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The #metoo movement

Causes and likely effects

The most popular movement against sexual harassment and sexual assault nowadays is the “Me Too” movement. This movement basically gained traction after it went viral on different social media platforms in October 2017 in the form of hashtag. It was basically supposed to spread awareness about the prevalence of sexual assault and sexual harassment especially harassment faced in the workplace. It also resulted in allegation of sexual harassment and assault against some big names like [Harvey Weinstein](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harvey_Weinstein). The hashtag #metoo became viral after actress [Alyssa Milano](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alyssa_Milano), motivated the victims to speak about the harassment they faced and let the world realize the prevalence of the issue. The purpose was to empathize with the victims and empower them. This was encouraged by many actors and celebrities in their social media posts, [Gwyneth Paltrow](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gwyneth_Paltrow) and [Ashley Judd](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ashley_Judd) to name two.

There was huge following on the social media of the hashtag #metoo and several people in the film and fashion industry came up with stories or experiences that involved sexual harassment. The hashtag was tweeted more than 200,000 times in a single day and on Facebook the tag was used more than 4.7 million times. In November 2017 that led to the #churchtoo hashtag that highlighted the harassment and assault in churches. And many women associated with churches came forward to amend the dealings of the harassment cases in churches

This resulted in changes being made in many organizations that include the amendments in harassment policies and also the wage gap between the two genders. The movement also led to the identification of the black sheep in many arenas including academics, financial industry and politics as well and led to the presentation of the bill in the us congress that emphasized on the flaws of the system dealing with sexual harassment complaints and required that it would take 180 days for a complaint to be filed which took months earlier. Several other domains like medicine, music industry, sports, military and even pornography and astronomy.

The movement has led to increased concern of the general public about sex education and now children are being taught more about consent and the right to say no and to report any undesired behavior. It calls out for the accountability of the perpetrators and safe work environment for all.

This movement for me is important as it has been researched time and again that the cases of sexual harassment and assault go unreported most of the time. In America, 25–85% of women say that they face harassment at some point or other. There is severe underreporting in schools as eighty percent of them won’t never report any case of assault. In japan, merely 4% of the rape cases are reported and the accountability of the accused is even rarer. There have been claims that women are now using the metoo movement to defame others or for their personal gains, but it should be noted here false accusations only account for 2-10% of the total reports. The media plays a part in harassment cases. A research revealed that media portrays a person participating in the movement in two ways: either as a victim or an over exaggerator. This plays a vital part as the perceptions of the masses about anything are greatly influenced by media. Also the definition of sexual harassment varies, for some it is as defined by the law, while others have a broader perception. Research needs to be done in this regard for getting qualitative results.

Another study of the 15 articles published in the New York Times revealed that 33.3% showed that harassment is a problem of the entertainment industry, 20% supported that this movement is global, 13.3% discussed the incidents in academics and another 13.3% discussed the mitigation strategies being adopted to avoid harassment. The remaining were focusing on the prevalence of assault in politics, restaurant and advertising industries. The study also showed that the New York Times cited cases coming from the privileged backgrounds and none of the articles discussed the cases face by the poor. This hints that the powerless and poor victims may not be given attention or even discouraged to report or disclose their secrets of assault.

Another study looks for the implications of law in the and sees if the movement influences the way courts pass judgments in harassment cases and whether the movement has an impact on the sexual harassment laws. The results showed that the movement has great potential in changing the ways in which sexual assault is seen in societies by reforming ways of sex education and raising knowledge of the damages of sexual assault. The movement can also lead to changes in the system and ways in which the society strives to serve justice to the victims.

Another study showed that after the me too movement the MTV surveyed 1800 young individuals of age group 18-25 and came up with the results that 40% of the male respondents admitted that they have changed substantially the way they behave in romantic relationships and 25% of the female respondents said that mens’ behaviors have changed after the movement, however more research is needed to see the real changes in behaviors and perceptions. Also the media and advertising should stop the objectification of women. Companies are using technology for the safety of the women like safety buttons or alarms on the phones to seek help if any assault happens to them.

A report published in WMC Reports said that the frequency of articles related to sexual assault in the New York Times have increased by 30% as of August 2018 as compared to May 2017. And articles covering the #Metoo movement make up for 52% of them.

As for me, the movement is of great significance as we as human race and a society need to modify things that are of importance namely perceptions of honor, masculinity, power, sex, consent and empowerment. For decades women, and even men and children have been subject to abuse, rape and mental and emotional torture and are forced to live their whole lives keeping the trauma with them. This movement has enabled people to come forward to raise their voices and report the perpetrators and seek justice. Now people are more aware and concerned about the sex education and are empowering sexual assault victims and motivating them to move on in life with dignity and respect.

There are parts of the world like India and Pakistan and other developing countries where there is a palpable disparity between the standard of lives of men and women and the societies have always been judgmental towards women. The victim is blamed for provoking the perpetrator by the way they dress or talk. But this is rapidly changing thanks to the movement. Now every woman, man or child can raise his/ her voice against the injustice done to him/ her through this movement. Social media has enabled people to speak up for themselves and seek justice. As we saw in the Zainab rape case, where a little girl named Zainab was raped and then murdered but the rapist couldn’t get away with this due the pressure from public on the law enforcement institutions via Facebook and other social media platforms. He was dealt with according to the law in a short span of time.

Many actors in the Bollywood have also come forward against the sexual harassment and bullying by senior actors and/or directors in the industry. The issues and incidents with casting couches have been highlighted.

People from almost all walks of life an every part of the world now have the liberty to live their marital or romantic lives according to their will and consent and constraints like lack of power and finances are no longer a hindrance. It is shamefully amazing that women being the opposite gender of same species have suffered and endured so much for centuries. But finally they have a voice of their own and are empowered enough to speak up.

Families have a great role in curbing the problem of sexual harassment as they are responsible for how their children behave and have the responsibility to teach their sons and daughters about manners and etiquettes. The “boys will be boys” narrative and perceptions about masculinity need to be reshaped. Schools also play a big role in shaping the personalities of the students. Companies should also care about the equality among the employees of both the genders. All sets of the society, in fact, need to play their part to make this world a better place to live in for whole of the human race.

The movement has already had an impact on the ideologies of people but still there is a long way to go to attain equality. Many governments especially the developed world are working on the improvement of quality of life and the wellbeing of the masses. We as people should do in our capacity, at local, community, state and country level to make this country a safer place to be in. We as a nation should strive to lead the world in this regard and set example for others to follow.

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