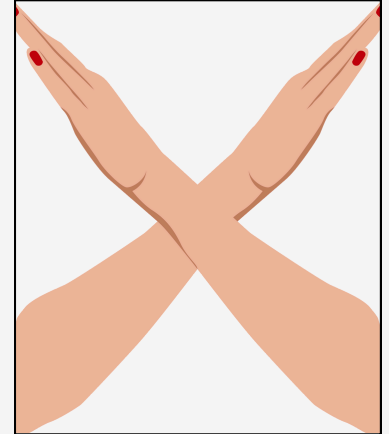


UNDERSTANDING QUEER EXPERIENCES OF HARASSMENT

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At CMGI, we remain committed to creating a campus where everyone feels safe, respected, and included. Misunderstandings about harassment, especially when viewed through a limited gender binary, can make it harder for survivors to speak up. This edition addresses these misconceptions and brings visibility to the experiences of queer individuals.



Myths & Facts About Queerness and Harassment

By Anurag Sarkar and Imnasangla Jamir, members of Mosaic

Discussions around harassment often unfold within a limited framework - that of a male perpetrator and a female victim. This binary lens, while pervasive, overlooks the experiences of those who exist outside it. Queer individuals, whose identities and orientations challenge conventional gender norms, face unique forms of harassment that are frequently dismissed, misunderstood, or rendered invisible. A truly inclusive community requires us to confront these misconceptions and recognise that harassment is not just about gender or sexuality; it is about power, consent, and respect.

One of the most persistent myths is that harassment only occurs in male-female contexts. In reality, harassment can and does occur across all gender identities and sexual orientations. It may take the form of same-sex harassment, homophobic or transphobic slurs, non-consensual outing, or intrusive questions about one's body or private life.

For queer people, harassment is often a direct attack on their identity. Examples of this can include the deliberate misgendering of a person, even after they have actively expressed their pronouns, or deadnaming (using someone's birth name), which refers to calling a Transgender or Non-binary person by the name they used before their transition rather than their chosen name.

Harassment can also take the form of invasive and persistent questioning that reduces them to objects of curiosity. “But how do you know you’re asexual?” or “Are you sure you’re not just uncertain?” - such remarks invalidate their self-understanding and lived experience.

Sometimes harassment manifests in the form of a threat to expose someone's identity, by holding it hostage and threatening to reveal it to family, professors, or employers who might be hostile.

And for many, it is the danger of simply existing in public, the constant stares, the slurs murmured on the streets, just because they don’t conform to the rigid norms set by society.

Another common misconception is that queer people are less likely to face harassment because they are a minority. On the contrary, studies show that LGBTQIA+ individuals face disproportionately higher rates of sexual, verbal, and psychological harassment. Yet these experiences remain underreported, not because they are rare, but because queer individuals frequently fear disbelief, judgment, or forced outing.

Equally harmful is the belief that same-sex harassment is merely “banter” or confusion about boundaries. Such attitudes trivialize the survivor’s experience and reinforce the idea that harassment depends on the genders involved rather than on the absence of consent. Dismissing queer harassment as a misunderstanding further normalizes unequal treatment and weakens accountability structures.

So how can allies help? This is where we all can come in.

The first step is to listen and believe them. Peers and faculty can contribute by listening without judgment, respecting privacy, learning about queer experiences, using inclusive language, and intervening when they witness harassment or discrimination.

When a queer person tells you what they are experiencing, don’t try to brush it away; instead, validate what they are saying. This also entails an active commitment to self-education through reading and reflection to better understand the experiences and challenges they navigate.

Further, it is also crucial to speak up. If you hear someone “joking” about pronouns or using a slur, say something. Silence in such moments can feel like you are siding with the harasser, to the person being targeted.

Each of these actions signals that queer individuals belong and that their safety and dignity matter. Creating a culture of allyship requires awareness, empathy, and the willingness to challenge one’s own assumptions.

At its core, the issue of queer harassment reminds us that safety is not simply the absence of harm - it is the active presence of respect and understanding. Queer individuals should not have to translate or justify their experiences to be believed. Recognising that harassment can affect anyone is not merely about inclusion; it is about affirming a shared commitment to equality and humanity.

If you or someone you know has experienced harassment or needs to talk, confidential support is available. Members of the IIMA community can contact **CMGI** at **cmgi@iima.ac.in** or **Mosaic** at **mosaic@iima.ac.in**.

Please note that if Mosaic receives a harassment-related complaint, it is required to inform CMGI. Mosaic does not independently decide on the course of action in such cases.

Let us work together to make safety, sensitivity, and respect shared responsibilities rather than privileges. For additional support, you can also find a list of people to reach out to here: **[Support Contacts](#)**.

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.
