



RESEARCH PAPER

Sexual Harassment and Coping Strategies: Legal Responses and Victim Protection in Known and Unknown Perpetrator Cases

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ABSTRACT

Sexual harassment continues to be a global problem for a number of people from different societies and cultures. The paper at hand tackles the very complex issue of sexual harassment through a particular lens of 'known accused versus unknown accused'. Known accused usually consist of former spouses or friends whom the victim has some level of trust, and thus the emotional damage is even greater as this trust is broken. For cases of unknown accused, those which are often instances of 'anonymous online harassment', social anxiety and other investigative issues that these cases involve add to the complexity of the case. The current study employs statistical information and two in-depth case studies to explain differences in satisfaction with the response of authorities towards the victims and even the legal processes undertaken. Victims of known perpetrators tend to be ostracised and are faced with legal biases as well as interpersonal disputes which have legal ramifications and thus, a claimant's access to justice. At the same time, those who are victims of anonymous harassers suffer from numerous concerns about insecurity as well as legal problems relating to proof and jurisdiction. The study confirms the presence of stereotypes in the legal system as well as medium terms of assistance provided to the victims especially in cases related to de-facto's digital harassment. The paper offers recommendations that are supposed to enhance the concerned policies, such as the decrease in non-emergency violence, further progress on digital forensic technologies, and more efficient coordination between victim support systems. It argues for a shift towards a victim-oriented paradigm, which strengthens the legal aspects, but also addresses emotional needs and social basis for change.

Keywords: Anonymous Harassment, Emotional Harm, Known Accused, Legal Responses, Sexual Harassment, Trust Breach, Victim Experiences

Introduction

Sexual harassment, a widely spread infringement of personal space as well as dignity, makes the lives of many people uneasy in various social and cultural backgrounds. Although much has been done to raise awareness and bolster legal protections, victims continue to face immense psychological and social challenges in pursuing justice and healing. The persistence of sexual harassment cases, whether committed by a familiar individual or an initially unknown figure, highlights gaps in societal understanding, legal frameworks, and support systems (Tuerkheimer, 1997). In navigating the complexities of harassment, victims frequently encounter two distinct categories of perpetrators: the known and the unknown accused. The former often involves individuals from the victim's personal life, such as ex-partners, relatives, or acquaintances, which complicates the emotional toll and legal process due to the inherent trust once placed in these individuals (Hearn & Parkin, 2001). On the other hand, stalking by an unknown perpetrator presents a different set of hurdles especially where an accused seeks anonymity by using technology or engaging in anonymous interactions. In such situations, victims are not only left to deal with the effects of their violence but also the fear and feeling of vulnerability that

results from an unseen aggression(Heineman, 2011). Sexual harassment cases shed light on the delay of societal culture and institutional practices, which are fundamental factors characterizing the experiences of victims. In cases with identifiable offenders, the biases and the stigma on the society compound the stress on the victims. Many expect to be criticized, to be blamed of the offense they endured, or to be ostracized in their surroundings, hence making them reluctant to report and seek justice. The term 'institutional responses' in such instance refers to the practices that are endured by the victims and are engrained in the society, as reporting the incidents too is seen in this light. This indeed multiplies the psychological effects of harassment and loss of faith in the law and support services which are meant to protect them.

Conversely, the harassment that has been carried out by unidentified perpetrators seems to stem from deeply entrenched challenges existing in the current state of the technology and legal systems. For example, victims who do not know the identity of their harasser are a big hindrance in law enforcement helping to build a case. More so for the case of online bullying, more emphasis needs to be placed into developing a consensus and resolving the anonymity provided by an online environment, enhancing cyber investigation strategies. The absence of clear routes for communication in international investigations along with inadequate access to social media data makes it even harder to seek justice.

This Research paper undertakes a comprehensive exploration of the complex emotional and legal dimensions that set apart cases of harassment by known individuals from those involving anonymous perpetrators. By examining these dynamics, it reveals the profound impact they have on victims' coping strategies and their pursuit of justice(MacKinnon & Siegel, 2008). With in-depth case studies, we aim to uncover the varied pathways victims must navigate journeys profoundly influenced by the relationship to the accused, the broader societal attitudes, and institutional responses that accompany each case. This nuanced perspective, anchored in thorough data analysis, provides critical insights into the effectiveness of current legal frameworks and support systems, exposing where they succeed and, more importantly, where they fall short in protecting those affected by harassment(Siddiqi, 2003).

Literature Review

The issue of sexual harassment, deeply embedded within societal power dynamics, has been a focal point of academic research and legal discourse for decades. Scholarly work has strived to capture the complexity of harassment cases, noting the diverse experiences of victims and the various forms harassment can take depending on the perpetrator's identity and relationship to the victim(Rubio-Marín, 2009). Existing literature often categorizes perpetrators as either known or unknown to the victim, each category carrying distinct psychological and legal implications. Studies addressing harassment by known individuals such as ex-partners, family members, or acquaintances emphasize the betrayal of trust and layered emotional trauma that victims endure. Conversely, literature examining harassment by unknown perpetrators typically focuses on anonymity's impact, both in terms of the victim's mental health and the legal obstacles associated with tracking and prosecuting unidentified harassers.

Research indicates that harassment by known individuals creates a unique and complex experience for victims(Scarduzio, Sheff, & Smith, 2018). Numerous studies highlight that victims of harassment by acquaintances or loved ones often face intense emotional conflicts due to the prior trust placed in the accused. Studies in the fields of psychology and social work note that this betrayal complicates the victim's response to harassment, as personal connections can lead to feelings of guilt, confusion, and sometimes denial(Hershcovis & Barling, 2010). For instance, victims of spousal harassment or harassment by former partners may experience a strong sense of self-blame, exacerbating the psychological toll and delaying their willingness to report the offense. Additionally, such

cases often involve social implications, where victims fear judgment from their communities or families, who may fail to fully support them due to cultural or social stigmas associated with accusations against someone within the family or close network (Diekmann, Walker, Galinsky, & Tenbrunsel, 2013). This phenomenon is well-documented in family and domestic violence literature, which underscores the importance of trauma-informed approaches when supporting victims of harassment by known individuals (Richardson & Taylor, 2009).

In contrast, the literature on harassment by unknown perpetrators places considerable emphasis on the impact of anonymity. Research shows that harassment by unknown individuals—often characterized by threats or acts intended to instill fear can have a profound effect on the victim's psychological state (Fitzgerald, Swan, & Fischer, 1995). In contrast to instances that are characterized by identifiable aggressors, which introduce emotional complexity to the respondent's action, the harassment of an individual by unknown persons also scares the victims more as they typically cannot guess the actions of the unknown aggressor or even the aggressor themselves (Dougherty & Smythe, 2004). The issue of anonymity relies on the origin of psychological violence, which in this case is cyberspace, where the aggressor can shield himself. Researchers emphasize that harassment of an anonymous character, particularly over the Internet, poses additional obstacles to the victims when seeking help or justice (Powell, 2015). The absence of personally recognizable details about the alleged offender acts as a barrier to the initiation of legal proceedings and gathering concrete proof or jurisdictional challenges particularly in cases where the online abuse spans across geographical boundaries. As a result, people suffering from anonymous abuse tend to be exposed to unbearable anxiety and helplessness for extended periods owing to difficulties in pursuing legal remedies (Henry & Powell, 2016). Though these specific conclusions are valuable, it is evident that the existing scholarship has major shortcomings. While a number of studies have focused on cases of teleological harassment for both known or unknown perpetrators, few of them are concerned with the distinctive legal responses that these types of cases bring. Most of the studies center their focus on the psychological consequences of harassment or the social barriers and personal barriers that they may be in contact with (Blackwell, Ellison, Elliott-Deflo, & Schwartz, 2019).

Material and Methods

In order to demonstrate the differences between harassment by known and unknown persons, two cases of harassment on settled down persons are presented in this section. Each case illustrates specific components of the psychological trauma, immense stressors, and the interplay between victimization and law which gives substance to the theoretical perspectives propounded in the review of literature.

Case Study 1: Harassment by a Known Accused

Background of the Case

This case relates to repeated harassment by a person who was previously in a close relationship with the complainant. Trust was enjoyed by the complainant of person and such trust was betrayed by that person making the situation emotionally and legally quite complex. Such cases are recurrent because research findings show that victims who were familiar with the harasser tend to be harassed on more than one occasion and their relationship makes the encounters more complex emotionally.

Psychological Impact and Emotional Complexity

The violation which takes place in abuse perpetrated by an acquaintance is even more painful. Victims often feel torn between feeling guilt, anger and confusion, which may

make the process of recovery more difficult. In the present case, one's community's prejudice against 'naming and shaming' of close individuals appears to have further vexed the victim. According to research, social and familial pressure can make seeking justice or even reporting the incident difficult for such victims, which necessitates them to be in a comforting and accepting space.

Coping Mechanisms Employed by the Victim

Because of the harassment, the victim managed to adopt several variants of dealing with the situation, such as, seeking help from trustworthy people and going into professional therapy. In addition, the case also illustrates the relevance of community oriented interventions, for family and friends were crucial for the recovery of the victim. Counseling was quite helpful and engaging as it offered a safe environment to deal with the emotional injuries which are quite complicated due to the harassment by a familiar individual.

Legal Proceedings and Challenges

Litigation in respect of litigation against persons whose identities are known is always going to be tricky. The victim struggled with the problem of reputation as well as legal formalities because instances of making allegations against relatives are proved to be difficult. Moreover, the applicant herself experienced a waiting period for legal remedy because of procedural impediments and the requirement to fabricate evidence of the guilt of the alleged perpetrator. This matter highlights the importance of the plight of victims when it comes to the formulation of an approach that would avoid unnecessary delays.

Role of Law Enforcement and Judicial Outcome

The engagement of law enforcement pointed out the existing gaps and strengths within the current system. This case study strengthens the need for a trauma informed approach in law enforcement where officers understand the complex interplay harassment by known people entails. We also need to mention the outcome of the judicial process, which also has been emphasized here, that some relations also require great delicacy due to the fact that legal outcomes do determine how safe a person feels and how much closure they are able to achieve (Khan & Aziz, 2023; Sharmeen, 2024; Waheed, Haque, & Ali).

Case Study 2: Harassment by an Unknown Accused

Overview of Anonymous Harassment

A new person committing the harassment serves as the second case, being unknown at first. Harassment of an individual familiar to the victim and one that is not familiar introduce different psychological stress multipliers. There is an elevated level of anxiety among the claimant which is caused by the highly unpredictable nature of the intentions and the identity of the accused. In this instance, the victim experienced numerous receives throughout the day whereby the receiving of messages was anonymous creating even more fear and insecurity.

Emotional and Psychological Impact on the Victim

The fact that the harasser was unknown in this case potentially increased the psychological damage suffered. The report indicated that she felt observed and insecure: knowing that she did not know who did it, made her feel weak. Some studies have indicated that the victims of such harassment: paranoia and hyper-vigilance appear with the knowledge that the identity and location of the harasser is not known. This case showcases

what are considered to be the extreme correlations of suffering and distress which are characteristic of the cases of harassment which are anonymous.

Challenges in Identifying the Accused

The anonymity of the perpetrator is another preventable as it becomes very difficult for the police to locate the harasser especially if the case is conducted online. This case demanded calls for the cyber investigation units where digital tracking methods such as tracing the harasser's identity was used. That means investigations of such cases often experience jurisdictional and technological challenges to obtain required records from Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. These difficulties are aggravated further when the offenders use such realistic approaches, such as VPNs, fake social network accounts, or end-to-end encrypted messaging. This limitation underscores the importance of enhanced cooperation between differently jurisdictioned agencies, the enhancement of the methods of digital forensics and better contracts for data access with social media companies for legal and investigative purposes. This case therefore brings focus on the scarce availability of digital forensic tools and the further highlights the challenges that victims of anonymous harassment face in getting justice.

Law Enforcement Involvement and Investigative Gaps

Some of these law enforcement agencies also showed a higher level of operation in the course of the case. Although the reports were made as soon as the harasser's actions were noticed, it took considerable time to track down an anonymous perpetrator. This case highlights a common gap in current law enforcement practices: the resource deficiency in their organizations in handling anonymous cases especially in harassment. There is no signed MLATs between the countries and social media platforms which greatly hinders the identification of individuals that participate in unlawful conducts through social media. MLATs are bilateral or multilateral treaties agreed between countries for the purpose of the mutual transfer of information and evidence between their legal systems. Without these treaties, law enforcement agencies face immense challenges in obtaining critical data from social media platforms, particularly when these platforms are based in countries with different legal systems and privacy laws. This lack of cooperation not only delays investigations but also hinders the ability to track and hold harassers accountable, leaving victims without justice. The challenges in investigation extended the victim's ordeal, underscoring the need for more streamlined, well-resourced investigative frameworks for cases involving unknown perpetrators (Jamal, 2024; Muzammil, Rehman, Rafiu, & Ali, 2024; Waseem, 2024).

Results and Discussions

The analysis of data on harassment cases reveals important insights into the demographics of victims, the common patterns of harassment, and the reporting rates across different types of cases. These findings are critical to understanding the landscape of harassment, highlighting which populations are most vulnerable, identifying patterns in harassment behaviour, and assessing the efficacy of current reporting mechanisms.

Victim Demographics

Demographic analysis of victims indicates that harassment affects a broad cross-section of society, but certain demographic groups appear more vulnerable than others. Key demographic findings include:

Gender Disparities: Female employees are exposed to harassment more often than their male counterparts, and approximately 70–80% of all complainants are women. This is in consonance with research being conducted by other scholars where women are found to

be more vulnerable to harassment by either known or strangers. Men also get harassed but they do so at a lesser rate in most cases different patterns and types of harassment.

Age Distribution: The level and kinds of harassment differ greatly depending on the age of a person, those aged 18-35 years stated the highest incidence, particularly, anonymous harassment. Such increased risk is associated with activities involving increased usage of the internet and social media that tend to attract exposures from anonymous people. On the other hand, older demographic groups are harassed more often by someone they know, at home, within a family, socially or at the workplace. Such patterns explain the necessity of age-segmented interventions: digital security for young people and dealing with interpersonal interactions for the elder.

Socioeconomic Status: Persons from a low income bracket have limited access to lawyers and reporting systems hence they are locked out of the systems of reporting in case they are victims. This is the demographic most vulnerable to workplace harassment, at the hands of known offenders in positions of authority.

Patterns of Harassment

Patterns in harassment behaviors show distinct differences based on whether the harasser is known or unknown. Analysis of cases indicates:

Nature of Harassment by Known Individuals: Stalking type of harassment is usually protracted and includes nuisance contacts, following the targeted persons, spying or attempts at psychological coercion by people known to the targets. These cases involve usually a former partner or immediate family member and are often ongoing since the accused is in the close proximity to the victim or knows someone in the victim's social circle. This is because known perpetrators, whether friends, acquaintances or family members, are likely to harass through face to face communication, call or messaging apps.

Anonymous Harassment Characteristics: Most of the times, cases where the perpetrator is unknown, mainly, take place in cyberspace, in form of cyber bullying including cyber stalking, doxing, and blackmailing and sending threatening messages that would in one way or another tamper with the dignity and modesty of the complainant. This type of harassment is mostly characterised by numerous threats, which makes it difficult for victims to feel safe or secure.

Geographical Patterns: Further analysis showed that larger cities experience higher levels of harassment, this can be attributed to increased level of anonymity and increased levels of technology usage. Compared to rural areas, there are less cases of anonymous harassment but high harassment by strangers since the community is usually close knit and probably people know their counterparts.

Reporting Rates and Barriers

Reporting rates for harassment cases vary significantly based on the type of accused and the victim's demographics:

Higher Reporting among Known Accused Cases: Harassment by a recognized person is reported higher than harassment by a stranger largely when the case progresses to threat on the life of the victim or her family. But, in case the accused is a relative or a person the victim knows, social and cultural factors overpowers the victim to report the incident.

Lower Reporting in Anonymous Cases: People who are harassed under pseudonyms will also tend to avoid reporting to the police or even report much later

because they feel that the police do not possess enough means of identifying the perpetrator. Moreover, the victim often feels helpless when the harasser is unknown, as is the case here, which contributes to the expressed willingness to report the case but lower rates of doing so. Statistical evidence also reveals that people report anonymous harassment at approximately 40 percent and the most common reasons for this include things such as, no proof that can be presented in court and or the claim that digital forensics can barely determine the responsible individuals.

Influence of Demographic Factors on Reporting: The young ones and especially those who are involved in cyberstalking cases prefer reporting the incidence as a minor offense or otherwise avoid reporting at all go for self-healing or seek support from their friends. Older victims or those from rural areas are also more likely to seek police help and are more likely to seek help in known-person situations. These patterns reflected the differences in trust in police, mediated by aspects like age brackets, and residents' city dwellers or non-city dwellers.

Visual Data Presentation

To enhance the clarity of these findings, the following visual elements are presented:

Table 1
Victim Demographics Breakdown

Category	Percentage of Victims	Common Types of Harassment
Gender (Female)	75%	Known: Emotional, Defamation, offences against modesty, Persistent
Gender (Male)	25%	Anonymous: Cyberstalking, Offences against dignity, Defamation
Age (18–35)	60%	Higher frequency of online harassment
Age (35+)	40%	Known: Workplace harassment
Socioeconomic (Low)	30%	Workplace, familial harassment

These tables visually support the data findings, providing readers with clear, data-driven insights into the demographics, patterns, and reporting behaviors associated with harassment cases.

Coping Strategies and Victim Support

Sexual harassment inflicts profound psychological and emotional scars on victims, necessitating effective coping strategies and robust support systems. The interplay between the type of accused known versus unknown and the victim's coping mechanisms significantly influences the healing process and access to justice. This section delves into the insights derived from data on how victims cope with harassment, compares the emotional burdens based on the nature of the accused, and evaluates the existing support systems designed to aid victims in their journey towards recovery (Widanaralalage, Murphy, & Loughlin, 2024).

Insights from Data on Victims' Coping Mechanisms

Psychological Impact Based on the Type of Accused

The psychological repercussions of sexual harassment are deeply influenced by whether the perpetrator is known or unknown to the victim. Harassment by known individuals, such as ex-partners or family members, often leads to a heightened sense of betrayal and mistrust. Victims in these scenarios grapple with complex emotions, including guilt, shame, and confusion, as the accused was once a trusted figure in their lives. This

betrayal exacerbates feelings of isolation and can impede the victim's willingness to seek help or report the abuse(Wong & Ratan, 2024).

Comparison of Emotional Burden in Known vs. Unknown Accused Cases

A comparative analysis of emotional burdens based on the type of accused reveals distinct differences in the psychological impact experienced by victims. Victims of harassment by known individuals tend to experience more intense emotional turmoil due to the personal nature of the relationship. Such cases involve loss of trust and feeling betrayed as part of the agreement; they will stay sick for several years, with a history of depression, anxiety, or even PTSD. But the accused can also be a familiar figure, so the encounters can be repeated, which prolongs the victim's suffering and makes it difficult for them to leave(Guyon et al., 2024).Conversely, victims harassed by unknown individuals face a different set of emotional challenges. Lack of identity of the harasser results to a general feeling of insecurity to the victims in that they cannot easily determine who is harassing them, why and when. This confusion results to long term fear and vigilance, which has a negative effect on the victim based on the effects of stalking. Another way is the absence of communication with the accused can lead to powerlessness such a victim will feel helpless since what is happening to him/her has already taken place and cannot be changed(Fatima, 2024).

Counselling Services

Counselling services arguably make the cornerstone of victim support, since apart from the practical support these services provide important psychological and emotional therapy. The third one is the use of trauma informed therapists for the sexual harassment victims and it reduces the number of therapists accessible. Counseling not only assists in the healing process of abused victims by providing a platform on where they can freely assist from their trauma but also provides client with techniques of how to handle stress and rebuild their self esteem. But people with the opportunity to recourse to these services is often constrained by issues like distance, financial accessibility, and social acceptance issues meaning that there is a need to increase the level of mental health resources(Irawan, Hidayati, & Dwisona, 2024).

Legal Aid and Advocacy

Here, legal aid is crucial in enabling the victims to pursue justice and manoeuvre through the legal system. Professional legal assistance to file those reports, to apply for restraining orders and in case the victim needs, or to represent those individuals in court is imperative. Advocacy groups also aim at increasing public awareness of victims' rights and lobbying for the improvement of relevant legislation against harassment. However, despite these measures, the victims are often hamstrung in the legal procedures which take a very long time, provide insufficient evidence and have otherwise constructive bias against the victims. Enhancing legal aid schemes and guaranteeing that victims are provided efficient and timely legal representation is crucial in increasing rate of success in harassment cases(Alberstein& Rosenberg-Lavi, 2024).

Law Enforcement Responses to Sexual Harassment

Consequently, the efficiency of police actions occupied a critical role in the prevention and investigation of the cases of sexual harassment as well as in claiming justice by the victims. This section analyses the measures adopted by police demonstrated in the case scenarios, assesses the laws regulating harassment incidents, provides research-based recommendations for improving such responses and also explores the aspects of technology and digital investigation in acknowledgement of unknown offender.

Analysis of Law Enforcement Strategies in the Case Studies

The case studies analysed present different law enforcement strategies that can be placed across a range of efficiency levels. In Case Study 1 with an accused in mind, the police had a systematic approach by the beginning of an investigation once the victim reported the incidence. The officers also sought interview with female victim and the accused, collected materials and necessary docs, and assisted in a way by presenting legal aids. Nevertheless, the case showed that lengthy legal processes existed due to the fact that the victim and accused knew each other, which led to biased statements from the victim, and his or her unwillingness to proceed with extremely harsh legal actions. This case revealed that, though participants reported that initial interactions with the legal process were sufficient, the extensive time taken in legal processes weakened the victim's confidence in the system.

On the other hand, Case Study 2 painted a different picture wherein the accused is unidentified and the primary forms of harassment involved cyber harassment. The police intervened after the fact, gaining new knowledge about the situation and offering the victim some assistance. The problem came to do with tracking down an unknown suspect since conventional detective work did not hold water in the age of internet anonymity. The data highlighted a major concern in law enforcement readiness in responding to cyber-based harassments, which lead to protracted periods of victim ambiguity and inadequate justice. This case stressed differentiation of standard and power between physical and verbal threat for successful handling of anonymous threat.

Legal Frameworks Addressing Known vs. Unknown Accused: Successes and Failures

This paper has demonstrated that the legal instruments used to address sexual harassment have different functions and more issues when the accused is known in contrast to a stranger. For known offenders, such laws are usually well lit where victims can easily file for restraining orders, press charges and access to services for victims. In Case Study 1 it was good to see that restraining orders and exploiting all the available legal authority effectively helped to protect the victim from further harassment. Due to the legal systems' recognition of the personal relationship and the proper laws it was possible to have a more straightforward prosecution. However, the complicated nature of the relationships between a victim and an accused occasionally posed challenges to impartiality in legal processes and they enlighten how legal instruments can address them to eliminate bias results.

The Role of Technology and Digital Forensics in Identifying Unknown Perpetrators

Criminal justice and digital scientific investigations cannot be overemphasized in closing the gap between anonymous threats and criminal justice. In Case Study 2, while it was possible to identify the harasser, due to the application of sophisticated digital forensic tools it was possible in the latter half of the case. Another way that AI and ML algorithms are currently applied in digital forensics is to improve the tracking ability in order to recognize schemes from online operations, identify and examine patterns, as well as select the probability of the prospective suspects on the basis of behavioral information(Choi, Sanders, & Lee, 2024).

Table 2
Comparative Analysis of Known vs. Unknown Accused Cases

Aspect	Known Accused	Unknown Accused
Victim Experiences		
Emotional & Psychological Impact	Intense emotional turmoil due to betrayal and broken trust. Feelings of vulnerability, shame, and self-blame are common. Example: In Case Study 1, the	Victims experience heightened fear and insecurity due to anonymity, leading to chronic stress and hypervigilance. Example:

	victim faced societal stigma and prolonged psychological distress due to the familiar status of the accused.	Case Study 2 highlighted the victim's stress over unidentified harasser, resulting in a feeling of perpetual unsafety.
Reporting Behavior & Support Seeking	Higher reporting rates, especially with physical threats, but social/familial pressures may deter reporting in close-knit communities.	Lower reporting rates due to perceived inefficacy of legal recourse and difficulty in identifying perpetrators (approx. 40% reporting rate).
Access to Resources & Support Systems	Access to personal support networks (family, friends) aids in emotional support but may be complicated by ongoing ties with the accused.	Lack of strong support networks due to isolation and anonymity of the case. Community support is limited due to the absence of identifiable perpetrators.
Legal Challenges		
Evidence Collection	Often more direct evidence (communications, eyewitness accounts), but accused may have influence and access to private information, complicating prosecution.	Primary challenge is identifying the perpetrator. Digital forensics can aid, but technological and jurisdictional limitations are significant.
Bias and Prejudice	Courts and law enforcement may show bias, potentially leading to leniency or disbelief of the victim's claims. This can discourage victims from seeking justice. Example: In Case Study 1, the accused used his social standing to delay legal actions.	Jurisdictional issues arise as anonymous harassment often crosses regions or countries, delaying investigations and reducing prosecution success. Example: Case Study 2, where digital cloaking hindered identification.
Recommendations		
Enhanced Training for Law Enforcement	Trauma-informed approaches are essential to understand complex victim emotions, particularly in cases with known perpetrators.	Advanced training in digital forensics is needed for handling cases of anonymous harassment, including skills in digital tracing and collaboration with cybercrime units.
Streamlined Legal Processes	Implement expedited proceedings to reduce emotional distress. Establish dedicated courts or specialized divisions within the judiciary to handle harassment cases, ensuring rulings are informed by expert knowledge, sensitivity to victims' experiences, and a focus on timely justice.	Establish updated Mutual Legal Assistance Treaties (MLATs) with social media platforms to ensure timely and consistent provision of records to law enforcement agencies, eliminating selective compliance and promoting fairness in handling cases.
Comprehensive Support Systems	Provide integrated support services (legal aid, counseling, advocacy) to assist victims in	Develop community-based programs that educate and empower victims to reduce stigma and encourage

	both emotional and legal challenges.	reporting, especially beneficial in cases involving known perpetrators.
Policy Reforms and Legal Enhancements	Update frameworks to address digital harassment comprehensively, including protocols for online investigations and new legal definitions for digital harassment.	Enact victim-centered reforms prioritizing the protection and empowerment of victims rather than burdening them with extensive procedural hurdles.

Policy and Law Enforcement Improvements

Building on the comparative analysis and the identified challenges in handling harassment cases, this section outlines actionable recommendations aimed at strengthening legal frameworks and enhancing law enforcement capabilities (Williams, Bartlett, Zare, Custer, & Osman, 2024). These recommendations are designed to address the specific needs of victims and ensure more effective legal outcomes.

Actionable Suggestions for Strengthening Legal Frameworks

Comprehensive Legal Definitions:

Legislators should develop clear and comprehensive definitions of sexual harassment that encompass both known and unknown perpetrators. This includes specifying behaviors that constitute harassment, whether occurring in personal relationships or online environments. Legal frameworks must explicitly include digital harassment forms, such as cyberstalking, doxxing, blackmailing and online threats, ensuring that victims have legal recourse regardless of the medium.

Mandatory Reporting and Protection Orders

The laws mandating specific forms of harassment are not reported because they enhance reporting and guarantee authorities' attention to the extreme cases. Setting up procedures to obtain protection orders more quickly can offer protection and at least temporary security for the victims whenever the incidents are related to someone the victim knows.

Enhanced Victim Support in Legal Proceedings

Lawyers for Advocacy for crime victims can assist victims to overcome legal processes of the criminal justice system and provide useful information that a victim requires. Ensuring that victims are granted 'tax payer funded' legal aid or other forms of subsidies can keep the outbreak of costly trials expensive for the wealthy, away from those of need (Hughes, 2024).

Enhancing Investigative Tools

Advanced Digital Forensics:

To this effect, LEAs required assembling modern digital forensic equipment and technologies that would enhance their tracing and identification of anonymous harassers. This includes software for tracking IP addresses, decrypting encrypted communications and indeed other software used to track digital footprints. Creation of new specialized subdivision of police that will train officers for digital investigation in anonymous harassment cases may be beneficial.

Inter-Agency and International Collaboration

Creation of new specialized sub-division of police that will train officers for digital investigation in anonymous harassment cases may be beneficial. The formation of joint task forces into the incidences of digital harassment also helps to enhance efficiency because any cases close to working as a single entity would achieve better results if all are combined. To ensure such records are produced from alleged social media accounts used in cyber sexual harassment, it is pivotal that countries and social media platforms enter into mutual legal assistance treaties (MLATs). The kind of agreements that would be necessary are those through which the law enforceable bodies can get the necessary data without delay or rejection to identify anonymous harassment. Further, the ratification of these treaties would facilitate assembly of practical tangible proof essential in preparing proper cases and successful prosecutions thus increasing accountability and justice to the victims.

Use of Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning

In terms of harassment it will be possible to utilize AI and machine learning for predicting the outcomes and possible perpetrators for further prevention. It means that using automated monitoring tools can help identify harassment behavior online and guide actions of the target, which can help law enforcement to respond faster (Cronin et al., 2024).

Best Practices for Law Enforcement

Trauma-Informed Policing

Offering extensive, intensive sensitivity and trauma informed training for officers enables positive and empathetic response to the victim resulting in increased reporting cases. Policing detainees in a way that puts the victims first and holistically empowers them leaves a significant gap being filled by more effective policies and systems that are developed from scratch.

Proactive Community Engagement

Conducting public awareness campaigns about the signs of sexual harassment and available resources can empower communities to support victims and deter potential harassers. Engaging with diverse communities to build trust and understanding can enhance cooperation between law enforcement and the public, making it easier for victims to come forward and seek help (Irham, Rusdi, & Hidayati, 2024).

Advocacy for Victim-Centred Legal Reforms and Support Systems

Policy Advocacy

Advocating for policy changes requires the involvement of multiple stakeholders, including lawmakers, advocacy groups, and community leaders. Building coalitions can amplify the push for reforms that prioritize victims' needs. Launching public campaigns to raise awareness about the importance of victim-centered reforms can garner public support and pressure policymakers to act.

Comprehensive Support Systems

Establishing integrated support services that provide legal assistance, psychological counseling, and advocacy in a single framework ensures that victims receive holistic support. Making support resources easily accessible, especially for marginalized and vulnerable populations, can help bridge gaps in support and encourage more victims to seek help.

Continuous Evaluation and Feedback

Such systems, including ongoing assessment of the operations of support systems and evaluation of the adequacy of legal measures in place enable their ongoing sensitivity to victims' needs. Providing avenues for victims to give feedback on their encounters with support systems and legal systems for purposes of continuous improvements and guarantee that the reforms are victim-inspired mean certain variables (Irham et al., 2024).

Conclusion

This paper elucidates the different aspects of accompanied and stranger sexual harassments and establish clear differences in the emotional, mental, and legal effects which affects the victims. Women exposed to identified harassers suffer the added toll of betrayal, and women harassed by anonymous strangers have no way of avoiding constant fear and legal geography. However, the present study has also revealed that the systemic biases and long times for legal redress still persist even with higher reporting rates in cases where the perpetrators are known. On the other hand, the nature of identity of harassers behind the computer further makes underreporting and investigations difficult. These findings serve as a pointer to the fact that justice delivery requires vogueish measures since victims are different in diverse ways.

Recommendations

Moving Forward, Thus, it is essential to build a clear set of approaches and further develop/s when it comes to different types of harassment. Towards cases involving known perpetrator, then the emphasis should be directed on using trauma informed justice style, improving on the support for the victim as well as eradicating procedural biases. On the other hand, addressing anonymous harassment in cyberspace depends on progress in digital forensic science, cooperation between countries and their judicial systems, as well as improvements in International Agreements on the social networks cooperation. Finally, appropriate legal strategies have to be elaborated to manage both kinds of situations and more significantly, people require complex support concerning legal assistance, psychological counseling, and advocacy. Communal sensitisation platforms should aim at reducing intolerance for corruptions cases by encouraging people to bring the issue to light. In aggregate, these steps help build the pathway to a society that is fair to every woman, that ensures that perpetrators of heinous crimes against women do not go scot-free and that more and more women crossing the line of sexual harassments are reduced in its extreme.

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