"Clouds in Egypt's Sky"

Sexual Harassment:
from Verbal Harassment to Rape

A Sociological Study

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CONCLUSIONS

The issue of sexual harassment has become less taboo recently in the Egyptian media and within academic circles, and has even become a part of daily discourse among women in Egyptian society, regardless of social or economic status or political belief. In the past, women were afraid to talk about sexual harassment and considered discussing it culturally taboo. With the problem worsening, we have found that the way ahead is to encourage dialogue about this problem and to try to search for solutions. Sexual harassment has become an overwhelming and very real problem experienced by all women in Egyptian society, often on a daily basis, in public places such as markets, public transportation and the streets, as well as in private places such as educational institutions, sports clubs, and the workplace.

The research component of the Egyptian Center for Women's Rights' (ECWR) work concerning the phenomenon of sexual harassment has progressed in three phases. In 2005 we received and documented over 100 complaints of women subjected to sexual harassment – women across all different age groups and socio-economic classes. These women spoke to us about the seriousness of the problem and the extent of their personal and private suffering. During the second phase of our research, in order to investigate the issue further and discover if the problem of sexual harassment was an isolated phenomenon or a pervasive problem faced by the majority of women in Egypt, we conducted an exploratory study surveying over 2,800 Egyptian women. We met with and surveyed Egyptian women from different socio-economic backgrounds in a variety of settings and our preliminary results confirmed the prevalence and severity of sexual harassment and the suffering of women due to it.

In the third phase of our research we designed a more in-depth study focusing not only on Egyptian women but also included data on the motivations of Egyptian men, as well as the situation of foreign women in Egypt, to identify the extent of their suffering and the impact of sexual harassment on their lives.

Our study attempts to provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of sexual harassment and also aims to help us achieve our desired objective: to make Egyptian society a society in which all members feel secure - whether male or female, Egyptian or foreign.

The study encompasses a number of procedural definitions:

First: the definition of sexual harassment

Sexual harassment is defined as "unwanted sexual conduct deliberately perpetrated by the harasser, resulting in sexual, physical, or psychological abuse of the victim regardless of location, whether in the workplace, the street, public transportation, educational institution, or even in private places such as home or in the company of others such as relatives or colleagues, etc.

It is possible that the harassment may come from an individual or group of individuals targeted to one woman or to a group of women. It is also possible that the harasser may be a person or persons with authority or a colleague or a relative. In some instances, harassment may even occur where the woman holds a supervisory position, as she will be reluctant to report harassment for fear of losing her job or status - although harassment of strangers in public places is the most frequent form of harassment in Egyptian society.

It is not necessary for harassment to declare an explicit sexual message, but may include behavior

such as ogling, gestures, offers to perform sexual acts, questions of a private and sexual nature, displaying sexual photos or pictures, unwanted touching, etc. All forms of abuse and sexual harassment practiced by powerful groups upon weaker groups are usually aimed at women by men.

Second: the definition of a harasser

The study aims to develop a precise definition of a "harasser." Although the study confirms that it is difficult to determine a specific understanding of the term - a harasser may be male or female, and harassment is not limited only to men harassing women, although this is most common. The study illustrates that it is possible that the harasser be female, or any person in everyday life, including an employer, a friend, a stranger, or even a family member.

Harassment is not limited to a specific group of people, and there are many factors and circumstances that lead to harassing behavior. These factors may be social, economic or cultural, moral or even political. The several types of harassers can be summarized as follows:

1 – "Authoritarian harasser": the harasser who has authority aims to pressure the victim to comply with his orders, and often exists in circumstances of superior-subordinate relationships, whether in the workplace, educational environment, or even in situations involving the police and ordinary citizens or the accused.

2 – "Male harasser": this harasser emphasized his masculine values and culture, found in and supported by societies where the male sex exercises harassment only to prove dominance over the female "weaker" sex.

3 – "Bully harasser": this harasser is trying to achieve some sort of sexual satisfaction without discrimination between victims, as any and all victims can equally satisfy his desires. He harasses without regard to time or place and often prefers foreigners as victims. He also makes no distinctions of time or place, and prefers to harass in public places like streets and public transportation or markets, etc.

Third: the definition of the victim

The study illustrated that there is no specific group of women that is prone to be victimized by the harasser; the harasser does not differentiate between categories of victims nor is he limited to a specific type of woman, whether a young girl or even a woman in old age, nor are victims limited to a specific social or economic class. All women can be victims of sexual harassment. The phenomenon of violence against women is a global phenomenon, affecting all human societies.

Importance of this study

• Scientific interest - this descriptive and analytical study is one of the first to address the phenomenon of sexual harassment in a comprehensive way and thus helps to enrich scientific research with a discussion of one of the most important and difficult issues faced by Egyptian women today.
• Practical importance - this study attempts to provide an integrated approach to the phenomenon of sexual harassment, and to highlight the most important reasons and motivations that led to the aggravation of this phenomenon in Egyptian society. Based on these important indicators and results, the study contributes to finding appropriate solutions to this phenomenon, to be submitted to decision-makers to enable them to develop appropriate mechanisms to reduce the aggravation of this phenomenon or eliminate it entirely.

Methodology

This study adopts the study sample survey method, as data were collected through the use of form questionnaires as a research tool for data collection. Three surveys were designed and implemented – the first to a sample of Egyptian women, the second to foreign women residing in Egypt, and the third to a sample of Egyptian males. The survey was based on a standard form but then modified and differentiated to take into account the characteristics of each audience - male and female, Egyptian and foreign.

Details of the study

Participants
The sample of 2020 Egyptian participants was divided equally between male and female Egyptians (females 50% (1010) and males 50% (1010)). The study also included 109 foreign women living or traveling in Egypt for different purposes.

Geographical area
The field study covered three governorates in the Arab Republic of Egypt: Cairo, Giza, and Qalubiya. The sample has been distributed as follows:

Cairo - The total sample in this province was 673: 336 in the region of Ain Shams and 337 in Shubra Masr

Giza - The total sample in this province was 675: 339 in Dokki and 336 in Imbaba

Qalubiya - The total sample in this province was 673: 335 in the region of Shubra al-Kheima and 338 in Banha

Female	Male	Gender / Area	
168	168	Imbaba	Giza
170	169	Dokki	
168	168	Masakan Ain Shams	Cairo
169	168	Shubra Masr	
167	168	Shubra	Qalyubeya
168	170	Banha	
1010	1011	Total	

The field research was conducted by four researchers in each region hired by ECWR– two males (to distribute the male surveys) and two females (to distribute the female surveys). Each region also had a supervisor for each group, and all groups were supervised by a director. The researchers targeted the main streets in each area as well as common crowded places with high population

densities, in order to interview a large number of participants and ensure that a representative sample from the region.

To complete the study of foreign women researchers collected data in a number of places where foreign women are concentrated, such as Hussein and the headquarters of the American University in Cairo, as well as a number of Arabic language teaching centers.

The surveys were distributed by a number of foreign researchers in order to overcome language and cultural barriers and help obtain more truthful responses from the research audience.

Timetable
The study was divided into seven key stages:
    Phase I: a compilation of articles on the subject to form a theoretical base.
    Phase II: the formulation stage - developing the data collection tool (form questionnaire).
    Phase III: the test phase of the questionnaire or "pretest" and analysis of the preliminary results of the study.
    Phase IV: reformulation of the form questionnaire.
    Phase V: application of the final form questionnaire in the field – data collection and data entry.
    Phase VI: data analysis – extracting the results of the study.
    Phase VII: preparing the final report of the study results.

Methods of analysis and interpretation

The study adopts a quantitative method of analysis, using the statistical program SPSS, relying on analytical methods in order to obtain the depth and precision necessary to reach the correct results.

This concludes the first section this paper addressing sexual harassment theory. The remaining six chapters detail the results of our field study.

Chapter I: Sexual Harassment: The most important features of victims and perpetrators

Forms of sexual harassment

• The results of the study illustrate there is evidence within all three study samples (Egyptian women, Egyptian men, and foreign women) of seven forms of harassment, which are: touching, noises (including whistling, hissing noises, kissing sounds etc.), ogling of women's bodies, verbal harassment of a sexually explicit nature, stalking or following, phone harassment, and indecent exposure.
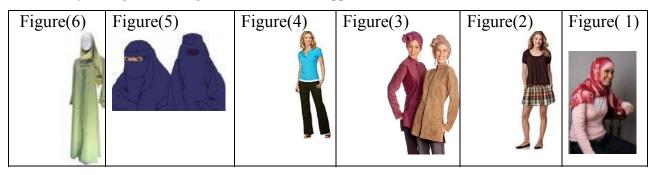
• Our study showed that foreign women are aware of more forms of harassment than our sample of Egyptian males and females. Foreign women indicated that sexual harassment also includes: sexual photographs displayed in a public place, sexual jokes or stories that have more than one meaning, insistent invitations to eat or drink or engage in other outings with the harasser despite the victim's repeated refusal, insisting on accompanying the female to her home or work in spite of repeated refusal, and asking the victim to work extra hours or work after her contract is completed for no real reason.

• As for the sources of knowledge about harassment, 31.0% of Egyptian women confirmed that they learned about harassment from the reality they faced in every day life, followed by 27.9% from the media. 78% of foreign women stated they learned about harassment from actual exposure to harassment, and 60.1% of the male sample stated that the media was the primary influence in their knowledge of the forms of harassment, followed by 43.0% from daily life.

Participants' views on the most important features of a victim of sexual harassment:

• 48.4% of Egyptian and 51.4% of foreign women that women of all ages are subjected to sexual harassment. However, the majority of the male sample 62.2% indicated that women in the age groups 19 - 25 years old are most susceptible to sexual harassment. This difference in the views of women and men may be due to the experiences that women have had with sexual harassment. If it happens to them, they are likely to believe that any woman at any age could be vulnerable to harassment, that it is not confined to young women and girls.

• In terms of general appearance of the victim, 62.5% of the Egyptian women and 65.3% of men involved in the study stated that Figure 2 (see below) is the most common appearance of women vulnerable to harassment. 44% of foreign women rejected this notion, suggesting, rather, that all women are commonly harassed. They think that the female in Figure 2 will be subject to harassment, but they also thought that the women in Figures 5 or 6 were also likely to be harassed. Generally, foreign women agreed that a woman's appearance is not a determinant of harassment.

Figure(6)	Figure(5)	Figure(4)	Figure(3)	Figure(2)	Figure(1)

• The study showed that sexual harassment is not class-based. 90% from Egyptian women 78% of foreign women, and 59% of males reported that the harasser does not distinguish between victims in regards to economic class.

• 77.1% of foreign and 61.6% of Egyptian women agreed that both married and unmarried women are subject to sexual harassment. 42.3% of men disagreed however, claiming that unmarried women (typically 19-25 years old) were most vulnerable.

• Finally, the study sample unanimously concluded that working women are most likely to be subject to sexual harassment. The next most likely groups were female tourists, housewives, and the mentally disabled.

Views of the public on the most important features of a harasser:

• Public opinion research showed that most harassers are young males, between 19-24 years old.

• In terms of occupation, the study showed that male microbus and taxi drivers are the most likely to be harassers. However, the vast majority of foreign women emphasized that police and security personnel are the most likely to engage in sexual harassment.

Chapter II: Sexual Harassment: Manifestations and Consequences

Manifestations of exposure to sexual harassment:

• Results of the study found high rates of exposure to sexual harassment. 83% of Egyptian women reported exposure to harassment, while 98% of foreign women stated they had been sexually harassed while in Egypt.

• Women exposed to sexual harassment have experienced men staring inappropriately at their bodies, inappropriate touching, sexually explicit comments, stalking, and telephone stalking.

• Results also revealed that 46.1% of Egyptian women and 52.3% of foreign women are subjected to harassment on a daily basis.

• According to the results of the study, 91.5% of Egyptian women and 96.3% of foreign women faced sexual harassment on the street and public transportation most often. Second most common were tourist destinations and foreign educational institutions.

• It is customary that the harassment may occur at night or after midnight, but the results confirmed that 60.5% of Egyptian women, and 68.2% of foreign women were subjected to harassment at all times, followed by noon and evening and then early morning and lastly mid-night.

General appearance of women who get sexually harassed: what women wear

• 31.9% of women who reported sexual harassment were dressed like figure 1, wearing a blouse, long skirt and veil. 21.0% of women were wearing a longer blouse, pants, and veil like figure 3. Figure 4 was third, where women were wearing a cloak and veil (20 %), then figure 6 (19.6%). These results disprove the belief that sexual harassment is linked to the way women dress (women are sexually harassed when dressed "indecently" or are not veiled – in the words of some participants), since 72.5% of victims surveyed were veiled.

• We found that there was a contradiction between words and deeds. Participants believed that figures 2 and 4 would get harassed more than the others because these figures were not wearing the veil and were wearing short clothes, but the results prove that this is mistaken, as the majority of women we interviewed were dressed like the figures 1, 3, 4 and 5 - but still experienced sexual harassment. These results illustrate the contradiction between society's belief that the appearance of the woman is a key factor leading to sexual harassment.

• This confirms that the stereotypical ideas of a patriarchal culture that blames women even if they are victims, is opposite to reality.

• Both foreign and Egyptian women confirm that the most common age of harassers are youth 19-24, then men from 25-40, followed by children under 18 and then finally men over 41 years old.

• The Egyptian women sample cited that the occupations of the harassers were drivers, followed by schoolchildren and university students with a rate of 42.8%, perhaps indicating the extent of the problem. The majority of foreign women identified the most common harassers as policemen, security, and then drivers.

The Effects of Sexual Harassment

• The results of the study also concluded that sexual harassment has serious physical consequences for the victim, such as cases of headaches, difficulty sleeping, and bad dreams, as well psychological repercussions such as a deep sense of anger, fear, pain, embarrassment, shame and turmoil, confusion and inability to act, and finally depression.

• The results confirmed the economic and social effects of harassment, including the impact of harassment on the productivity of workers at work, 9.5% of Egyptian women and 22.4% of foreign women stated that sexual harassment affects the productivity of students at school (such as students not being able to recall what they study), and a feeling of lack of security, both in public places or private as well as 42% of Egyptian women and 73% of foreign women indicated their lack of confidence in others and dealing with the opposite sex.

• The study results showed the impact of sexual harassment on tourism and the entry of foreign currency in Egypt. The study found that some foreign women had expectations about being harassed in Egypt before they arrived, which were confirmed by their experiences during their stay. 66.1% of foreign women confirmed that their experiences with sexual harassment had a negative impact on their vision of Egyptian society. 7.3% also thought that they would not return to Egypt again because of their experiences, and 4.6% said they would advise their friends not to visit Egypt.

Chapter III: How the Victim, Witness and Security Officers Deal with the Problem of Sexual Harassment

• The study concluded that there are negative reactions to harassment at all levels, whether by the harasser or witness.

• The study indicated that the vast majority of women did nothing when confronted with sexual harassment, which is one of the most difficult obstacles to overcoming sexual harassment as it is therefore "silenced" or "covered up." However, it is meaningful that many women stated they did not report harassment because they were not yet aware of the serious effect harassment would have on their lives. Women confirmed that they did also not report harassment because they feared an impact on their reputation, and were afraid of the reactions of people around them were they to admit they were harassed.

• Egyptian women and men who witnessed harassment of Egyptian women and foreign women are likely not to help victims of harassment. The vast majority of these attributed this to disinterest in the affairs of others.

• Results on reporting incidents of sexual harassment show that an extremely small percentage of women sought help from police as only 2.4% of Egyptian women and 7.5% of foreign women reported the crime. The result was that some let the harasser escape while others caught him and filed a report against him. We also found that some police officers the mock these women or harass them as well. The vast majority of women - 96.7% of Egyptian women and 86.9% of foreign women - did not seek police assistance because they didn't think it was important or because no one would help them. This failure is significant and protection of women could stop harassment. Others reported they feared a negative impact on their reputation and negative consequences from breaching customs and traditions, while some sighted the absence of an effective law criminalizing sexual harassment and the absence of witnesses as reasons not to report. We note also that the vast majority of foreigners confirmed that many times the harasser was himself a police officer - further deterring them from requesting assistance. There is no doubt that the silence of women is considered a major impediment to the reporting of incidents of sexual harassment, as it gives confidence to the harasser to continue to commit crimes, illustrating the need to end this silence and discuss the consequences of this phenomenon and its negative effect on women, who comprise half of society. Half of society will not be spared the threat of sexual harassment if the other half will not recognize the consequences of sexual harassment.

Chapter IV: Men and Sexual Harassment

• Results show that the vast majority - 62.4% of the male audience surveyed - confirmed that they have perpetrated and/or continue to perpetrate one or more of the forms of harassment. 49.8% being ogling women's bodies, 27.7% whistling and shouting comments, 15.9% shouting sexually explicit comments, 15.4% phone harassment, 13.4 unwanted touching of women's bodies, 12.2% following and stalking, 4.3% exposed or pointed out his penis.

• Results confirmed that the majority of these incidences take place in public places: 69% on the streets, 49.1% on public transportation, 42.4% in parks and coffee shops, 29% in educational institutions, 19.8% on beaches, and 6.2% in the workplace.

• Most participants stated they prefer to harass in the evening, followed by mid-day, no specific time, morning, and after midnight.

• Regarding frequency of harassing behavior, the vast majority of male participants stated they harassed women approximately once a day, while others stated they did so more than once a day. The minority harassed weekly and then monthly.

• Regarding reasons for the harassing behavior, results show that the vast majority of harassers 41.8% believe that harassing behavior works to satisfy their repressed sexual desires, perhaps confirming the above classification of the "bull harasser" who indiscriminantly looks to satisfy his sexual desire at any time or place with any females he sees.

• 23.1% of the men surveyed reported that harassing women made them feel more masculine, more confident, stronger in relation to women, powerful. 13.9% considered harassing degrading and humiliating to women, and agreed with the conclusion that sexual harassment enhances the already existing culture of male hegemony through acts of violence by men against women.

• 19.3% said that they experience no positive or negative feelings when they harass women because they are accustomed to doing it since they were young.

• Results indicate that 53.8% of men blame men's sexual harassment of women on the women. They interpret the cause of sexual harassment primarily as a result of women dressing indecently (unveiled). However, our study shows that most victims of harassment wear headscarves, illustrating the falseness of this claim. 42.4% of men also attributed harassment to women's beauty. One of the interviewees said that when he sees a beautiful woman he tries to harass her verbally first and then sees how it might develop further. Others said that they harass women because women enjoy it. 27.7% reported that they harass women to satisfy their sexual desire, or to pass the time, or to increase self-confidence. When we analyzed these responses, we found that all reflect the idea of masculine hegemony. Usually men blame women, not themselves, describing her appearance as inappropriate or saying that she initiated it or likes to be harassed.

• 88% of the sample saw someone harassing a woman. This occurred most often in public places including streets, public transportation, parks, clubs, etc. Our results showed that the reactions of these to seeing such incidents where negative, but that 61.4% ignored the issue completely and failed to provide any assistance to the victim or separate the harasser from her. 29.4% sympathized with the victim and only 0.1% reported trying to help the victim (verbally, physically, or by helping the victim to file a police report).

Reasons that most of the sample ignored harassment and refused to help the victim included: 47.8% indicated that they don't care, others said that women enjoy harassment, and others replied that since they harass women themselves, they have no right to prevent others from doing the same.

Chapter V: Sexual Harassment and Blaming the Victim

• According to the results of the study, there are differences between Egyptian women, foreign women, and men regarding the ideal reaction to be taken by the victim when subjected to harassment. Most Egyptian women claimed that the victim should remain silent and not tell anyone about being harassed. Most Egyptian males and foreign women stated victims should request assistance from witnesses to help stop the harasser. No doubt this reflects the fact that Egyptian women support the image of the "silent woman" more than Egyptian males or foreigners. This also indicates that Egyptian women support the idea of male dominance and women's fault, as well as the inappropriateness of talking about women's vulnerability to harassment, which would violate norms, moral values and the ideal of the obedient woman.

• The results showed that there are a number of opinions held by research participants, which blame the victim for sexual harassment. Out of the Egyptian women and men interviewed, most believe that women who wear tight clothes deserve to be harassed. They also excused harassers on the grounds that "he sees a lot of girls." Most also rejected the views that men have the right to harass women because he is unable to marry, or that women shouldn't leave their homes (Egyptian women were more opposed to this idea than Egyptian men).

• Most Egyptian women interviewed agreed that it is wrong for a woman to go to the police station to report harassment or to talk about being harassed. Some men in the sample both agreed and disagreed with these ideas.

• Most of the Egyptian women and men agreed that women should be at home by 8 p.m.

• As for the foreign women participants, we find that the vast majority rejected all these views. They do not provide excuses for the harasser to commit these behaviors, and reject blaming women for being harassed.

• Although there are some contradictions in the opinions of Egyptian women, most of them were wearing hijab yet still suffering from the problem of sexual harassment. Despite this, they sometimes gave excuses for the harassers, justifying his behavior. This shows that women are socially regarded as sex objects, not complete human beings or citizens with rights and obligations. The most important of these rights being the right to personal safety and freedom of movement.

Chapter VI: Sexual Harassment: Reasons and solutions

• Results of the study confirm that 91.3% of Egyptian women, and 38.5% of foreign women, and 78.8% men agree that sexual harassment is a recently growing phenomenon.

• Participants cited various reasons for this growth: First, the worsening economic situation and the spread of unemployment among youth; followed by lack of awareness of religious values. Male participants particularly blamed the general appearance of some women and their behavior in public places. Male participants also attributed the behavior to the media's free airing of pornography and harassers' poor upbringings. The vast majority of the sample of foreign women blame harassment on the lack of a clear law that effectively criminalizes sexual harassment. Some foreign women indicated that this is also due to the victim's silence, which allows the harasser to escape any consequences.

• The main solution proposed by participants to reduce this phenomenon was the need to improve the economic situation and create job opportunities for youth. Some feel that the solution lies in raising awareness among religious citizens. The vast majority of foreigners and some of the Egyptian women and men have stressed the need to apply existing laws that may be used to address sexual harassment, if any, or the need for special legislation criminalizing sexual harassment. They also mentioned the need to create some effective security system and impose censorship on the media and, finally, the need for women to dress modestly so as not to provoke harassment from men.

After examining the results of the study we propose several recommendations which help achieve the study's overall goal – to find ways to attempt to limit or reduce the phenomenon of sexual harassment in the Egyptian society and make our society safer for all women and men, children and elders.

Recommendations

-- The need to raise awareness of the concept of sexual harassment. Many consider sexual harassment limited to rape or sexual assault, and do not realize that the term sexual harassment is a broad concept including many verbal and physical behaviors. Awareness of the phenomenon is necessary to stand against it and take action.

-- The need to intensify research on the social, psychological, legal, and economic aspects of sexual harassment, with the goal of deepening our understanding of all facets of the problem as interpreted from every angle. Research should focus on the dangers of this social phenomenon and its threat to social progress and evolution, as well as studies focusing on the seriousness of the psychological consequences of the phenomenon on the victim as well as examining the most important psychological reasons why harassers commit such crimes. Legal studies should focus on evolving comparative legal frameworks for addressing sexual harassment in various countries around the world, and to how to best formulate legal recommendations addressing the specific needs of the Egyptian society and culture.

-- The need to develop training sessions for police on how to deal with the issue of sexual harassment

-- The need for increased security in the streets and easy reporting procedures aimed at reducing the incidence of harassment in the streets and creating a general atmosphere supportive of the ideas of women as victims of harassment, not the instigators, and harassment as a criminal act of violence against women.

-- The creation of a sexual harassment reporting center, the main function of which should be to receive and document complaints from women subjected to this type of violence.

-- The need for solidarity between civil society organizations and federations to mobilize public opinion and decision makers to address the problem of sexual harassment in all its forms.

-- Drafting a law that clearly defines sexual harassment, criminalizes it, and defines procedures for evidence and proof. It should also allow policemen and officers to report sexual harassment when they see it or receive a complaint, like traffic officers who are able to write citations and give fines for parking or driving incorrectly.

-- The police should have a specific document (file/folders) containing all information on the harasser, and if the harasser's name is repeated they should be punished.

-- If a harasser is reported twice for harassment, this should constitute evidence and used to file a law suit against him.

-- Punishment for officers or policemen who refuse to report sexual harassment or engage in any negative behavior against women should be set.