cultural and organizational problem which having gained public visibility seeks for a serious solution and a historic shift in work culture and gender equations

## **Feminist debate on violence against women**

Sexual harassment has always been a central issue of feminist debate. Power is at the core of the operational of sexual harassment as a form of violence drew attention to how the phenomenon is firmly embedded within relations of gendered power. Situating the notions of patriarchy <sup>2</sup>within the framework of how knowledge is socially located we find the predominant pattern of women as victims and men as

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<sup>1</sup> Referring to her sexual harassment experience comedian and talk show hostess Ellen DeGeneres said this. Quoted in Thesis on Understanding the impact of the #MeToo movement on leadership and corporate culture, with regards to female inclusion and value of voices by Sara Praeceptor, Modul Vienna University. 5 August 2020.p.44.

<sup>2</sup>Patriarchy can be broadly defined as a social system in which men control power and dominate in roles of division of labour, political leadership, moral authority, social privilege, and control of property. It determines and governs norms, rules, values code of conduct and behaviours for women which starts as socialization process at the family level practiced at home initially. And this deeply embedded socialization gradually gets transferred to organizational settings when the woman step out to work.

perpetrators of sexual harassment. And this becomes theorised within a body of literature as a manifestation of a wider system of gender inequality in which men dominate women. Broadly speaking, that how the authoritative /controlling power relations become infused with gendered/sexualised ones that it has been conceptualised as creating the conditions under which sexual harassment is active and operative. Thus, the mechanism of gendered/sexualised authoritative /controlling power relations have been a central focus in sexual harassment research<sup>3</sup>.

### **Feminist theories of sexual harassment.**

The public/private dichotomy and its consolidation with masculine and feminine dualisms respectively have been conceptualised as fundamental to traditional gendered divisions of labour. In particular, it has long been argued that traditional understandings of productive labour or wage labour as a male preserve have historically operated as an exclusionary mechanism against women's participation in the workplace as well as preventing women from reaching higher positions within employment hierarchies<sup>4</sup>. The privileging of the masculine in this context has been broadly argued to reflect, (re)produce and maintain a wider system of gender inequalities in which men subordinate women. This conceptualization or theorization of sexual harassment within the framework of patriarchal power dynamics has been deeply internalised by women within the social structure. The labour market becomes highly gendered due to these factors, making women vulnerable.

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<sup>3</sup> Mackinnon, C. 1979. *Sexual harassment of working women*. New Haven: Yale University Press; Wise, S. & Stanley, L. 1987. *Georgie porgie Sexual harassment in everyday life*. London: Pandora; Thomas, A. & Kitzinger, C. 1997. *Reviewing the field*. In: A. Thomas & C. Kitzinger. ed. *Sexual Harassment: Contemporary Feminist Perspectives*. pp. 1- 18. Buckingham: Open University Press; Superson, A. M. 2001. *A feminist definition of sexual harassment*. In: L. Pickering Francis. ed. *Sexual harassment as an ethical issue in academic life*. pp. 175-182. London: Rowman & Littlefield; Timmerman, G. 2005. *The Impact of male dominance on the prevalence of sexual harassment: an analysis of european union surveys*. In: J. Gruber & P. Morga. Eds. In *The company of men: male dominance and sexual harassment*. pp. 167-194. Boston MA: Northeastern University Press.

<sup>4</sup> Mackinnon, C. 1979. *Sexual harassment of working women*. New Haven: Yale University Press; Nicholson, P. 1997. *Gender inequality, sexual harassment and the toxic organization: the case of medical women*. In :A.M. Thomas and C. Kitzinger ed. *Sexual harassment: contemporary psychological perspectives*. pp. 32-48. Buckingham: Open University Press; Hearn, J. & Parkin, W. 2001. *gender, sexuality and violence in organisations*. London: Sage Publications.

Women face a number of disadvantages in the labour market due to the masculine and feminine dualisms and the public/private dichotomy. These gender biases are carried and produced by stereotypes in the wider culture by all of us which has great influence on how we evaluate and treat one another.

And this often impinges on their work status, the length and structure of their workday and their salary level. Besides the employment sector offers fewer opportunities and potential for women as compared to men. Many times they are less paid for the same work. Cockburn<sup>5</sup> (1991) observes, that the issue of workplace sexual harassment has been interpreted within some feminist theorisations as a means by which male dominance over women can be asserted and maintained in the workplace.

And earlier even after being victims of such harassment remained passive, never dared being vocal nor ready to share the experiences even with their close ones with the fear of being stigmatized. Sexual harassment has been not a new phenomenon it has existed from several years since women stepped out of their home confines to enter work place to engage in productive<sup>6</sup>labour. The question of sexual harassment entails the operation of several factors, the patriarchy, the power, the power relation, the social structure, so on and so forth.

### **Polarised gendered realities between men and women**

Both men and women live polarised gendered realities. These polarized gendered realities are the outcome of the process of socialization and genderisation. In the family which is the first school for the children begin a process of socialization wherein parents, family, and friends establish an infant's social construction of reality, or what people define as real because of their background assumptions and life experiences with others. As newborns interact with family and friends they learn the expectations of their society (family, community, state, and nation).And the mindset of the children is developed through this early socialization. Family, the first unit of patriarchy teaches females/girls are taught to maintain the prescribed norms, values, attitudes, and behaviors by the family at any cost even after marriage.

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<sup>5</sup> Cockburn, C. (1991). *In the way of women: men's resistance to sex equality in organisations*. London: MacMillan Press.

<sup>6</sup> It should be remembered that women since ages have been doing work within their homes which has been referred as love and care work, unproductive and unpaid labour. The productive labour was considered to be the male preserve. But gradually women started stepping out for work in formal and organized sectors, the work culture and gender equation started witnessing some changes and this led to the emergence of such issues or questions of sexual harassment. It is not the question of women working in corporate culture but all those women who are working out.

Patriarchy<sup>7</sup> has linkage with other systems too. It is not limited to the family and marriage, it pervades all other institutions such as religion, education, health, the media, the judiciary and the police. Patriarchy pervades economic, political, cultural and social arrangements.

### **Statistical profile /overview**

The recent upheavals of sexual harassment of women at workplaces in India are highly disturbing. It is strange to know that there has been a sharp rise in sexual harassment of women at workplaces. Statistics provided by the National Crime Records Bureau<sup>8</sup> indicates of the alarming situation pertaining to sexual harassment of women at workplace.

- Cases of sexual harassment within office premises rose by more than 100 % between 2014&2015.
- There has been 51% rise in sexual harassment cases at other places related to work from 469 in 2014 to 714 in 2015.
- Sexual harassment of women at workplaces rose by 45 % in the last three years.<sup>9</sup>
- There was 35% increase in sexual harassment complaints at workplace from 249 to 336 between 2013 &2014.
- 38% women had faced sexual harassment at workplace.
- 70% women do not report workplace sexual harassment in India.
- 65.2 % women said that their company did not follow the procedures laid down under the Sexual Harassment of Women at workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act 2013.

### **Sexual harassment: what?**

Now let us have a clear understanding of sexual harassment. To put it simply, sexual harassment at workplace is an act or a pattern of behaviour that compromises physical, emotional or financial safety and security of a woman worker.

Sexual harassment at the workplace is defined by any unwelcome sexual advances as well as verbal or physical sexual conduct. A main characteristic is the implication of sexual complacency as a condition for

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<sup>7</sup>Patriarchy provides privileges to men and withholds them from women, resulting in their subordination. There is a power structure in each family specific to its economic, cultural and social background. All the members are on different levels of this power structure. It is usually the male members who assume power and control the other family members, especially women.

<sup>8</sup>National Crime Records Bureau,2014 &2015 .

<sup>9</sup>Chaitanya Mallapur First Post <https://www.firstpost.com/india/sexual-harassment-of-women-at-workplaces-rose-by-45-in-the-last-three-years-says-report-426738>.

favorable professional treatment, which creates an intimidating, abusive, hostile and offensive working environment<sup>10</sup>.

Legally speaking, sexual harassment includes unwelcome sexually determined behaviour (whether directly or by implication). This has been laid down by the Supreme Court of India, as per Vishakha<sup>11</sup> guidelines.

- physical contact and advances
- a demand or request for sexual favours
- sexually coloured remarks
- showing pornography and
- any other unwelcome physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct of sexual nature.

It makes us think as to why there has been need for such specific act on sexual harassment at workplace in the recent years in the country. Did the cases of sexual harassment not exist earlier? Has there been any change in work scenario? Is the increasing number of women in organized sector or corporate sector in the contemporary times has been causing/ impacting the work culture or gender equations. How and why women in large numbers are coming forward and showing their vocal protest against such sexual harassments at workplace. What role # Me Too Campaign has in breaking the silence against sexual harassment ? These questions need to be given a serious thought.

It has been found by women that their complaints of sexual harassment at workplace are not taken seriously by the police officers, the courts and beyond. The poor implementation of Sexual Harassment of

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<sup>10</sup> ILO, 2007 *Equality at work: Tackling the challenges*, Global Report under the follow-up to the [ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, International Labour Conference](#), 96th Session 2007, International Labour Office, Geneva. This Report may also be consulted on the ILO Internet site ([www.ilo.org/declaration](http://www.ilo.org/declaration)). ISBN 978-92-2-118130-9, ISSN 0074-6681, 165-166

<sup>11</sup>An NGO, called Vishakha, took a case of gangrape in Rajasthan to the Supreme Court challenging the Rajasthan High Court verdict. Sexual harassment at workplace was not originally conceived as a separate offence in the Indian Penal Code (IPC). The question drew first attention in India in 1997. The credit goes to the instrument of Public Interest Litigation (PIL), which, itself, is a creation of judiciary. While hearing the matter, the Supreme Court noted the lack of legal recourse against sexual harassment at workplace. The Supreme Court defined what would constitute sexual harassment at workplace and issued guidelines referred as Vishakha guidelines that were to have statutory value until a proper law was enacted by Parliament. Before the Supreme Court set the law against sexual harassment at workplace in order, such cases were dealt under IPC Section 354 (outraging the modesty of women) and Section 509 (using a word, gesture or act intended to insult the modesty of a woman. It took another 16 years for Parliament to replace the Vishakha guidelines with a law called, the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013.

Women at Workplace Act, since its enactment in 2013 has been pushing the female activists to hope for strengthening the existing Indian law.

The government, under Ministry of Women and Child Development has come forward to set-up an online complaint management system – Sexual Harassment electronic-Box (SHe-Box) for registering sexual harassment complaints at workplace.

The legacy of violence against women, supported by both the active and passive nature of social, economic and political institutions, has permeated in a massive manner in the trajectories of justice in the country. The sheer failure in properly implementing the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Law, 2013 is one of the reasons why the collective voices of women have had to come together. These are women who have suffered various forms of harassment by bosses, colleagues, professors, etc.

The sharp and resonant testimonies of women supporting the # Me Too campaign and adopting a revolutionary way by naming the alleged perpetrators of sexual harassment in academia is a reminder that the justice system fails to deliver its due.

The concept of sexual harassment at the workplace seems to be emerging from the dark shadow of corporate confines. Global news headlines been highlighting a number of cases, spotlighting senior executives and leading corporates.

Some important complaints of SHW that came into the national exposure were filed by:

- Rupan DeolBajaj, an IAS officer in Chandigarh against ‘super cop’ by KPS Gill.
- Case of an activist from the AllIndia Democratic Women’s Association against the environment minister in Dehradun.
- Case of an air hostess against her colleague Mahesh Kumar Lala in Mumbai.
- Case of an IAS officer in Thiruvananthpuram against the State Minister.

### **State intervention**

Even though the sexual harassment at workplace is widespread in India and elsewhere, this is the first time it has been recognized as infringement of fundamental rights of a woman under Article 19(1)(g) of the Constitution of India’ to practice any profession or carry out any occupation, trade or business’. Of late the problem of sexual harassment at workplace has assumed serious concerns with a meteoric rise in the number of cases. Surprisingly in most cases women do not report the matter to the concerned authorities. In India Articles 14, 15 & 16 of the Indian Constitution provide safeguards against all forms of discrimination. In recent times SC has given two landmark judgements, Vishaka vs State of Rajasthan , 1997, and Apparel Export Promotion Council vs. A K Chopra 1999-in which certain guidelines and

measures to ensure the prevention of such incidents have been laid down. Despite these developments the problem of sexual harassment is assuming alarming proportions.

- Initially till the late 90s, any complaint of sexual harassment at workplace was lodged under Section 354 of the Indian Penal Code that dealt with the ‘criminal assault of women to outrage women’s modesty’ whereas the punishment for an individual /individuals for using a word, gesture or act intended to insult the modesty of a woman’ was given under Section 509. It was very much on the discretion of the Police Officer as how the interpretation of outraging women’s modesty ‘was done.
- It was only in 1997 the Vishakha guidelines were laid down after the landmark judgement by the Supreme Court of India in the case of Vishakha. After that judgement certain guidelines were made to be followed by establishments in dealing with complaints about sexual harassment. The court stated that until specific legislation is passed, these guidelines were to be implemented to deal with the issue. It took several years for the specific Act to be framed. The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, came into effect in 2013.
- Despite, the Constitutional commitments of the nation to the women were translated through various planning processes, legislations, policies and programmes over the last several decades, in actual the situational analysis of socio and economic status of women does not reflect satisfactory achievements in any of the important human development indicators. The contemporary scenario is, that according to Global Gender Gap Report 2022 India ranks 135 out of 146<sup>12</sup> countries in comparison to the year 2021, where it ranked 140 out of 156<sup>13</sup> on Global Gender Gap Index<sup>14</sup>. It has slightly improved its position.
- In spite of the Constitutional provisions which provide every citizen, ‘the right to practice or carry out any occupation, trade or businesses which includes the right to safe environment, free from all forms of harassment<sup>15</sup> significant number of women are routinely subject to various kinds of sexual harassment at their workplace. It is because of traditional gender roles of our society where women disproportionately occupy inferior position in the workplace and face intimate violence men often.

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<sup>12</sup> The Hindu, July 14, 2022.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> The Global Gender Gap Index measures gender parity across four dimensions or sub indices- economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival and political empowerment.

<sup>15</sup> Article 19(g) of Constitution of India.



### **Indian scenario of sexual harassment**

The reported cases of women facing sexual harassment at the workplace have been increasing-there was an increase of 35 %from 2013-2014, the number of cases rose from 249 to 336.However a study conducted by Indian Bar Association (2017) amongst 6047 participants found that 70% of women failed to report their instances of sexual harassment because they feared the consequences. This is despite the promulgation of stringent legislation-Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace(Prevention, prohibition and Redressal) Act 2013<sup>16</sup> which was implemented following the *Nirbhaya*.<sup>17</sup> gang rape case<sup>18</sup> of December 2012<sup>19</sup>.

### **#Me too movement**

What is # Me Too Movement actually all about. It's a campaign or a movement by millions of women which has drawn attention to pervasiveness of sexual harassment at workplace. Although the movement has come as series of women joining by adopting the method of #hashtag to highlight sexual harassment at social media, but its beyond hashtag because it is being seen as the beginning of the larger discussion/dialogue and movement for those women who are ready to break silence.

#Me Too is about breaking the silence which too often has been tolerated for too long.#Me Too has helped changed that. It has been very powerful and has created solidarity among women. #Me Too shifted the focus away from the shame and fear of victims to the behaviour of perpetrators, the responsibility of perpetrators and the responsibility of the State to prevent ongoing violations against women.

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<sup>16</sup>Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace(Prevention, prohibition and Redressal) Act 2013(No.14 of2013).The Gazette of India , retrieved January 13, 2019, <http://indiacode.nic.in/acts-in-pdf-/142013.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> Nirbhaya was a 23 year old girl who was gang raped and left in a vegetative state in a moving bus in New Delhi on December 16, 2012,while she was returning from Cinema with her boy friend . She later died in the hospital

<sup>18</sup> Bhattacharya, R. 2013. Criminal law amendment act ,2013,: Will it ensure women's safety in public spaces. *Journal Space & Culture in India*, I (1).pp. 13-27, DOI <http://dx.doi.org/10.20896/saci.v1i1.11>.

<sup>19</sup> Bhattacharya, R. 2015. Understanding the spatialities of sexual assault against Indian women in India. *Gender Place and Culture*, 22(9). Pp.1340-1356 DOI <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2014.969684>; Bhattacharya, R. 2016. Street violence against Indian Women in India : Mapping Prevention Strategies. *Asian Social Work And Policy Review*, 10(3).pp. 311-325, DOI:10.1111/aswp.12099.

However, this movement is an opportunity for women to speak out and expose the perpetrators. In the wake of the strings of allegations of malicious sexual abuse by Harvey Weinstein, one of the most powerful men in the Hollywood, the # Me Too movement went viral in the social media. Indeed this movement helps us to gain a sense of the problem and make people aware of the scale of the sexual harassment that remains pervasive in the public space/work place<sup>20</sup>.(Gonzalez 2017; Gonzalez & France 2017)

As a result of India's #Me Too movement, some accused men have been forced to resign from prominent positions, and companies have instituted new measures to make women feel safe in their workplaces. But at the same time these accused men have publicly denied allegations or lashed out women for speaking up.

### **#Me Too campaign and India**

Having impacted by the global # Me Too Movement in India too, it got triggered by the serious allegations made by actress Tanushree Dutta against Nana Patekar in 2018. The actress recounted her past experiences of sexual harassment during the shoot of the film, Horn OK Pleasss, 10 years ago. Since then, the controversy has engulfed many famous and important personalities. Even there had been several allegations leveled against one of the Union minister forcing him to resign from his office.

No doubt, the resignation of a union minister after several charges of sexual harassment was a real victory for the movement. Such a surge of mainstream concern with sexual violence, rape culture, and patriarchy has not been witnessed in India since the Nirbhaya's gang rape and murder at New Delhi in 2012.

Later on many other working women in entertainment industry and journalism emerged out in public to break the long buried silence by sharing many personal stories of anger and guilt due to the # Me Too Movement.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Gonzalez, Sandra and Lisa Respers France (2017, 27 October). Rachel McAdams, Selma Blair accuse James Toback of sexual harassment, *CNN entertainment*, retrieved on 17 November 2017 from, <http://edition.cnn.com/2017/10/26/entertainment/rachel-mcadams-selma-blair-james-tobackallegations/index.html>; Gonzalez, Sandra (2017, 27 October). Ashley Judd: Aftermath of speaking out against Weinstein has been 'moving', *CNN entertainment*, retrieved on 17 November 2017 from, <http://edition.cnn.com/2017/10/26/entertainment/weinstein-ashley-judd-interviewgma/index.html> <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/oct/16/me-too-social-media-trend-highlightssexual-harassment-of-women>.

<sup>21</sup>#Me Too Movement which began as a hashtag on Twitter in 2017 has now become a global phenomena. It is creating awareness about sexual violence and sexual assault and allowing victims to find courage to name the alleged harassers through collective.

Me Too movement having emerged as a symbol of resistance, gained momentum on Twitter, and picked up on Facebook. However, it is still also one of the most discussed topics on Instagram with more than 15 lakh posts.<sup>22</sup>

### **Backlash of Me Too Movement**

It is not easy for a woman to speak against the sexual misconduct of the perpetrator for the reasons such as sheer embarrassment of being labeled as characterless woman, bad woman, accusation of lying, fear of ruining their career, threat from the perpetrator<sup>23</sup>.(Shah 2016) The women who broke silence had to struggle very hard within themselves to raise a voice against their close ones or their bosses and narrate their personal pain and suffering. Breaking silence is a clear manifestation of protest against the fissures in the institutions of marriage and family. There are women in huge numbers who are not able to muster courage to speak out or break silence against such harassment because of existing social structure and its socialization or indoctrination of preserving the notion of honour/ *izzat* of the family which does not allow a girl to speak out in public against such violence. While discussing the issue of breaking silence against such sexual abuse a few college girls said, '*Itna asan nahi hota awaz uthana kyonki us ek awaaz ke sath apkaa career , aapki zindagi wahin pe jaise tham si jaayegi. Koi bhi aapke support me nahi khade hone ko tyaar hota hai,khaskaraapki family jahan yehi kaha jata hai ki chup raho, nazar andaz kiya karo, anyatha family ki aur apki izzat dhumil ho jayegi . Activist ban ne ki koi jarurat nahi hai*'.(It is not that easy to raise voice ,because of that raised voice your career, your life comes to stand still.No body is ready to support especially your family where you are indoctrinated to be silent ,ignore it because it will tarnish the image of your family and you. No need to be an activist).

One girl came forward and told , *Meri to padhai hi us college se meri family ne band karwa dikyonki main complaint file kar di thi us shaksha ke khilaaf. . Kaha gaya ki aage bhi bahut aise log pareshaan karne wale milenge tum kahan kahan kiske kiske khilaaf awaaz uthaogi. Agar chup reh sakti ho aage ki padhne ki socho*.(My family stopped my studies from that college because I had lodged complaint against that person. I was told that in how many places, and how long you will raise voice against such

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<sup>22</sup>One year of #MeToo movement, 8 interesting things to know , India today, <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/one-year-of-metoo-movement-8-interesting-things-to-know-1368727-2018-10-16>, Accessed on January,18, 2019.

<sup>23</sup> Rukmini,S. 2016. The Many Shades of Rape Cases in Delhi, The Hindu.30 July 2014.retrieved on January,2019 from [http:// www.thehindu.com/data/the-many-shades-of-rape-cases-in-delhi/article6261042.ece](http://www.thehindu.com/data/the-many-shades-of-rape-cases-in-delhi/article6261042.ece). Although false accusations are very rare , however there could be fake cases where women take advantage of #Me too movement.

people who are present everywhere. If you are ready to internalize such acts and remain silent then ever think of continuing your studies)

Further one of them came forward and said, *Awaaj uthane par samaj wale tumko hi charitraheen kahenge kitno ko rokogi . Is tarah se naukrari karne se kya milega?*(If you raise voice you will be only labelled as characterless by society, how many people you are going to stop from doing this. What you are going to gain from such jobs?)

One further commented, *Us vyakti ke status par depend kartahai ki wo kitne high profile walahai. Sirf awaaz utha dene tak ki baat nahi hoti ye ek jung hai , nyaya mila to thik anyatha sab bekar kyonki us haar se nishabd hi hone jaise hai. Jab tak pure structures aur uski training aur badlao nahi aayega tab tak hum public place work karte hue abuse ko face karenge silently.*(All depends on the status of that person as to what extent he is highly profiled. It is not simply about raising voice but it is just like a *jung*(war) where if you are delivered justice then it's a victory otherwise it is useless if you defeated in your goal which word just like remaining wordless and silent).

Another girl said, *Awaaz uthana jyada bade logon, high profile, celebrities aur ya to ekdum hi low tabke ke logon ki baatein hoti jinkeliye samaj ke dwara banaye izzat aur honour ke dohre aadarshon ki koi fikra nahi hoti. Unki apni hi alag duniya hai. Ye hum jaise middle class ke log jyad asochte hain.*(Raising voice is the talk of big and high people, celebrities who do not care for the honour of the society based on double standards. The live in their own world. This thinking or mind set prevails in the middle class people like us.)

All such statements are indicative of many factors and its implications such as class, power, patriarchal mindset and internalized gendered expectations, norms and values of the institutions.

### **Implications**

No doubt, #Me Too movement has shown the entire world that women from separate spaces, diverse backgrounds and with heterogeneous experiences are coming in more and more numbers to articulate some common issues like the omnipresence of patriarchy and deep seated perception of male entitlement, strongly intertwined with factors of class and caste privilege and its strong linkage in governing and structuring the working spaces. It has revealed that the experiences of sexual harassment, social fear, assault and intimidation of victims are not an individual problem but a social one which needs a serious answer by the society and the State.

Women have struggled for women's rights and their place in society and the workplace for centuries. It is really so unfortunate that even after attending the same schools and universities, female workers are

still treated as a lesser version of their male counterparts, shown with examples of gender wage gap, fewer job and promotion opportunities, or reduced safety and security measures within workplace. While gender equality<sup>24</sup> at work represent the equality of opportunity and treatment, equality in obtaining career advancement, as well as the equal wage/pay to men and women in their workplace irrespective of any gender. Moreover, it includes the equal access to health and safety standards, rights and access to association and union/collective bargaining, as well as maternity protection and a fair work-life balance<sup>25</sup>.

Accountability of institutions like family, educational institutions, media and the State, in the creation of gender-just societies is very much demanded. In the words of Michel Foucault, the French philosopher and social theorist, power relationships in societies are expressed through language and other practices. An individual being a member of society he /she learns all the social and cultural norms, rules, customs and practices and has to ultimately conform to that.

### **Conclusion**

As ILO states, addressing sexual harassment is therefore crucial when addressing gender equality and the employee needs of safety, security and equal opportunity<sup>26</sup> Some research studies have suggested for developing of an inclusive work culture which include developing a diverse talent pipeline, using the influence peers have on each other, confronting all forms of discrimination no matter how subtle, training employees to be actively inclusive, developing a system holding everybody accountable and leveraging diversity to maximize the firm's performance<sup>27</sup>. In order to create an inclusive organizational culture, the

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<sup>24</sup>It is important to understand the two different areas of (gender) equality when it comes to the workplace a) equality of employment, meaning the opportunity to apply for a job in the first place, to receive education and training in order to attain a level of qualification to be considered a worker, and b) equal treatment, which refers to the treatment received within a workplace including equal pay, employment security, safety and health standards as well as social protection and general working conditions (ILO 2007:73).

<sup>25</sup> ILO, 2007*Equality at work: Tackling the challenges*, Global Report under the follow-up to the [ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work](#), [International Labour Conference](#), 96th Session 2007, International Labour Office, Geneva. This Report may also be consulted on the ILO Internet site ([www.ilo.org/declaration](http://www.ilo.org/declaration)). ISBN 978-92-2-118130-9, ISSN 0074-6681, 91-92.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid , p90

<sup>27</sup> Offermann, L.R. & Basford, T.E. 2014. 'Inclusive Human Resource Management: Best Practices and the Changing Role of Human Resources' B.M. Ferdman & B.R. Deane (eds.),

organizations need to address organization's culture, including its values, styles, and norms, systems and structures, which may then foster a climate of inclusion. It also includes the decision-making process of an organization, their community engagement and stakeholder interaction<sup>28</sup>, every day, as an ongoing process, and without exception<sup>29</sup>.

### **Me Too Campaign**

With such a historic shift in work culture and gender equation work culture needs to be inclusive which demands developing a diverse talent channel, through the influence of peers on each other, confronting all forms of discrimination no matter how subtle, training employees to be actively inclusive. Further, developing a system holding everybody accountable and leveraging diversity to maximize the firm's performance<sup>30</sup>.

We all know that India is a patriarchal society and most cases of sexual harassment go unreported. Women are reluctant and prefer silence due to lack of sensitivity on the part of Indian society. There is need to gender sensitise our society that the victim does not feel guilty and is encourage to report any form of harassment. The victim's privacy must be protected. The police and the judiciary also need to be sensitized. There should be speedy redressal and increased rate of conviction rate. Women themselves should be made aware of their right to a safe and harassment free work environment.

Following interventions can be taken to tackle the problem.

- Individual experience of inclusion which includes feeling of safety, acceptance, trust, support, respect, value, fulfillment, engagement and dependability as individual and part of one or multiple identity groups should be built.
- More and more Internal Complaint Committee (ICC) be constituted to
- Online and Offline awareness and sensitization drive to be done.

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*Society of Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. 229–259.(239)

<sup>28</sup> Ferdman, B.M. 2014. 'The practice of inclusion in diverse organizations: toward a systemic and inclusive framework' B.M. Ferdman & B.R. Deane (eds.), *Society of Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. 3–54. Ferdman, B.M. & Deane, B.R. 2014. 'Preface' B.M. Ferdman & B.R. Deane (eds.), *Society of industrial and organizational psychology*, San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., xxi–xxxiii.

Ferdman, B.M. & Deane, B.R. 2014. 'Preface' B.M. Ferdman & B.R. Deane (eds.), p 19-20

<sup>29</sup> Ibid 14-17

<sup>30</sup> Offermann, L.R. & Basford, T.E. 2014 *Opcit*, p 239

- Holding of seminars and conferences and capacity building programmes on sexual harassment for ICC members.
- Cases of sexual harassment be treated as misconduct under service rules and appropriate action be taken against it.
- But the most important of all the above interventions are that there is need for a proper gender socialization at the institutional level such as family educational organizations, media and the State.