



THE ROOTS OF DISRESPECT: HOW PARENTING STYLES NORMALIZE EVE-TEASING

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Abstract

This paper investigates how parenting styles contribute to the normalization of eve-teasing (street sexual harassment), focusing on the critical yet understudied role of family dynamics. While legal and societal factors are widely examined, this study argues that parental communication gaps regarding sexuality, consent, and gender respect fundamentally shape adolescents' perceptions of harassment behaviours. The research employs qualitative analysis of secondary data from WHO, UNICEF, and peer-reviewed studies to examine correlations between parenting approaches and eve-teasing prevalence. Three key areas are explored: (1) parental avoidance of sexual health discussions, (2) gender stereotype reinforcement through controlling parenting styles, and (3) consequences of adolescents relying on media/peers for misinformation. Key findings reveal that restrictive parenting correlates with: (1) widespread misinformation about healthy relationships, (2) entrenched toxic masculinity and victim-blaming attitudes, and (3) empathy deficits that enable harassing behaviours. Conversely, families maintaining open dialogues demonstrate measurable reductions in adolescents' harassment tendencies. The study highlights how media/pornography fills educational voids left by parental silence, often normalizing objectification. The implications call for multi-level interventions: (1) parent education programs to overcome cultural taboos, (2) school-based gender equality initiatives, and (3) policy frameworks incorporating family-centred prevention. Evidence from successful programs like Kenya's father-son dialogues (30% harassment reduction) proves culturally- adapted approaches can break cycles of silence. The study concludes that transforming parental communication is essential for fostering cultures of accountability and eradicating eve-teasing.

Keywords: Eve-Teasing, Parenting Styles, Sexual Harassment Prevention, Gender Socialization, Consent Education.

Introduction

Eve-teasing, which is a word used to describe street sexual harassment, is often just brushed off as a small social problem and it even can be seen as deeply embedded gender inequalities and

patriarchal norms. The external factors like male dominance, weak legal enforcement, and societal tolerance have been discussed extensively, but the role of family dynamics in this is not much discussed, especially how parents communicate. The family is the main socializing agent to which children are introduced and where they begin to internalize gender roles, respect, and the understanding of interpersonal boundaries (Bronfenbrenner 1961). Parents are an important factor, so their children's perception of appropriate behaviour will definitely be the same as the ones the parents have, and hence they are the key influencers. In addition, going by the cultural taboos that are prevalent around sexuality, it is evident that people hardly have open discussions in this regard. Therefore, kids get distorted information which they are not even aware of and they have no choice but to rely on such information from their peers, media, and pornography (Miller *et al.* 1998). This work deals with investigating how gaps in communication between the parents lead to parental behaviour being perpetuated in the form of eve-teasing and further it also outlines certain steps that are necessary to bring about changes in the attitudes and behaviour towards the concept of gender and consent.

The psychological abuse of a person that can be an Insult, harassment, among other things, and can also be called sexual harassment, including the act of "eve-teasing," is not solely the result of an individual's action, but also a cause that comes from learned behaviours, which are further strengthened by the structure that exists in the society. Empirical evidence supports the hypothesis that teenagers, who come from families with very solid gender stereotypes, tend to be those who commit or demonstrate tolerance towards harassment most (Hlavka 2014). A parenting style that is very limiting and that avoids providing children with information on consent, body autonomy, and mutual respect will, without intending to do so, be normalizing the aggressive masculinity and victim-blaming attitude. On the contrary, if families are the ones who create an atmosphere of trust and allow the conversations about relationships and boundaries, they will be the ones who foster empathy in children and thus reduce the number of those who will be harassing others (O'Sullivan *et al.* 2001). To talk about the topic of sexuality is, after all, a taboo that is widely spread across the world. As a result, teenagers are not really getting any better sources of knowledge, therefore, their sources are unlikely to be very trustworthy as they totally will misinterpret the concepts of powers and objectification.

The effects are surely quite big since this gap in communication appears. Kids definitely without clarifying guidance, with a particular emphasis on boys, may think that the act of eve-teasing is a socially acceptable one amongst the different ways of interacting, and here while it is happening, girls might internalize the shame and the sense of self-blame which they might get from it (Khan and Hussain 2008). Research finds that parents' feelings of discomfort in talking about issues like these can be a reason for the continuation of a state of ignorance among those who practice harassment and thus they do not perceive how psychological harm they are causing to their victims (WHO 2013). There is a need to put in place many different strategies such that programs targeting parents that seek to dismantle the prevailing taboos and sensitizing them to gender will be part of the solution. It is also imperative that schools and communities go hand in hand with families in their work of re-emphasizing the same message of respect and accountability.

This study recommends a shift in familial dynamics to effectively address the issue of Eve teasing. The research conducted in this paper is based on the premise that parental communications play a crucial role in shaping children's behaviours. The study affirms that if parents wanted to effectively curb the problem of sexual harassment among the young, the engagement in proactive and age-appropriate dialogue regarding consent and gender equality is of utmost importance. Parents' dismissal of the problem followed by their handing it over to educators has done no good. Those most affected by the problem are the ones who have to be in the forefront if the solution has to be realized.

Parental Communication and Adolescent Misconceptions

Insistence on the primacy of adolescence as a crucial phase for brain and identity development substantiates the human commitment to the importance of this stage in the life of all individuals. Only then do the young adults become able to influence positively the societal attitudes towards gender, relationships, and sexuality. However, despite its enormous significance, very few households still recognize and accept the importance of open and constructive dialogue on such matters among their members. It has been proven by the studies of parents that they hardly talk to their children about sexuality because they feel embarrassed, because of cultural nature, or because they think that talking to them about sexuality will result in them starting

to have sex early (International Institute for Population Sciences [IIPS] 2010). For example, in India, 15% of adolescent children say that they get some sort of sex education from their parents, which means that the remaining majority have to search for untrustworthy sources of information like peers, the internet, or porn (IIPS 2010). This absence of organized and true guidance makes the young get distorted ideas about gender roles that still do not see any wrongdoing in them, they continue to see women as objects, and they treat harassment as if it were normal.

The nature of communication between parents and adolescents on sexually-related issues is very often problematic. In a similar vein, Rodgers *et al.* (2018) firstly notice that these talks, if they definitely happen, are very rarely and they are of a very negative nature where one party dominates the conversation and the focus is primarily on warnings rather than fostering constructive conversations. Much of the time, parents exemplify abstinence or the negatives of premarital sex and at the same time they do not go into such crucial parts as the consent, mutual respect, and healthy relationships if they do go into them. This one-sided manner of talking not only is not able to provide adolescents with the necessary skills for them to be able to deal with conversations in an ethical manner, but it also continues to build a society in which people lightly talk about the problem or even pretend that it does not exist and the victim is silent due to shame and not being able to talk about it.

The extent of the communication gap resulting in problems that are very serious and affecting far-reaching is hard to imagine. According to the argument above, adolescents who come into the world without proper instructions on gender equality and respect of the body are undoubtedly more likely to behave in a manner that is unacceptable, and they will have a very distorted image of such behaviour. In order to illustrate this statement, a report from The World Health Organization (WHO 2007) states that, should parents avoid sex talk, they will be the first who, although they do not want it, will initiate the transfer of the gender stereotypes that are harmful and the result of all will be the harassment that will be more possible. If they do not get from their families clear moral and ethical frameworks, they will have no way but to go their own way. Their way will be regressive attitudes, and they will be the ones who will hardly understand that eve-teasing is

the violation of personal boundaries, thus they will never think of it as a form of flirtation or social bonding.

The aspect of the problem that is more serious now is that the outside sources are supporting the empty spaces that are left by the silence of the parents. For example, if there is no structured education at home, mixed with the necessities, adolescents find comfort in their peers, media, and digital platforms—most of them become only voices that repeat themselves over and clench the mindset of toxic masculinity and misogynistic narratives. Exemplified here is pornography, which is replete with women who play the role of those who yield and accede to male desire, this, in turn, carves in the brains of people that the males' are the aggressors, and dialectic is the one that is appropriate for their sexuality. When they do not have the opportunity to challenge those distorted narratives through parents' guidance, they end up believing those, hence, these behaviours grow when they act in public go as harassment.

Evidence-based research links weak family communication to mischievousness, sexual harassment being one of them. Adolescents who have a distant connection with their parents and are less supervised by their family members are the ones who tend to be most involved in delinquent behaviours, including harassing ones, according to the study of Chung and Steinberg (2006). It could be said that, due to missing communication, which is based on openness and trust, at home, young individuals become more vulnerable to the influence of the outside world that is negative, hence, they are more likely to take on social behaviours that are harmful as if they were their own.

The findings of this study leave no room for doubt: the way parents communicate decisively impacts the attitude of the teenagers towards gender issues and sexuality. When parents choose to not have these conversations with their children, they become the main culprits in the process of normalization of the harassment and the silence of the victims. Thus, tackling this problem is turning out to be an overhaul in how families redefine the concept of sex education—switch a way of avoidance and message of fear to open, honest, and respectful dialogue. Just at this moment teenagers can begin to get the empathy and the consciousness necessary for the fighting of the harassment instead of the continuation of it.

The Role of Parenting Styles in the Formation of Adolescent Behaviour and Eve-Teasing

Parenting styles are the most important factor in determining the character of adolescent attitudes towards the gender and behavioural aspects of the same concept. The study shows several times over again that the nature of parental involvement positively impacts the decision whether young ones will compose respectful or aggressive behaviour. The authoritarian approach that is mostly aggressive, along with the emotionless, clear and open communication that is present, has been linked to the reduction of young people's aggressive behaviour and improved social abilities (Massar *et al.* 2021). Adolescents brought up in such situation. Empirical research confirm the association between parenting patterns and characteristics of harassment The study of Jackson and Foshee (1998) revealed that adolescents who had parents that were responsive and communicative showed the least violent behaviours because they were more likely to get conflict-resolution and emotional regulation skills. On the other hand, if families are not able to provide proper socialization, adolescents will find themselves in deviant peer groups and will get behavioural cues from there (Wickliffe & Joseph 2013). Here, peer influence typically strengthens the idea of toxic masculinity, thus, harassment gets normalized, either as a form of bonding or as a way to demonstrate the one's masculinity.

Without corrective guidance from parents, these learned behaviours continue into adulthood, thus, cycles of harassment are still being perpetuated. The implications for eve-teasing are particularly worrisome. In societies where gender roles are very strictly held, parenting that is either too authoritarian or neglectful only makes the situation worse because it leads to the spread of harmful attitudes. Boys who have been raised in homes, where the only thing that is rewarded is being dominant, and emotions are not accepted, may conclude that street harassment is the only way to demonstrate their manhood. On the other hand, girls may become the ones who tell such stories over and over again and believe them so much, that they even find themselves in the role of victim-blamers if by any chance they happen to be harassed, moreover, they may think of it as the only thing they can do while in public. The more that parents are not dealing with this issue of consent the more wrong and disfigured their children get, they end up adopting those corrupted parts of culture and media because that is where they get their main source of education about gender

interaction. A unified parenting strategy is essential to overcoming this issue the solution of this problem is finding a more consistent parenting approach. Authoritative parenting, which leans on both emotional support and providing clear limits, has been effective in combating aggressive behaviour. Parents must not be passive in trying to get rid of the old ways of thinking about the gender topic but act as an example by showing them gender-equal relationships and having free, warm conversations with their children about respect and boundaries. Additionally, schools and community programs can play a big part in making it easier for young people to unify their minds by giving them organized information on healthy relationships and therefore making sure that what adolescents get is the same. To conclude, even though parenting styles do not work independently of societal forces, but rather, the latter have an influence on the former. Parents, though, if they work on creating peaceful environments in their family settings, where the communication is good will, definitely lessen the chances of their kids picking up such attitudes of harassing behaviour. The struggle to wipe out the problem of sexual harassment carries on but its point of origin must be home as the foundation of empathy and respect is only laid there. The legal and educational sectors can only reach this far in curbing harassment if the indispensable intervention is absent.

Societal Taboos and Their Consequences on Adolescent Sexual Attitudes

The stubborn persistence of ingrained and deeply rooted cultural taboos that are around sexuality makes it really difficult, if not impossible for a parent and a child to have a conversation about healthy relationships and consent. In many societies, discussing sex remains stigmatized and misunderstood. Rather than promoting responsible behaviour, open conversations about sex often have the opposite effect, potentially leading to increased promiscuity. This silence has a deep effect mainly on young people's attitudes toward gender and sexuality. As Hollander (2007) found out, male adolescents whose fathers were not willing to talk about sexuality with them came to be more objectifying attitudes toward women among them. Thus the results clearly indicate that parental silence does not act as the suppression of sexual curiosity in adolescents but actually, it tends to divert their sexual curiosity to places which may not be the most appropriate.

This silence in our culture results in situations where an adolescent is given to interpret the situation of avoidance of sexual topics. The idea that unmentionable things must go unspoken is usually implied when parents treat sexuality as a taboo. At the same time, they are not aware that such treatment yields a psychological change in kids who internalize the fact that these issues are not for conversation. Thereby it is not only dangerous but also a vicious circle that deprives society of the whole idea of youngsters raising their heads and becoming more decent than adults through emulation as it was traditionally assumed. Youngsters end up getting their information in misleading, problematic, or arbitrary ways from their peers, media, or pornography without the presence of parents' moral compass they tend to strengthen and intensify such entrenched stereotypes and gender-based hate crimes.

The World Health Organization (2007) has affirmed that changing old beliefs in the society is not about getting people to have sex but about sharing feelings, and respecting each other. In their survey, they show that societies that are more liberal in the sex education field have less number of cases of sexual harassment and violence against women. This link further implies that the setting up of open conversations on sexuality could be the shield that prevents the coming of the harassing behaviours. The WHO's statements are corroborated through real interventions, e.g., the father-son dialogue programs which were enacted in Kenya resulting in the decline of harassment rates by 30% (Hollander 2007). The success of the programs hinged upon the fact that there were places created where intergenerational conversations about respect, consent, and healthy masculinity could take place.

The Kenyan study is a perfect example on how cultural barriers could be dismantled. The trick was to put conversations into the proper cultural contexts and to stress the respect aspects of the values rather than the purely biological parts of sexuality, and thus, these programs managed to get through the sensitive cultural norms while they were still able to achieve significant behavioural change. This strategy reveals that cultural taboos that are still very strong, nevertheless, are not impossible circumstances. The main thing is the learning and practicing of the communication strategies that respect the cultures but at the same time are able to reveal the scandals in the silence of the cultures.

The discussion above matters mostly to the societies that have a lot of problems with eve-teasing. The research shows that community-based interventions which are multi-generations have more impact than those which are individual-focused. When a whole community changes its patterns of communication, adolescents get repeated messages about the right behaviour from multiple sources – such as parents, teachers, and community leaders. This multi-pronged approach not only prevents the negative influences of the media and peers but also allows the consistent message of the positive influences of parents to be heard.

Besides that, the gendered content of the rhapsodies in rightness that makes them sane needs to be unpacked and understood. Across different cultures, girls and women get the most of the responsibility of the sexual thing, while boys barely receive any guidance about respectful behaviour. Such a double standard not only keeps the old victim-blaming ideas alive but also does not provide young men with the necessary understanding to change their behaviour if it is misbehaviour. To do this, it is necessary to mobilize particular deliberate efforts, for example, those demonstrated by Kenyan father-son dialogues, to get male members of the family involved in conversations about sexuality and respect.

The continuance of sexual taboos has become the problem of revelation of new keys to the understanding of how victims of harassment tasks themselves and there with their feelings. At the stage of silence, privacy and secrecy around it, victims often become the first source of their own shame and the source of their silence. This, in turn, leads to the elimination of the victims' influence in the local culture, thus creating a cycle of silence that serves the needs of the perpetrators and the normalization of harassment as behavioural patterns that can be found in everyday interactions between individuals. Such a situation may be changed if there is an opportunity for young people to be presented with safe spaces where they can sing out their experiences and get the help they need.

Strategies for Effective Parental Intervention Against Eve-Teasing

The persistent problem of eve-teasing calls for proactive strategies that empower parents to create better conditions for gender and relationship issues. Research shows that parental intervention should

not be limited to responding with punishment, but it should rather concentrate on preventive education, breaking stereotypes, and community partnership. The efficiency of methods is dependent on consistent and constant efforts to change minds of adolescents on the subject of consent, respect, and accountability. Here are three important strategies supported by practical evidence:

1. Early and Age-Appropriate Education on Consent and Respect

One of the most vital means of intervention is to open the discussion about bodily rights and mutual respect far before adolescence. Miller *et al.* (1998) highlight that early conversations contribute to breaking down the resistance towards healthy attitudes, and at the end of the day, it becomes very easy for children to adopt these values as they get older. Parents should decide on suitable stages of development to contact children, i.e. telling kids at age five what their limits are (“your body belongs to you”) and at a later stage, gradually introducing more complicated issues such as consent and the use of technology. Research demonstrates that kids who get the same message all the time about respect are far less likely to become sexual aggressors (Espelage *et al.*, 2018). As an illustration, parents can refer to a scene from the latest movie that they have watched or to a news report about harassment, and the idea that they will not make anyone angry if they respect this rule will become a natural and familiar part of their thinking. In this way, the first “sex talk”, generally characterized by awkwardness, is avoided; instead, a natural and continuous dialogue is established over the years.

2. Actively Challenging Harmful Gender Stereotypes

Unknowingly, many societies perpetuate toxic norms under the guise of fighting them, often through phrases like ‘boys will be boys’ or ‘she was asking for it,’ which inadvertently downplay the severity of harassment. It is definitely necessary that parents consciously turn away from these stories and, on the contrary, disseminate positive messages to their children. Brank and Weisz (2004) have revealed that adolescents will be much less likely to be involved in the act of

bullying if they receive the unequivocal repudiation of it from authority figures, particularly from their parents.

To dismantle stereotypes, parents should Model egalitarian behaviour: Children learn from the observation of how parents treat each other and other people. Respecting each other in the family dynamics is a

very powerful example to give to children. Call out media tropes: If films or songs are the vehicles to glorify harassment, then the parents have to be the first ones to call it out and also provide reasons as to why such portrayals are not good. Encourage emotional expression in boys: If the male children's emotions are repressed, it probably means that they will become aggressive. If we teach boys empathy they will be less likely to harass others in order to "prove" masculinity (Way 2011).

3. Collaborative Efforts with Schools and Community Programs

Parents alone can't solve this problem. The structural support from schools and local organizations is indispensable if positive messaging is to be reinforced. The World Health Organization (2007) shares the best practice example of how' parent workshops that teach communication skills, such as how to talk about consent without shame or fear, can be instrumental in creating a climate of acceptance. Schools can also be the address for these programs to take place and at the same time, they can also bring gender sensitivity training into their courses.

Successful models include: Parent-peer support groups: The places where caregivers exchange their ideas regarding the most efficient ways to approach the discussions of difficult topics. School-based interventions: For example, psychologists can come and hold sessions with the students about romantic and friendly relations to help them better understand. Community awareness campaigns: The local leaders are those who can turn the changes of the cultural norms into reality by being there publicly when the gender equality is confirmed. Conclusion Eve-teasing is certainly not an unavoidable social evil but just a behaviour that has been learned and which can be changed through the intentional guidance of parents. Parents can become instrumental in the process of nurturing a new generation that opposes harassment by taking the initiative early, dealing with stereotypes directly, and working together with institutions. It is abundantly clear that a candid and proactive dialogue at home is among the most effective means of inhibiting sexual harassment and the establishment of a respectful atmosphere. Consequently, parents' participation should be the heart of the efforts of policymakers and educators aimed at fighting the harassment.

Conclusion

It is important to note that the widespread problem of eve-teasing, which is often treated as harmless fun, is actually the result of a lack of

gender equality. The research establishes the critical but unrecognized role of parental communication in either forming new or preventing existing harassing behaviours among adolescents. In other words, Bronfenbrenner's (1961) ecological systems theory greatly illustrates that family primarily is the most influential environment where children first learn social norms, gender roles, and interpersonal boundaries. The research in this paper convincingly shows that parents who communicate openly and honestly about aspects of sexuality, consent, and mutual respect have a strong impact against the cultural and social influences that perpetuate street harassment. The evidence reviewed shows that in some societies there are religious factors that restrict parents from discussing with their children healthy relationships and bodily autonomy. As a result, adolescents have no option but to rely on alternative sources – friends, the media, and pornography – which are full of deceptive and sexist contents. This communication void will become a breeding place for the continuity of the cases of the eve-teasing as it emerges the young people with distorted pictures of the social interaction proper. On the other hand, families that have facts that are shared with the child from an early age about gender-sensitive issues are the ones who raise children that are very much likely to exhibit respecting behaviours rather than challenging when they see the issue of harassment. The outcome of these studies points to a far-reaching significance for policy and practice. In the first place, it can be seen that the great prominence of a change of mindset is required to see eve-teasing not only as an issue that the police need to solve but also as a systemic problem that needs intervention at the level of the family. As a result, parent education programs that help caregivers to handle difficult conversations with children in an age-appropriate manner about consent and respect should be instituted extensively. Such efforts must be culturally respectful, understanding that different societies need to change the way they approach the issue of gender equality in order to be able to apply the same core principles.

Apart from that, the work highlights the significance of the joint actions of the families, the schools, and the communities. It is clear that while teachers are the first and the most lasting influence, their work should be supported through the implementation of sexuality education in schools and awareness-raising campaigns in communities. The achievement of initiatives such as the east African country's father-son dialogues exemplifies that adapted and culturally sensitive

programs can lead to a decrease in the harassment incidents, even in the conservative milieu.

In the future, the current work also points out various dimensions which are significant for further studies. In this context, the intersectional investigations that will focus on how different factors such as socioeconomic status, caste, religion, and urban-rural divides impinge on parenting practices can help us get a more detailed look at the issue. Furthermore, studies that allow following pupils who are provided with comprehensive sexual education at home for a certain period in the future may be able to offer the proof of causal relationships between the way the parent communicates and student's attitude to the cases of harassment. The exploration of as to how the communication of the mother is different from that of the father and the differential impacts of the communication patterns on children's attitudes toward gender, sexuality are thus to be considered.

For the present, the way ahead in this endeavour is through a cultural shift that sees changing the societal mindset regarding the manner of conducting family conversations about sex and the gender issues. Undoubtedly, the process of ridding the silence that had been handed over from one generation to the other will be a difficult one; however, the option of accepting street harassment as the status quo is no longer morally acceptable. As this study clearly indicates it, giving parents power to have difficult conversations with their children is not only a good thing but a necessary condition for the creation of spaces that are safer and social relations that are more equitable.

In the end, the battle against eve-teasing has to be launched from the domestic front. We can break the chain of inter-generational transmission of gender stereotypes by providing parents with the necessary means and confidence to talk openly about these issues. Indeed, legal provisions and public education campaigns are still the essential parts of anti-harassment struggle, however, the families' change of attitude and their involvement in teaching and practicing respect, consent, and gender equality is the only guarantee for sustainable transformation. It is time to acknowledge parental education as a key frontline in the wars against the eradication of eve-teasing and the creation of a culture where all the individuals can freely walk through the streets without being harassed or intimidated.