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Sexual Harassment in Greater Cairo: Effectiveness of Crowdsourced Data

Towards A Safer City

لو التحرش
سببه تأخر سن الجواز
أبو العيال
بيتحرش لهيه؟

لو التحرش
سببه الفقر
مدير الشركة
بيتحرش لهيه؟

لو التحرش
سببه الكبت الجنسي
اللي عنده سبع
سنين بيتحرش لهيه؟

لو التحرش
سببه
بيتحرش لهيه؟

لو التحرش سببه
الانفلات الأمني
أمين الشرطة
بيتحرش لهيه؟

لو التحرش سببه
الم المرأة ومفاتها
حرشوا
لغال لهيه؟

لو التحرش
بيختفي بالتطيش
بعد سنين سكوت
ما اختفاش لهيه؟

لو التحرش
سببه المرأة
بيتحرش لهيه؟

Towards A Safer City

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Additional information about the research can be obtained from the link below



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لو التجرش بسببه الكبت الجنسي
اللي عنده سبع سنين
تجرش ليه؟

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Preface

When women walk in public spaces they are often subjected to different forms of sexual harassment (ogling, verbal commentary, explicit observation, touching and occasionally assault and/or rape). Sexual harassment in public spaces is by far the most common form of sexual violence. It is a pervasive phenomenon and an everyday struggle that Egyptian women have to endure, and in many cases accept, while present in public space. It is often portrayed as a trivial matter with few or no consequences, undermining its profound impact on women's perceptions of themselves, their bodies and their role in society. Street sexual harassment is an endemic social problem that harms women both physically and psychologically and violates their basic rights to safety and mobility.

Sexual harassment is underreported all over the globe. Stigma and shame prevent many targets of sexual harassment from talking about or reporting these crimes. New technologies and social media platforms open up possibilities to overcome some of the barriers to data collection on sexual harassment. The Map, which has become one of HarassMap's methods for generating data and providing women with an alternative way to report sexual harassment, has enjoyed great success in generating debates and discussions around the issue. Moreover, it has provided a venue where both women and men can share experiences and stories as well as their reactions and positions on sexual harassment.

Finally, after two years of hard work, we are presenting the findings of our study that looks at the use of technology in addressing sexual harassment in public space. It examines the use of technologies in reporting incidents of sexual harassment and provides insights into the perceptions and experiences of Egyptian women and men on sexual harassment in Greater Cairo.

Amel Fahmy
Principle Investigator

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Amel Fahmy', with a stylized flourish extending from the bottom right.

Executive Summary

Crowdsourcing has emerged as an exciting new method for data collection yet its efficacy remains poorly understood. As part of our mission to end the social acceptability of sexual harassment in Egypt, HarassMap has conducted a study to investigate the strengths and weaknesses of crowdsourcing as a data collection method comparing it to traditional data collection techniques, such as questionnaires, focus groups and interviews. This study took place in order to draw a clearer picture of the role crowdsourced data can play both in our work and the work of others, as well as to provide insights into how sexual harassment, which has long been an issue in Egypt, is conceptualized and understood. The research was conducted in six administrative units of Greater Cairo (Helwan, Imbaba, Masr El-gedida, Masr El-qadima, Shubra El-kheima, and Shubra Masr) covering a range of socio-economic backgrounds.

Chapter one discusses in detail the socio-political context of sexual harassment in Egypt, offers a review of the previous literature on crowdsourcing, an outline of the research methodology, challenges faced and limitations of the study, as well as ethical considerations. It also presents the qualitative and quantitative analytical methods employed. The study triangulated crowdsourced, qualitative and quantitative data to provide multiple perspectives and allow for increased confidence in both internal and external data validity. The crowdsourced data was derived from reports received via our online Map while our other data came from focus group discussions, in depth interviews and questionnaires. Our sample included reports from both men and women from across Greater Cairo.

Chapter two provides quantitative analysis of the data collected based on 450 questionnaires (300 completed by women and 150 by men) distributed evenly between six administrative units of Greater Cairo. The quantitative study was carried out in each area in partnership with a local NGO who identified participants based on the study selection criteria.

Major Findings

- A majority of respondents understood “sexual harassment” to refer to more than just rape and/or sexual assault. They further perceived other behaviours, such as ogling, comments, and facial expressions to be acts of sexual harassment. Younger and more highly educated respondents generally employed more inclusive definitions.
- Women regardless of their age group experience sexual harassment.
- 95.3% of female respondents reported having been harassed in the past, most commonly during the afternoon either on the streets (81.4%) or on public transport (14.8%).
- 17.7% of respondents reported having intervened upon witnessing sexual harassment.
- Women reported reacting in various ways to being harassed, most commonly doing nothing followed by “answering back and putting him to shame”.
- Results showed that sexual harassment has a significant psychological effect on the harassed, with 81.8% of respondents reporting feeling upset or disgusted by their experience.

- 77.3% of male respondents reported who belong to different age group having perpetrated sexual harassment.
- 63.3% of respondents attributed sexual harassment to harassers being poorly raised, 48.9% to a lack of religious awareness, 34.2% to sexual repression and 34.4% to a lack of control of the media.
- Few respondents reported filing official reports, typically due to fear of a scandal. Nearly half the sample, however, considered that police stations were the best places to report harassment.
- 83.3% of the study participants said they would not report incidents of sexual harassment using an online reporting system as they did not believe it would be able to guarantee confidentiality.
- Younger respondents were more widely aware of HarassMap.
- Results showed minimal variation in rates of sexual harassment in different geographical areas.

Chapter three provides qualitative analysis of the data collected based on 48 (30 female and 18 male) focus group discussions (FGDs) conducted. The FGDs provided an open forum for participants to discuss sexual harassment, giving the researchers insight into how they perceive the phenomenon. Thematic analysis and qualitative case-oriented open coding were employed to study the data.

Major Findings

- Many participants were comfortable using the expression “**خرش جنسي**” (sexual harassment) however the term “**معاكسة**” (flirtation) was still encountered, with many men using it to refer to “minor” forms of harassment.
- Many more women than men perceived actions such as catcalls, ogling and facial expressions as harassment while male participants generally identified sexual harassment with physical harm.
- Participants frequently attributed sexual harassment to economic and political conditions, citing reasons such as “high unemployment”, “poor religious values”, “lack of manners”, “sexual frustration”, “women’s dress”, and “a lack of security and appropriate legislation”.
- Sexual harassment has been shown to have significant physical and psychological consequences.
- Most female respondents said that they rarely respond to harassment, especially when it is verbal.
- Many female respondents were willing to discuss their experiences of harassment in the FGDs, although some stated they had not discussed the issue with family members due to fears that their mobility or style of dress would subsequently be restricted.
- Participants stated they were reluctant to report harassment to the police and had not done so in the past.
- Men were generally more accepting of the idea of reporting harassment online than women, who often highlighted concerns about safety and anonymity.
- Male participants were generally reluctant to discuss in detail incidents where they had harassed women in the past, although many did admit having done so.

- Younger and more affluent female participants generally understood sexual harassment more broadly and used more gendered language. They openly discussed dominant traditions and discourses limiting the role of women and the prevalence of masculine images that normalise harassment.
- The stigma attached to speaking about or reporting harassment was a recurring theme and seems to be one of the main reasons for low reporting levels.

Chapter four provides comparisons of the narrative accounts derived from the online Map and in-depth interviews (IDIs). Further, the Map reports were taken from our online Map, cleaned and filtered to remove non-narrative reports. Information, such as where harassment occurred and the age and sex of harassers was then extracted and compared to the data from the field questionnaire.

Major Findings

- Different types of harassment were reported more commonly depending on the approach employed with forms such as catcalls and ogling most common in the IDIs and forms such as touching, physical assault and rape more frequent in the Map reports.
- The physical locations in which harassment was reported to occur were similar in both datasets, with most incidents happening on the street followed by on public transport.
- Harassers were overwhelmingly identified as men in both datasets, although in the Map data the sex of the harasser was unclear in the majority of many cases. A majority of harassers were identified as aged 10-24 in both datasets and women aged 18-24 were shown to experience harassment most often in both datasets.
- Harassment was reported as occurring at broadly similar rates in the morning, afternoon and evening (although rarely at night) in the Map data while the vast majority of cases were reported as occurring in the afternoon or evening in the field data.
- The Map narratives exhibited a recurring four part structure characterised by 1) a set-up of the scene, 2) details of the harassment itself, 3) the response of the harassed individual, and 4) the moral. Longer narratives sometimes, but not always, included this fourth element of the moral, which offered public comments on harassment in Egypt in General. This structure was not seen in the IDIs where shorter question and answer exchanges were more common than extended narratives.
- A majority of accounts in both the Map and IDI data were 1) brief and included few details of the harassment itself, 2) offered little description, 3) used a mixture of direct and indirect language, 4) tended to repeat the categories of harassment provided on the Map report form and the questionnaire.
- Explicitly sexual language was found in the Map reports than in the interviews where euphemisms and vaguer language were generally favoured.
- Details of the responses taken by the harassed were scarce in the short Map reports however in longer reports descriptions of the reaction taken were often longer than the description of the

sexual harassment event itself. In the IDIs, few details about the responses taken by the harassed were included and the harassment tended to be minimised.

- The idea that harassment is a violation of the women's rights was rarely seen in the Map data but was more common in the IDI data, although it often only emerged after probing.
- Fuller and more comprehensive reports were received via the Map than in the interviews which may suggest that people are more willing to speak about the issue online than in person. This may represent a major advantage of the Map over traditional methods. The Map offers a space where individuals can speak relatively freely and anonymously, although the Map is not a perfect method for data collection as a great deal of information was lacking in the Map data set.
- A limitation of the Map data is that it provides limited insights into differing definitions of harassment. The IDI data showed that definitions of harassment vary substantially with men broadly understanding it to refer to physical acts and women associating it more strongly with verbal harassment.
- Our findings broadly support the hypothesis that the Map is an effective tool for data collection for sensitive issues despite its limitations.

Chapter five presents study recommendations for tackling sexual harassment in Egypt, such as: the need for more qualitative research, constructing positive images around women's presence in the public space, reinforcing of the new legislation on sexual harassment, fostering collaboration between different concerned parties at the national level, promoting a more positive image of police stations as entities that provide services for all Egyptians, and reaching out to the younger population through unconventional methods, such as social media.