

WHEN WE NAME IT

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The language we use shapes the way we understand harm, accountability, and justice. Many forms of abuse were historically silenced because they had no name, or because the words available minimized the severity of what survivors experienced. This month's edition is devoted to an illustrated glossary of terms that are central to conversations around sexual harassment and abuse. Some of these terms may seem commonsensical to readers, while others are concepts and definitions that survivors, activists, and communities have brought to attention in recent years. Learning them can help us recognize sexual harassment and challenge environments of silence and complacency.



Core Terms

- **Harassment** – Unwanted behavior that demeans, humiliates, or intimidates, often in workplaces, schools, or public spaces.
- **Sexual Harassment** – Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal/physical conduct of a sexual nature.
- **Consent** – Freely given, informed, enthusiastic, and reversible agreement to engage in sexual activity.
- **Assault** – Any non-consensual sexual contact.
- **Rape** – Non-consensual penetration, often involving coercion, force, or inability to give consent.

Grooming & Manipulation

- **Grooming** – A deliberate process of gaining trust to exploit someone sexually.
- **Gaslighting** – Psychological manipulation that makes victims doubt their perception of abuse.

Types of Harassment & Abuse

- **Verbal Harassment** – Comments, jokes, or remarks of a sexual or degrading nature.
- **Non-Verbal Harassment** – Staring, gestures, displaying sexual content without consent.
- **Physical Harassment** – Unwanted touching or advances.
- **Cyber Harassment** – Abuse through digital platforms (stalking, threats, revenge porn).
- **Stalking** – Repeated unwanted attention that causes fear or distress.
- **Catcalling** – Unwanted sexual remarks, often in public spaces.
- **Flashing/Exhibitionism** – Exposing oneself without consent.
- **Voyeurism** – Watching or recording others without their knowledge or consent.
- **Non-Consensual Pornography** – Sharing private images or videos without consent.

Structural & Workplace-Specific Terms

- **Quid Pro Quo** – Sexual favors demanded in exchange for opportunities, benefits, or avoiding punishment.
- **Hostile Work Environment** – Workplace atmosphere made abusive through repeated harassment.
- **Retaliation** – Punishment for reporting harassment or abuse.
- **Power Imbalance** – Unequal dynamics (teacher/student, boss/employee) that create vulnerability.

Victimization & Survivorhood

- **Victim-Blaming** – Holding survivors responsible for the abuse they experienced.
- **Survivor** – A person who has experienced sexual violence (alternative to “victim”).

- **Disclosure** – When a survivor shares their experience.
- **Re-traumatization** – Experiencing trauma again, often triggered by insensitive responses.
- **Secondary Victimization** – Harm caused by authorities, institutions, or communities when survivors seek help (e.g., disbelief, stigma).

How Culture Fuels Harassment

- **Rape Culture** – Social norms that normalize or trivialize sexual violence.
- **Slut-Shaming** – Criticizing individuals (usually women) for their sexual behavior or clothing.
- **Objectification** – Reducing someone to their body or sexual function.
- **Microaggressions** – Subtle, everyday acts of sexism or harassment.

Resistance & Survivorhood

- **Accountability** – The process of holding perpetrators and institutions responsible for enabling, ignoring, or covering up harassment.
- **Intersectionality** – A framework for understanding how overlapping systems of power such as race, caste, class, gender, sexuality, and disability shape people's experiences of harassment and abuse.
- **Allyship** – Active, intentional support from colleagues or community members who challenge harassment, stand with survivors, and work to transform workplace culture.

The monthly newsletter from the [Committee for Managing Gender Issues \(CMGI\)](#) is an attempt to initiate conversations on sexual harassment. 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 on campus, please reach out to us at: Email: chr-cmgi@iima.ac.in. Please note that any communication with the CMGI is strictly confidential.