

SEXUAL HARASSMENT, BULLYING, VERBAL ABUSE AND MOLESTATION IN RIDE-HAILING COMPANIES

Deepthi AB*, Karthigai Prakasam C**

*Research Scholar, CHRIST (Deemed to be University)

** Associate Professor of Commerce, CHRIST (Deemed to be University)

Abstract:

Sexual harassment, bullying, molestation and verbal abuse is a concern in most of the on the go service facilities particularly talking about cab services (ride-hailing companies) - Ola and Uber, India that is leading to mental effects on the victims of it. Women experiencing such injury and pain is indistinguishable from that of what men experience. This research article talks about the sexual harassment, bullying, molestation and verbal abuse occurring in Ola and Uber in India. The objectives of the paper being to find out the age group and gender affected by the act, to compare both the cabs for most occurred events and to give suggestion for reducing such acts in the future.

Key Words: Sexual Harassment, Bullying, Molestation, Verbal Abuse, women

INTRODUCTION

Business ethics also termed as professional ethics determines the ethical issues regarding morals and ethical principles arising within an organization. It's the conduct of individuals within an organization as well as anywhere that is termed to be an area where work is carried out. According to (Numbeo, 2020) India is ranked 69th among all other countries in the world in terms of crime index which is 58.19. A recent study says that 1 out of every 4 women and 1 out of 10 men are facing harassment at their workplace. It is the duty of an employer to ensure that his employees are protected from unethical activities or stop them from doing the same. This study focuses on the effects of wrong doings at the place of services. Ride-hailing services in case of Ola and Uber is particularly spoken about in this article. It is found that women no longer feel safe traveling through these cab services availing in the city (India Today, 2019). This research paper particularly focuses on the issues faced by the traveler in the cab services.

DEFINITIONS

According to Cambridge Dictionary (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.):

Sexual Harassment: Referred to as offensive sexual attention, suggestions or talk especially by an employer or other person in authority.

Bullying: Referred as the behaviour of a person who hurts or frightens someone less powerful, often forcing that person to do something they do not want to do.

Molestation: Referred as the act of attacking or touching someone in a sexual way.

Ride hailing company: Also known as a transportation network company or mobility service provider, is a company that matches the passengers with the vehicles through websites and mobile applications. Ridesharing companies for automobiles is referred as Ride Hailing company (Wikipedia, 2020)

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Although most of the articles mostly mention about the various forms of harassment at workplace this particular article (O'Leary-Kelly A. M., 2009) focuses on how the actors tend to follow such illegal activities like sexual harassment for achieving their set target. The paper studies about the effects of sexual harassment on an individual. The article (Rousseau, 2014) has highlighted about the effects of workplace harassment and bullying in terms of an estimate of 14.6% worldwide. This article has defined the bullying at workplace as an organized series of series of events that include repetitive bad influential acts over a period of time, in which the victim has a hard time defending themselves. Being shouted at, threatened physically at work are some of the behaviours that are included under bullying or harassment. As a result of which the job commitment of an individual or their attitude towards the job or the health have been put to risk. Therefore it is most important for the organizations to understand how to protect their employee's mental health as well as the financial condition of the organization. However this article particularly talks about how the work environment can have an influence on the bullying behaviour.

This research paper (Raver, 2005) aims at knowing the results of sexual harassment at the team level that could lead to deviations within the team affecting the overall financial functioning of the organization. Discrimination is also a form of workplace harassment. The implementation of patriarchal attitude is considered one of the biggest challenges to execute any law related to women in the society. Sexual harassment is considered as one of those unsolicited acts of want for sexual desire, physical abuse, which disturbs one's mental health and performance in the organization. This article (Kentucky, 2002) states that when there is an unclear job description,

this is likely to lead to bullying. This article points out that even an intense amount of workload is also a form of bullying at workplace. Bullying develops negative outcomes from the employees within an organization and even for themselves as an individual. If proper training and learning procedures are not properly imbibed within an employee the organization will fail to understand the employees behaviour. In the article (Jeroen Stouten, 2010) the author talks about the theoretical aspect of mobbing in the organization. He says that many people are not quite familiar with term 'mobbing', even though its an old term. Like for example hatred, jealousy, desire for taking up charge are all old. He talks about the victims of mobbing like the victims of terror or fear, people undergoing physical and psychological problems like depression, crying, sensitivity, panic attacks, social isolation etc. These however do have a major impact on the organization as well like the cost base to be more significant and also the communication gap between the work environment and the individual employees. This article (Aysegul Ertureten, 2013) keeps in mind about a particular concept while discussing mobbing at workplace.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Sexual harassment, bullying and verbal abuse not only happens at workplace but now its been extended beyond workplace. Most of research articles mention the wrong doings happening in corporates, acting industry, educational sector etc. Such events not only take place in such spaces but one such space that is to be explored is Cab-hailing services, particularly the research article talks about Ola and Uber facilities in India. It is important to record such events taking place in such spaces because even though its used for short period of time only, still makes it unsafe for citizens. This study is restricted to only Ola and Uber ride sharing facilities. Though there are other facilities like Quick ride, Airport Taxi services and other, only these two have been exclusively selected for the study. This study will help recognise such events and bring about suggestions to curb such events and make it a safe place for traveling.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This is descriptive based paper. The title "Sexual Harassment, Bullying, Verbal Abuse and Molestation in ride-hailing companies" explains the type of wrong doings that the traveller experiences when he/she uses the cab facilities(particularly Ola and Uber) such as Sexual Harassment, bullying, verbal abuse or molestation as the case maybe. Secondary source of data has been selected for the study i.e. various articles from news channels online, journals have been referred to. The study focuses on the events that have been reported in India during the

immediate past 5 years from 2015 to 2019 only. The study is restricted only to two ride-hailing facilities being Ola and Uber, India.

Inclusion Criteria:

Journals	Journal of Business Ethics, Academy of Management Review, Springer, Journal of Management, Journal of Managerial Issues
Online News Channels	India Today, NDTV, Times Now, Economic Times

Exclusion Criteria: Newspaper articles

DATA ANALYSIS

OLA CABS

YEAR	AGE (yrs.)	LOCATION	VICTIM	HARASSER	TYPE	MOTIVE	TIME
2015	>19	Delhi	Passenger	Driver	SH	P/C	Night
2016	>19	Delhi	Passenger	Driver	VA	P/C	NM
	>19	Maharashtra	Passenger	Driver	SH	P/C	NM
	>19	Delhi	Passenger	Driver	SH	P/C	Noon
2017	30	Bangalore	Passenger	Driver	M	P/C	Mid night
	23	Bangalore	Passenger	Driver	SH	P/C	Night
	>19	Hyderabad	Passenger	Driver	SH	P/C	Night
2018	24	Bangalore	Passenger	Driver	SH/VA	Advantage of the situation (Child Lock)	Early hours of mid night
	22	Bangalore	Passenger	Driver	SH	P/C	Night
	26	Bangalore	Passenger	Driver	M	P/C	Night

2019	22	Bangalore	Passenger	Driver	SH/VA	Taking advantage of the situation	Night
	>19	Bangalore	Passenger	Driver	SH/VA	Taking advantage of the situation	3:30 AM

**SH- Sexual Harassment, VA- Verbal Abuse, B- Bullying, M- Molestation, NM- Not Mentioned, P/C- Pleasure/Casual*

UBER

YEAR	AGE (YRS)	LOCATION	VICTIM	HARASSER	TYPE	MOTIVE	TIME
2015	>19	Delhi	Passenger	Driver	SH	Anger	Night
	>19	Kolkata	Passenger	Driver	SH/VA	P/C	Night
	25	Kolkata	Passenger	Driver	SH	P/C	Night
	>19	Bangalore	Passenger	Driver	SH	P/C	Night
2016	>19	Mumbai	Passenger	Driver	SH	P/C	Night
2017	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2018	>19	Delhi	Passenger	Driver	SH	P/C	Night
	22	Haryana	Passenger	Driver	SH	P/C	Night
	29	Haryana	Passenger	Driver	SH	Drunk	Night
2019	>19	Uttar Pradesh	Passenger	Driver	SH/B	Frustrated	Evening

**SH- Sexual Harassment, P/C- Pleasure/Casual, VA- Verbal Abuse, B- Bullying, M- Molestation*

Secondary Source: (The Hindu, 2017), (India Today, 2019), (oneindia, 2015), (NDTV, 2019), (NDTV, 2019), (Times of India, 2019), (NDTV, 2018), (The New Indian Express, 2018), (The Hindu, 2018), (The Times of India, 2019), (The Times of India, 2017), (India Today, 2018), (Live Wire, 2019), (India Today, 2018), (India Today, 2015), (The Guardian, 2017)

FINDINGS

To better explain the table and the ages of the victims of the incidents, the age group “>19” is termed as “**Adult/Woman**” as per WHO guidelines. This age range is designated when the study hasn’t specifically mentioned the ages of the victim and the above shall be used whenever said terms are called out in the study.

The age group “10-19” is termed as “**Adolescent**” also as per WHO guidelines. This term shall be henceforth used whenever a person of the specified age range (10-19) is to be addressed.

From the data analysis tables for both Ola Cabs and Uber, we can clearly see some blaring points and also come to certain conclusions regarding the same.

First, with the number of cases over the years for Ola Cabs, the number of cases reported seems to be almost constant or have a slight increase up to the year 2018 and a decline in the following year.

This trend doesn’t hold up much in case of Uber where 2015 had the most cases reported as per the study sample.

With the recent increase in the popularity of apps for cab rentals and ride sharing, there is an increase in the frequency of occurrence of cases of harassment.

In all cases, the Driver is the one harassing the victim with the passenger being the victim.

Also all cases show that the **victims are all female** over the age of 19 with the drivers being all male. In the studies where the age is mentioned, it can be noted that all women are mostly in the age range of **20-30** years old. This could also be due to the majority of the users who are female, belonging to the said age criteria.

As for the location of the incidents, most occur in only the **major cities** with the highest number of cases being recorded in Bangalore. This could be attributed to the popularity of such apps in cities where **traffic density** is the highest causing people to opt more keenly on such modes of transport.

Also, these incidents occur **primarily at night** or the wee hours of the morning, en route to/from trips to the **airport** which give ample opportunity due to the duration of the journey, the airports being located far outside city limits and the lack of people along these routes.

The majority of cases also lack a clear motive and are simply passed off as for **pleasure/lust/casual** with very few being instigated by stimulants or out of frustration.

SUGGESTIONS

Firstly, it seemed like a good idea to travel in a bus, train in ladies compartment. The union transport ministry is taking initiative to consider women-only option for taxi apps i.e. when they travel by OLA or Uber. To restrain from cases of rapes, sexual harassment or molestation, the government thinks that women passengers should be given options to choose their co-passengers or travel with only women (pool), the problem could then be restrained. This would make traveling for women at odd or late hours more viable and safer though it's still unsure for a few responders about how safe it could be. The government should do a proper screening of the drivers before appointing them for work. It's best advisable for the companies to hire only those employees having a strict background check. The passenger should be given an option to check on the co-passenger's gender before booking the ride, giving them confidence to reach their destination safe (NewsLaundry.com, 2018). The women passengers can switch to Pink Taxis for better safety incase they're travelling alone or traveling late nights. There should be enough responsibility that should be taken by the organization as well with regard to providing proper orientation or training for their employees or drivers. A proper tracking facility for the routes chosen by the drivers should be monitored by the company as well to prevent such happenings. The passengers should preferably share the details of their travel with their peers for safety. The passengers should also be provided with facilities to verify the ratings of the drivers before they book their cabs so that they're confident of doing their travel.

CONCLUSION

Irrespective of various measure taken by the government, organization these events are still happening that hamper the safety of women across the country. The organization and the government should come up with much stricter and mandatory policies to curb such activities caused by the employees which ultimately affects the reputation of the organization and can create a loss for them as well. It is even the sole responsibility of the passengers as well to take care of their safety and keep their peers informed prior to their travel. Therefore, a collective approach has to be taken by the government, organization as well as the passengers to ensure the safety and make it a safe travel.

REFERENCES

- Aysegul Ertureten, Z. C. (2013, August). The Relationship of Downward Mobbing with Leadership Style and Organizational Attitudes. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 116(1).
- Bulutlar, F. (2009, May). The Effects of Ethical Climates on Bullying Behaviour in the Workplace. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 86, 273-295.
- CambridgeDictionary*.(n.d.).Retrievedfrom<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/sexual-harassment>
- Commers, W. V. (2003). Downward Workplace Mobbing: A Sign of the Times? *Journal of Business Ethics*, 45(1-2), 41-50.
- Doss, 2. (n.d.).
- Dubois, D. E. (1997). DETERMINANTS OF TARGET RESPONSES TO SEXUAL HARASSMENT: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK. *Academy of Management Review*, 22(3), 687-729.
- Einarsen, S. B. (2010). BULLYING IN THE WORKPLACE: DEFINITION, PREVALENCE,. *INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ORGANIZATION THEORY AND BEHAVIOR*, 13(2), 202-248.
- Einarsen, S. H. (2010). Bullying and harassment in the workplace: Developments in theory, research, and practice.
- Finley. (1986).
- GRIFFIN, A. M.-K. (2000). SEXUAL HARASSMENT AS AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR: AN ACTOR-BASED PERSPECTIVE. *Academy of Management Review*, 25(2), 372-388.
- Hejase, 2. (2015). Sexual Harassment in the Workplace: An Exploratory Study from Lebanon. *Journal of Management Research*, 7(1).
- IndiaToday*.(2015,September).Retrievedfromindiatoday.in:
<https://www.indiatoday.in/fyi/story/five-instances-of-uber-cab-drivers-attack-on-women-262111-2015-09-09>
- IndiaToday*.(2018,October).Retrievedfromindiatoday.in:
<https://www.indiatoday.in/fyi/story/horrifying-incidents-cabs-uber-ola-2016-safety-358626-2016-12-20>

IndiaToday.(2018, April). Retrieved from indiatoday.in:

<https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/delhi-woman-accuses-uber-driver-of-sexual-harassment-says-he-was-masturbating-1214585-2018-04-18>

IndiaToday.(2019, August). Retrieved from

<https://www.indiatoday.in/>:<https://www.indiatoday.in/mail-today/story/app-based-cabs-under-fire-over-womens-safety-1580195-2019-08-13>

Jeroen Stouten, E. B. (2010). Discouraging Bullying: The Role of Ethical Leadership and its Effects on the Work Environment. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 17-27.

Kentucky, M. K. (2002). SOCIAL UNDERMINING IN THE WORKPLACE. *Academy of Management Journal*, 45(2), 331-351.

Knapp, D. E. (1997). DETERMINANTS OF TARGET RESPONSES TO SEXUAL HARASSMENT: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK. *Academy of Management Review*, 22(3), 687-729.

Live Wire. (2019, June). Retrieved from livewire.in: <https://livewire.thewire.in/personal/ola-uber-and-womens-safety/>

NDTV. (2018, June 5). Retrieved from ndtv.com: <https://www.ndtv.com/bangalore-news/bengaluru-ola-driver-allegedly-molests-passenger-forces-her-to-strip-for-photos-1862802>

NDTV.(2019, September 3). Retrieved from ndtv.com: <https://www.ndtv.com/topic/bengaluru-woman>

NDTV. (2019, August). Retrieved from ndtv.com: <https://www.ndtv.com/bangalore-news/bengaluru-woman-allegedly-threatened-with-sexual-abuse-by-uber-driver-2080797>

NewsLaundry.com.(2018, June). Retrieved from

<https://www.newslaundry.com/2018/06/25/women-only-pools>

NewsLaundry.com.(2018, June). Retrieved from

<https://www.newslaundry.com/2018/06/25/women-only-pools>

- Nielsen, M. B. (2016, March 5). The new workplace II: protocol for a prospective full-panel registry study of work factors, sickness absence, and exit from working life among Norwegian employees. *SpringerPlus*.
- Numbeo*. (2020, February Thursday). Retrieved from <https://www.numbeo.com/crime/>:
<https://www.numbeo.com/crime/>
- O'Leary-Kelly, A. M. (2000). SEXUAL HARASSMENT AS AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR: AN ACTOR-BASED PERSPECTIVE. *Academy of Management Review*, 25(2), 372-388.
- O'Leary-Kelly, A. M. (2009, March 24). O'Leary-Kelly, 2000. *Journal Of Managemnt*, 35(3), 503-536.
- Panwar,P.(2015,April9).*oneindia*.Retrievedfromoneindia.com:
<https://www.oneindia.com/bengaluru/bengaluru-ola-auto-driver-harasses-woman-facebook-post-goes-viral-1711232.html>
- Parashar, K. (2019, October). *Times of India*. Retrieved from [timesof india.com](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bengaluru/bengaluru-ola-cabbie-dumps-woman-on-dark-road-at-3-30am/articleshow/71415643.cms):
<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bengaluru/bengaluru-ola-cabbie-dumps-woman-on-dark-road-at-3-30am/articleshow/71415643.cms>
- Raver, J. L. (2005). BEYOND THE INDIVIDUAL VICTIM: LINKING SEXUAL HARASSMENT, TEAM PROCESSES, AND TEAM PERFORMANCE. *Academy of Management Journal*, 48(3), 387-400.
- Raver, J. L. (2005). Beyond the Individual Victim: Linking Sexual Harassment, Team Processes, and Team Performance. *Academy of Management Journal*, 48(3), 387-400.
- Rousseau, M. B. (2014). Organizational Resources and Demands Influence on Workplace Bullying. *Journal of Managerial Issues*, 26(3), 286-313.
- Ståle Einarsen, H. C. (2010). Education Report, 33(5): 1–143. *Academy of management Learning and Education*, 512.
- Thakur,A.(2019,April25).*IndiaToday*.RetrievedfromIndiatoday.in:
<https://www.indiatoday.in/crime/story/-i-know-where-you-stay-will-chop-you-into-pieces-bengaluru-woman-recalls-horrific-ola-ride-1510043-2019-04-25>

TheGuardian.(2017).Retrievedfromtheguardian.com:

[theguardian.com/technology/2017/jun/15/uber-india-woman-rape-lawsuit](https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/jun/15/uber-india-woman-rape-lawsuit)

TheHindu.(2017,December7).Retrievedfromthehindu.com:

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/bangalore/ola-suspends-cab-driver-for-harassing-woman/article21285746.ece>

TheHindu.(2018,June).Retrievedfrom thehindu.com: [thehindu.com/news/cities/bangalore/ola-driver-molests-tries-to-strangle-woman/article24091014.ece](https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/bangalore/ola-driver-molests-tries-to-strangle-woman/article24091014.ece)

The New Indian Express. (2018, June 6). Retrieved from [newindianexpress.com: https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/bengaluru/2018/jun/06/i-knew-no-one-could-save-her-says-ola-driver-accused-of-molesting-bengaluru-woman-1824370.html](https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/bengaluru/2018/jun/06/i-knew-no-one-could-save-her-says-ola-driver-accused-of-molesting-bengaluru-woman-1824370.html)

The Times of India. (2017, September 27). Retrieved from [timesofindia.com: https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/hyderabad/ola-cab-driver-arrested-for-misbehaving-with-woman-passenger-in-hyderabad/articleshow/60855286.cms](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/hyderabad/ola-cab-driver-arrested-for-misbehaving-with-woman-passenger-in-hyderabad/articleshow/60855286.cms)

The Times of India. (2019, September 12). Retrieved from [timesof india.indiatimes.com: https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/delhi/woman-accuses-cab-driver-of-misbehaviour/articleshow/71087867.cms](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/delhi/woman-accuses-cab-driver-of-misbehaviour/articleshow/71087867.cms)

Wikipedia. (2020, February Saturday). *Ridesharing company*. Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ridesharing_company.

York, K. M. (1989). DEFINING SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN WORKPLACES: A POLICY-CAPTURING APPROACH. *Academy of Management /ournai*, 32(4), 830-850.