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Experiences of Sexual Harassment among Young Women in Rural Bankura: A Sociological Analysis of Sarenga Block

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Abstract: One important type of gender-based violence that has an impact on women's independence, safety, and dignity in society is sexual harassment. The experiences of young women in Sarenga Block in the Bankura district of West Bengal with regard to sexual harassment are being investigated. Understanding the nature, prevalence, awareness, and sociocultural aspects of sexual harassment in rural settings is the study's primary goal. The study is based on primary data that was gathered through structured interviews and surveys from fifty respondents. The results show that the most frequent types of harassment that young women encounter are verbal abuse and inappropriate gestures, which are followed by physical contact and internet harassment. The most common places for harassment to occur are public transportation, marketplaces, and educational institutions. Additionally, the survey shows that respondents' knowledge of legal rights and support networks such as police assistance, helplines, and non-governmental organizations is comparatively poor. Additionally, a number of social, cultural, and economic factors—such as patriarchal societal norms, lack of education, economic dependence, insufficient security in public places, and fear of social stigma—have an impact on the prevalence and underreporting of sexual harassment. According to the study's findings, tackling sexual harassment in rural areas necessitates raising awareness, bolstering institutional support, enhancing public safety protocols, and advancing gender equality. Such programs are necessary to guarantee that young women in rural communities live in a more secure and encouraging environment.

Key-words: Gender-Based Violence; Patriarchal Social Norms; Sexual Harassment; Social Stigma.

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1. Introduction

Sexual harassment is widely acknowledged as one of the most prevalent types of gender-based violence impacting women worldwide. It means any unwanted sexual behaviour, like inappropriate comments, gestures, words, or physical touch that hurts someone's dignity, safety, or personal space.