

GENDER HARASSMENT IN DIGITAL SPACES

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This edition of the CMGI newsletter looks into the emerging patterns of technology-facilitated harassment, the manosphere's growing influence in online misogyny, and the shifting contours of workplace harassment in the increasing virtualization of contemporary work. Additionally, we introduce our process flow and timeline chart, which outlines the Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) procedure under the POSH Act. This chart provides a step-by-step guide to reporting incidents, options for conciliation, investigation timelines, and the submission of inquiry reports with recommendations.



Source: <https://nrgs.international/stories/technology-isnt-slowing-down-so-either-cao-w/>

UNDERSTANDING TECHNOLOGY FACILITATED HARASSMENT

One of the most unsettling cases in recent memory with regard to tech-based harassment is that of Gisèle Pelicot, whose husband used online platforms to enable years of abuse. The case has become emblematic of the ways digital spaces can facilitate and exacerbate sexual harassment. At the center of this growing crisis is the rise of the manosphere—an umbrella term for online communities promoting misogynistic ideologies. These spaces have fueled a dangerous culture of digital harassment, contributing to real-world violence and forcing urgent conversations about platform accountability.

We see the rise of what experts call technology-facilitated abuse—a form of violence that leverages digital tools to harass, manipulate, or exert control. Far from being limited to isolated online interactions, these behaviors reflect deeper power imbalances and systemic patterns of gender-based violence. According to the Women's Media Center, technology-facilitated abuse includes cyberstalking, online defamation, non-consensual image sharing, and digital surveillance—tactics that have become disturbingly commonplace.

A 2024 report from the UN Secretary-General underscores three major factors driving this landscape: a growing backlash against women's rights, the rapid expansion of artificial intelligence, and the increasing influence of the manosphere. In this context, sexual harassment and stalking remain the most frequently reported forms of digital abuse, while image-based violations, relentless messaging, and location tracking have become routine threats.

These tactics blur the line between online and offline harm. Smartphones, social media, chatrooms, GPS tracking, and video streaming platforms have all become tools of control, allowing abusers to extend their reach far beyond physical spaces. And as technology evolves, so do the methods of abuse, raising difficult questions about legal protections, corporate responsibility, and the societal structures that allow such behaviors to persist.

Forms of Technology-Facilitated Abuse:

- **Unauthorized Access & Control:** Perpetrators may hack into accounts, lock victims out of devices, or steal private information, restricting autonomy.
- **Impersonation & Defamation:** Fake profiles on social media, dating apps, or adult content sites can be used to humiliate, harass, or damage reputations.
- **Persistent Digital Harassment:** Unwanted messages, explicit content, and online threats—via texts, emails, social media, or gaming platforms—are common tactics.
- **Surveillance & Tracking:** Spyware, GPS tracking, hidden cameras, and keylogging software can be used to monitor and control victims' movements and activities.

Cyberstalking & Online Harassment:

- **Catfishing:** Deceptive online identities are used to manipulate or exploit individuals.
- **Doxxing:** The public release of personal information to intimidate or endanger someone.
- **Image-Based Abuse:** The sharing or threatening of non-consensual intimate images.
- **Trolling & Digital Shaming:** Deliberate provocation, humiliation, or dissemination of damaging content.

As work environments become increasingly virtualized, workplace harassment has also adapted to digital spaces. The erosion of clear boundaries between professional and private spheres in remote and hybrid work models has not only facilitated new modes of harassment but has also complicated institutional mechanisms for redress and accountability.

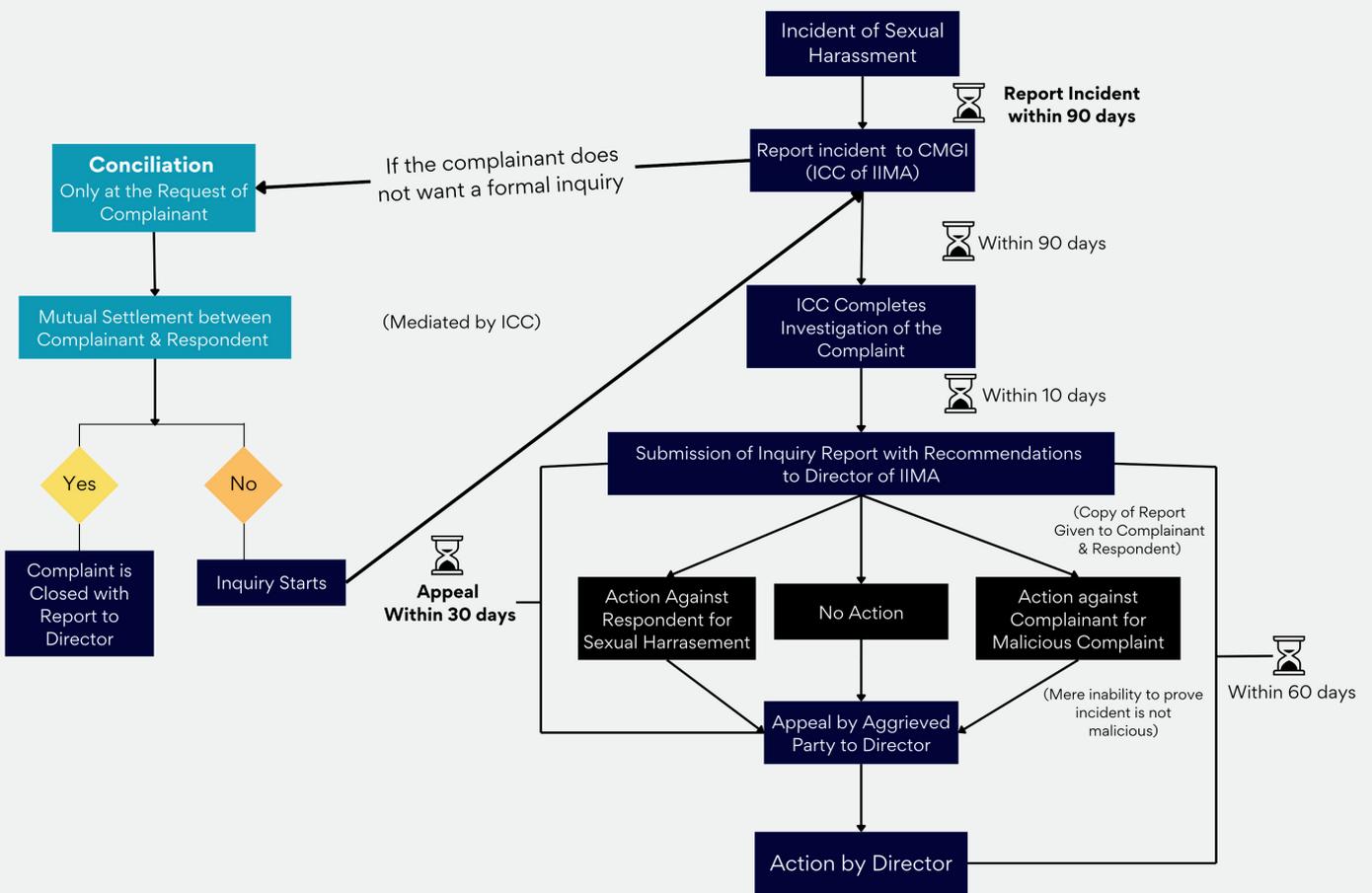
Protection of Women from Sexual Harassment (POSH) Act offers a critical legal framework to address these challenges, extending its definition of "workplace" beyond physical offices to include digital workspaces. This means that unwelcome sexual advances, explicit messages, or any other form of online misconduct tied to professional settings fall within its scope.

The intersection of technology and gender-based violence is not new, but its scale and complexity are growing at an alarming rate. The question now is whether lawmakers, tech companies, and society at large can keep up—and whether the systems designed to protect individuals will adapt quickly enough to meet the evolving threats of the digital world.

A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO THE ICC’S COMPLAINT PROCESS UNDER THE POSH ACT

The chart below, prepared by Ramesh P. (PGP 2023–2025 batch), breaks down the Internal Complaints Committee's process under the POSH Act, offering a clear timeline for reporting, investigation, and resolution. It details the steps complainants can take, the role of the committee, and the possible outcomes.

Internal Complaints Committee (CMGI) Under POSH Act Process Flow and Timeline



The monthly newsletter from the Committee for Managing Gender Issues (CMGI) is an attempt to initiate conversations on discrimination, gender bias, sexual harassment, and related issues. We would love to have the community participate. Please reach out to Geetika Sharma at geetikas@iima.ac.in for queries, submissions, and/or feedback.

If you feel you have been subjected to sexual harassment or if you would like to make any suggestions regarding curbing sexual harassment or gender bias on campus, please reach out to us at: Email: chr-cmgi@iima.ac.in Phone: 97129 15533 Please note that any communication with the CMGI is strictly confidential.