

PERCEPTIONS AND REALITIES: A STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF FALSE SEXUAL HARASSMENT ALLEGATIONS ON MEN'S LEGAL, SOCIAL, AND PSYCHOLOGICAL LIVES IN THE WORKPLACE

*** Dr. Abhijeet Rawal, ** Ms. Prachi Joachim Kharat & *** Ms. Diksha Nivrutti Kelatkar**

* Research Student.

Abstract:

This study examines the legal, social, and psychological impacts of false accusations of sexual harassment on men in the workplace. It considers the aftermath of such accusations, including long-term effects on stigma, reputational harm, and mental health. With a focus on a survey and primary data from sources, this paper examines how media influence public opinions regarding false charges brought at the workplace, how good workplace policies in addressing false accusations are, and which demographic characteristic affects the population's response towards these claims. The case studies illustrate the effect of using improper language in the real-world context. The research work aims to uplift inclusive and equal workplace practices, by identifying efficacious practices meant to reduce cases of false allegations at the same time ensuring fair support and justice in favour of both the accusers as well as those accused. Research focus: toward fairness and respect for all: regardless of any gender identity and sexual orientation.

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Introduction:

Sexual harassment has increasingly come to light in recent years, from work to societal settings. This transition has forced significant policy, legal, and cultural reforms designed to create safer workplaces for everyone — especially women.

Addressing real-life sexual harassment cases is important, but this focus has also led to a complex array of problems, such as claims that may not be true. Even while false allegations are less common than accurate reports, they can nonetheless have a big impact on the accused, who are mostly males, damaging their social life, legal circumstances, and mental health.

In the last couple of years, the conversations around workplace environment including about sexual harassment has been widespread. Although many initiatives are in place to build safe and equitable workplaces for all, false allegations have arisen as a troubling shadow to many of these advances. It can

have devastating legal, social, and psychological effects on them (social media are especially ruthless) because once you are condemned, the guilt remains, and even if found innocent, you will carry the burden of guilt on your back for the rest of your life.

Gender dynamics: when we talk equality as mentioned into our Indian constitution as well it's not just about equal opportunities or rights to females but also to treat everyone equally irrespective of their gender.

Societal context:

With high-profile cases and the #MeToo movement, the discussion about sexual harassment has become newly energized. Many people have spoken out and shed light on abuses that many have endured; however, society's response to the issues varies. At its highest level, sympathy for victims can drown out due process and potential ramifications for false accusations. This societal context is critical while evaluating how these perceptions of false accusations seem to develop and

assume belief beyond just empirical evidence. Public opinion easily swings around a presumption of guilt, moved by media portrayals and prevailing narratives that can result in a tragic outcome for the accused parties.

Legal Implications:

Accusations of sexual harassment carry legal consequences. If men are wrongfully accused, the effects often occur rapidly and severely, resulting in professional, financial, and reputational consequences. Suspensions from work and loss of opportunities at work are some of the results of investigation. Criminal charges can also follow, even though there is likely no conviction afterwards. More to the point, the judicial system's handling of such allegations is precarious and places some men in a powerless situation where they feel subjected to an unfair and unclear process. The current research examines the legal protection accorded to the accused with a view of whether such legal protection is enough to prevent miscarriages of justice occasioned by false allegations.

Social Effects:

Socially, the effects on the individual often extend to include the workplace as a whole; they may reflect in team dynamics, morale, and organizational culture. Men accused may be alienated, changing the nature of their professional contacts and reputations, which will be long over when the accusation is proven unfounded. This exclusion can encourage settings of distrust, fear, and silence, in which men are reluctant to interact with women at work or even report real harassment for fear of being misconstrued or wrongly accused. The paper will analyse how such social changes, resulting from a combination of fear and misunderstanding, may lead to hostile environments that might discourage constructive interactions and teamwork within the workplace.

Psychological Effects:

Perhaps the most tragic aspect of this phenomenon is

the psychological cost to those wrongly accused. Men subjected to false allegations usually suffer grave psychological challenges, which include anxiety and depression as well as deep-seated isolation. Sexual harassment carries an enormous stigma which, when accompanied by the social stigma of being called an accused perpetrator, often leads to more severe psychological consequences that are felt not only professionally but also in personal relationships. This study therefore explores the psychological implications of the experience through the application of quantitative and qualitative analysis in order to give a clear insight into its emotional impact.

Case studies:

1. The Jasleen Kaur harassment issue was born out of the 2015 accusation of sexual harassment against Sarvjeet Singh and the events that followed. Jasleen Kaur, a lady from Delhi, shared a picture of Singh on Facebook in August 2015, claiming that Sarvjeet Singh had sexually assaulted her. The post gained much attention in India after it went viral on social media. Politicians and other national celebrities are in support of Kaur speaking out against the sexual harassment and eve-teasing on social media. Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal also appreciated Kaur by saying in a tweet, "an act of bravery". Singh was taken into custody on charges of sexual harassment the following day. However, he was declared not guilty of such charges. The next day, Singh obtained bail. Singh was named "National Pervert" and "Delhi ka Darinda" (Delhi's predator) by Indian media, including national news networks. Despite the denial by Singh of harassment, he said that he and Kaur had quarrelled. His story received support when an eye witness came forth to say that Singh was innocent a few days after the event.

This occasion increased a great amount of media interest in false cases of misused laws of rape against women.

2. Techie Atul Subhash had taken his own life by suicide at his flat in Bengaluru on December 9. He released an 81-minute video and a 24-page suicide note accusing Nikita and other members of his family of false cases to get money from him and his parents. He also made an accusation against the judicial system of the country that is allegedly biased to side with women.

The incident spurred a nationwide outrage and debate regarding the misuse of laws created for protecting women against cruelty by her husband or husband's relatives.

Looking at these above-mentioned examples we can understand how laws and rights made to protect women are actually somewhere being used against men or to accuse someone. This does not mean at all that these laws are always used in a wrong way or to accuse someone or to make false allegations. It is also important to note that there might be some loopholes in these laws and policies which might give a chance to such false accusers to use these against the others working there.

It is generally seen that in most of the cases wherein the victims were accused falsely of harassments, it was mostly to take revenge, out of jealousy, any unsolved workplace conflict or due to any other personal grudges.

This also throws light on how important it is for the organization to resolve the conflicts among the employees and maintain harmony among them. The HR team must look into this matter very seriously to avoid happenings of such cases. It not only disturbs the victim as in whole but also degrades the goodwill of the company associated to it. Encouraging more team building activities, making sure that everyone is participative and giving their hand in the decision-making process and felt valued. Now when we talk about workplace environment it also leads us to prioritizing mental well-being of

everyone.

Poor mental well-being of the employees at the organisation is also one of the major reasons in increasing such cases of false harassment allegations.

Behaviour misinterpretation: Individuals who are stressed, anxious, or suffering from other mental illnesses may misinterpret the words or behaviours of others and believe they have been harassed when they are not.

Increased sensitivity: Mental illness causes patients to become very sensitive, with the ability to perceive more and be irritated over some kind of slight or insult.

Lack of clear communication: In some cases, when mental health concerns are not dealt with, individuals may not clearly express themselves; this may result in misunderstandings and miscommunication that may be mistaken for harassment.

Overreaction to vagueness: There are always grey areas in relationships and communications at work. False accusations of harassment may occur due to overreaction by someone with mental problems to unclear situations.

Retribution or manipulation: Unfortunately, others may even exploit a coworker's mental well-being for leverage or influence by using complaints of harassment as an act of retribution or manipulation.

Lack of resources and support: Workers may feel left alone and unsupported if their mental health concerns are not attended to, thereby increasing stress and anxiety levels, thus resulting in false harassment claims.

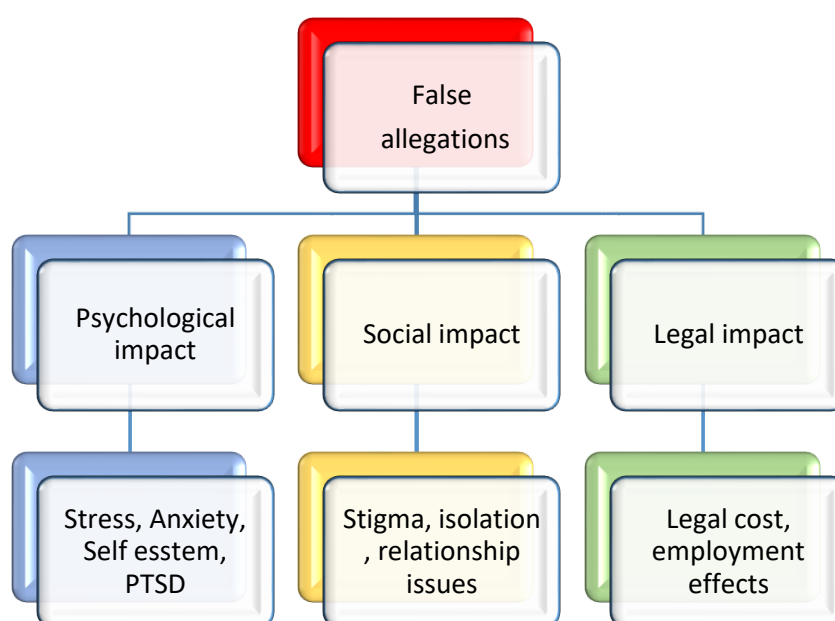
Power dynamics: In some instances, an imbalance of power in the workplace will be a contributing factor to unfounded claims of harassment. A subordinate may, for example, accuse a superior of

harassment to gain authority or avoid accountability.

Laws and workplace policies must be clear and unbiased to all. The root thought or believe behind any law or policy is to protect the people against

malpractices and make everyone feel safe. When such incidents of false accusations occur at any workplace it creates an atmosphere of fear among the other genders working there, making the entire point of creating these laws and policies invalid.

Conceptual framework:



Research methodology:

- **Research Design :** Descriptive method was used for this study.
For primary data source- questionnaire method was used while different articles, research papers, journals and data from various websites was used to gather secondary data.
- **Data Source :** For primary data source- questionnaire method was used while different articles, research papers, journals and data from various websites was used to gather secondary data.
- **Sample Size :** 44 Respondents
- **Sample Area :** Kalyan and Dombivli

Objectives:

1. The objective of the study is to investigate how false sexual harassment charges are portrayed in the media and how this affects public perceptions of males who are accused of sexual harassment.

2. to assess how well the current workplace policies and procedures handle false accusations while defending the accused's rights.
3. to examine how men of different ages, races, and occupations have dealt with false accusations and the consequences that have followed.
4. to provide best practices and prevention methods that organisations may apply to reduce false accusations and guarantee that accusers and accused are treated fairly.

Hypotheses:

- (H0) There is no relevant difference in how the media has portrayed false charges of sexual harassment and how the portrayal affects perceptions of males that are accused of sexual harassment in the public domain.

- (H1) There is a great distinction in how false sexual harassment charges are reported in the media, and this reporting has a great impact on public perception of males accused of sexual harassment: the way in which males who are accused of sexual harassment are viewed, as if the accused males are guilty or less credible.
- (H0) Current workplace policies and procedures are unable to effectively address false accusations against the rights of the accused.
- (H1) Current workplace policies and procedures effectively address false accusations against the rights of the accused.
- (H0) Men of different ages, races, and occupations do not face major differences in the way they respond to false accusations and their subsequent consequences.
- (H1) Men of different ages, races, and occupations face major differences in the way they respond to false accusations and their subsequent consequences.
- (H0) Implementing best practices and prevention methods does not have a great result in the diminution of false accusations or a fair treatment accorded to the accusers as well as those accused in organizations.
- (H1) Best practices and prevention methods significantly decrease false accusations as well as ensure an improvement in fair treatment between both accusers and the accused within organizations.

Limitations of the study:

- This context is extremely complex in relation to sexual harassment allegations. In fact, legal contexts between different jurisdictions might differ considerably. Therefore, legal insight may be unable to cover universally.

- Sample size and diversity might be too little to represent adequately the population the study is to be generalized out to. Not only that but if the population sampled lacks general diversity in all key demographics such as age, race, socioeconomic background or industry type and so on; the findings lack generalizability.
- Gender dynamics at workplace is a huge concept and everyone's perception and opinion on it varies limiting the specification.

Review of literature:

Charlie Huntingtona, Alan D. Berkowitzb, and Lindsay M. Orchowskic. "False accusations of sexual assault: Prevalence, misperceptions, and implications for prevention work with men and boys." 2022.

This chapter reviews literature on false accusations and suggests the ways in which that knowledge might be incorporated into prevention curricula. Research has demonstrated that men and boys commonly worry about false accusation, driven by misinformation and exaggeration about how common false accusations are. Such misperceptions can be altered through proper education, thus making support for victims more acceptable and prevention efforts easier to advocate and reduce retaliatory behaviors. Increased revelations on sexual assault resulting from social media and the popularity of #MeToo, in addition to this, cases become public with more accusations being witnessed (Modrek & Chakalov, 2019).

Lindsay Orchowski, Katherine W. Bogen, and Alan Berkowitz. "False Reporting of Sexual Victimization: Prevalence, Definitions, and Public Perceptions". 2021.

According to research, false reports of sexual violence might be associated with certain psychological variables. A study of 357 stalking incidents in the UK and the Netherlands reveals that 70% of complainants who reported falsely had delusions (Sheridan & Blaauw, 2004). Mental health disorders such as

factitious disorder and Munchausen's syndrome, which are characterized by hyperbolic and fantastical accounts, may also be associated with false reporting (Brown & Schefflin, 1999; Hazelwood & Burgess, 2016). False reporting can also stem from personal problems or emotional reward motivations such as attention-seeking or sympathy (De Zutter et al., 2018; McNamara et al., 2012). According to Lonsway et al. (2018), a few reports can also align with much publicized and highlighted crimes of the community and media.

Claire E. Ferguson, John M. Malouff. “Assessing Police Classifications of Sexual Assault Reports: A Meta-Analysis of False Reporting Rates.” 2016.

A meta-analysis was conducted to determine the prevalence of confirmed false reports of sexual assault to law enforcement. Seven studies that utilized trained assessors or researchers to assess sexual assault cases to determine false reporting rates were included in the study. Overall, the meta-analysis found 5.2% (95% CI: 3.0%, 8.9%) of confirmed fraudulent reports. The heterogeneity of rates between individual trials could indicate potential modifiers. However, moderators that were not statistically significant include inter-rater reliability, geographic location, whether data other than police reports are included, and year of publication. The rate overall, which includes equivocal situations, would be higher than the 5.2% of proven false reports. This meta-analysis shows that, although still relatively low in comparison to the entire number of complaints, confirmed false allegations indeed occur at a considerable rate.

Heather Hensman Kettrey, Summer Quinn, Claire Waddell, Jadarius Evans, Cadi Imbody, Fabii Nunez-Garcia. “A Woman, With No Evidence, Can Send Any

Man to Jail Whenever She Wants”: Men’s Rights Activists’ Digital Narratives of a Culture of False Rape Allegations. 2024.

Despite the fact that there is proof that men are more likely to be raped than falsely accused, MRAs often deny the existence of rape culture. Sites such as /MensRights on Reddit are full of conversations about false rape charges. In reaction to what they perceive as threats to their privilege, MRAs develop an "aspirational oppression," a "culture of false rape allegations," according to the term used by this research. This co-opted victimhood is for the reestablishment of their equality and justice perceptions. In response to these narratives, one must be able to identify the misogynistic roots of such discourses and hold systemic discussions about gender.

Data analysis:

Data analysis is simply taking a look at, cleaning, transforming, and analysing information to discover trends and ascertain useful information in aid of decision-making. Data to be analysed must have been collected from different sources and cleaned out to remove any mistakes or inconsistencies. Patterns and organization of the data must also be determined, and statistical techniques and visualization software become very useful for verification or proving a hypothesis and communicating effectively and realistically the outcome. In addition, complex methods such as machine learning and predictive modelling may be employed to predict results and inform strategic decisions. Data analysis is a very important tool that companies across most industries employ to solve problems, enhance performance, and make better decisions.

Anova Analysis:

Table 1. What a false sexual harassment charges are portrayed in the media and how this affects public perceptions of males who are accused of sexual harassment.

Anova: Single Factor						
SUMMARY						
<i>Groups</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>Sum</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Variance</i>		
PA	44	92	2.090909	0.735729		
v02	44	118	2.681818	0.966173		
ANOVA						
<i>Source of Variation</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>F crit</i>
Between Groups	7.681818	1	7.681818	9.027329	0.003484	3.951882
Within Groups	73.18182	86	0.850951		significant	
Total	80.86364	87				

The ANOVA results are seen to be significantly different between the two groups. This is from the F-value of 9.027 greater than the F-crit at 3.952 and P-value of 0.003. This further supports the hypothesis that media representations of false sexual harassment charges tend to differ between the two conditions in the perceptions of public of the accused males. That is, males in the v02 condition have a significantly higher average, 2.68, whereas those in the PA condition averaged 2.09.

Table 2. how well the current workplace policies and procedures handle false accusations while defending the accused's rights.

Anova: Single Factor						
SUMMARY						
<i>Groups</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>Sum</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Variance</i>		
PA	44	92	2.090909	0.735729		
v04	44	143	3.25	0.843023		
ANOVA						
<i>Source of Variation</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>F crit</i>
Between Groups	29.55682	1	29.55682	37.44325	2.7E-08	3.951882
Within Groups	67.88636	86	0.789376		significant	
Total	97.44318	87				

ANOVA table indicates the difference of opinion between two groups, namely, PA and v04 in terms of addressing false accusations. The null hypothesis is rejected, as $F = 37.44$, which is $> F\text{-crit} = 3.95$. $P = 2.7E-08$. Higher the average value indicates that people have a better opinion that policies addressing false accusation can be properly made in workplaces on the basis of group v04 (3.25) in comparison with the group PA (2.09).

Table 3. how men of different ages, races, and occupations have dealt with false accusations and the consequences that have followed.

Anova: Single Factor						
SUMMARY						
<i>Groups</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>Sum</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Variance</i>		
PA	44	92	2.090909	0.735729		
V06	44	156	3.545455	1.41649		
ANOVA						
<i>Source of Variation</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>F crit</i>
Between Groups	46.54545	1	46.54545	43.25344	3.57E-09	3.951882
Within Groups	92.54545	86	1.07611		significant	
Total	139.0909	87				

The differences between the two groups, PA and V06, in terms of whether or not men react better to false accusations, are significantly different. Results: The F-value is much higher than the F-crit ($43.25 > 3.95$), and the P-value of 3.57E-09 is highly significant. With a mean score of 3.55 for V06 and 2.09 for PA, it shows that the men in the V06 group believe that there is a significant difference in how men from different demographics react to false allegations and what they receive as consequences. Hence, demographic factors indeed influence how people react to such allegations.

Tabel 4. to provide best practices and prevention methods that organisations may apply to reduce false accusations and guarantee that accusers and accused are treated fairly.

Anova: Single Factor						
SUMMARY						
<i>Groups</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>Sum</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Variance</i>		
PG	44	68	1.545455	0.2537		
V08	44	153	3.477273	1.790169		
ANOVA						
<i>Source of Variation</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>F crit</i>

Between Groups	82.10227	1	82.10227	80.34006	5.85E-14	3.951882
Within Groups	87.88636	86	1.021934		significant	
Total	169.9886	87				

The ANOVA analysis shows that a difference is indeed significant concerning the impact of best practices in reducing false accusations and fair treatment between groups PG and V08. The F-value of 80.34 is much higher than the F-crit of 3.95, and the P-value of 5.85E-14 confirms this with a statistically significant result. From the above, V08 with an average of 3.48 is much higher than PG at 1.55, thereby proving the hypothesis that the effect of best practices lowers false accusations and increases organizational fairness.

Scope of Study:

- Investigating the legal implications and challenges experienced by men accused of sexual harassment, including those concerning due process, judicial findings, and lasting impact on their reputation in court and at the workplace.
- How do these false accusations impact the society in bringing shame, disrupting personal and professional relationships, and workplace issues impacting how people think or feel about the guilt or innocence. Examining the repercussions of the accusation on the mental health of males, especially psychological trauma, emotional suffering, and long-term effects on esteem, welfare, and productivity is the third step in assessing psychological impacts.
- Workplace System Assessment-Review rules governing the place, work culture and systems of support so that understand their role to avoid false cases and ensure balanced fair treatment and that should be made to be the same for complainers and victims alike.

Conclusion:

This study would thus aim at developing a better-balanced perception of the hardship experienced by the victim and that experienced by the accused in order to contribute to an enlightened discussion over the consequences that come with baseless harassment or

assault allegations at the workplace. With regard to the study's objective, our goal is to challenge dominant narratives, gain better insights into complex human interaction dynamics, and bring forward a work culture of fair respect and understanding for all stakeholders by investigating both legal, social, and psychological impacts that are intermixed. By the findings of such an investigation, we would promote further discussion in sexual harassment matters and contribute towards more inclusive remedy construction which consider the needs of all parties affected.

Summary of findings:

Wrongful accusations of sexual harassment can bring very serious legal cases against men, affecting their reputation as well as work issues; not to mention even if they come out to be innocent, they carry stigma along for a pretty long time in their lives.

Extreme social stigmatization, challenging professional relationships, and peer isolation in all its manifestations are all felt by accused guys. These effects linger long after accusations are proved false and touch their personal as well as professional lives. Psychologically speaking, the anxiety, hopelessness, and low self-esteem make the men feel hopeless and miserable. This psychological torture not only hampers their mental well-being but also their performance at work.

The present labour laws generally deal with the bogus

cases in a wrong manner and offer insufficient safety to the victim. Always remember protection and justice.

The study focuses on the importance of creating a just and balanced work environment by bringing out the multi-dimensional impacts of false claims on men's life.

Suggestions:

1. Workplace standards: Establish clear, unambiguous standards on false charges while showing equal care for accusers and those accused. Design appropriate procedures to conduct an investigation that emphasize secrecy and impartiality as top priorities.
2. Support Systems. Be supportive to the accusers who happen to be harassers, help them with lawyer's and guidance support, ensuring their complete access to available mental resources and legal counsellors in order not to subject them further to financial suffering and psychological distresses.
3. Promote Organizational Accountability: Ensure that all the stakeholders are accountable for their own actions to develop a sense of justice and transparency in the organization. Review and update the policies at the workplace on a regular basis to reflect new issues and challenges.
4. Balance between Justice and Prevention: Safeguard the rights of the accused with preventive strategies in mediation and a dispute resolution process. Ensure the accused and the accusers get equal protection under law and fair treatment.

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