

#Metoo Movement: Backlash or Rhetoric

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Abstract

Any form of sexual assault stems from the intersection of power, patriarchal structure and gender. While different countries take different measures to tackle cases of sexual assault, cases continue to rise like a pandemic. This study is a revisit to the # Metoo Movement that took the catbird seat in 2017 after Tarana Burke founded it in 2006. Although the #Metoo movement started with women calling out names of abusers, the movement was not confined to female voices alone. It helped expose the cases of sexual abuse across all genders. Taking examples of various instances of sexual assaults against gender across societies, committed under the bulwarks of power, domination and (or) patriarchy, and the newly emergent ways of exploitation of gender, such as Catfishing and Love Jihad, this communication aims to probe whether the #Metoo movement has faced backlash or is simply a rhetoric or both.

Keywords: #Metoo Movement; Gender; Gender Justice Movement; Power; Patriarchal Structure; Sexual Assault

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Introduction

“ ‘Me too’ was just two words; it's two magic words that galvanized the world.”

Tarana Burke (Founder, ‘me too.’ International)

(Gender Justice Movement, ‘Me Too’ Global Movement, n.d.)

The aforesaid statement was that of Tarana Burke, the founder of the #MeToo Movement. Burke, an African American civil rights activist and herself a victim of rape and sexual assaults as a child and a teenager, launched the #MeToo Movement in 2006 to help and empathise with the victims of sexual assaults (Biography, 2018). However, the #MeToo juggernaut remained restricted to the USA alone (Table 1) and that too in the geographical frame of New York until 15 October 2017, when the actress Alyssa Milano took the phrase to the social media platform Twitter (now X) at 9:21 pm requesting those who have been victims of sexual assaults at some point to reply to her tweet as #MeToo (Milano, 2017). The idea of this hashtag (Figure 1) was to get a sense of the enormity of the problem of sexual assaults that impacts and traumatises millions of genders every day. Alyssa Milano’s tweet received 20.4K Retweets, 17.4K Quote

Tweets, and 47.5K Likes. Soon, the bandwagon of naming and shaming started on various social media platforms, transcending various geographical spaces and taking multiple names in different countries. For example, #NiUnaMenos (Not One [Woman] Less) in Argentina (De Maio, 2023); #米兔 (translated as “rice bunny,” pronounced as “mi tu”) in China; #uykularinkacsin (may you lose sleep) in Turkey; #Sex4Grades in Kenya (De Maio, 2023; Gender Justice Movement, ‘Me Too’ Global Movement, n.d.); #MetooInceste in France (Mondragon et al., 2022); #Ana_kaman in the Arab world (Nicolaou & Smith, 2019) but with one common agenda— to make people aware about the scale of the problem of sexual assaults (Milano, 2017; see also, Bhattacharyya, 2018). Table 1 illustrates the timeline of #MeToo following the publication of the article titled *Harvey Weinstein Paid Off Sexual Harassment Accusers for Decades* in The New York Times on 05 October 2017. Harvey Weinstein, one of the hegemon in Hollywood, was accused of a series of sexual assault complaints, which was supposedly one of the worst-kept secrets until the time it was exposed (Nicolaou & Smith, 2019; Sanction, 2022; Wunsch, 2018).

Me too.

Suggested by a friend: "If all the women who have been sexually harassed or assaulted wrote 'Me too.' as a status, we might give people a sense of the magnitude of the problem."

Figure 1: Twitter post of Alyssa Milano on 15 October 2017 at 9:21 pm
Source: Milano, 2017

Table1: The Key Events of #Metoo Allegations and Activism	
17 October 2014	Accusations of rape against the retired American comedian, actor, and media personality William Henry Cosby Jr. resurfaced, and investigations were followed. However, on 30 June 2021, Pennsylvania's Supreme Court judgement freed him from all convictions of sexual assault.
06 October 2015	Ashley Judd wrote an essay in <i>Variety</i> narrating her tale of sexual harassment in a hotel room by the powerful media boss Harvey Weinstein.
21 July 2016	On 06 July, the chairperson of Fox News, Roger Ailes, was accused of a string of sexual harassment allegations of several women at the company. He resigned from his office on 21 July, declining the charges. However, he passed away in May 2017, so his case remains unsettled.
07 October 2016	Then-presidential candidate Donald Trump boasted of sexual crime, which was secretly taped in 2005 on the set of <i>Access Hollywood</i> and published in <i>The Washington Post</i> .
21 January 2017	On the first day of President Donald Trump's office, the Women's March was organised in Washington, D.C., to support gender equality and civil rights, and millions participated. The Women's March was not restricted to Washington D.C. alone; there were protests in cities worldwide, and it is reckoned to be the largest single-day protest in the history of the USA.
19 February 2017	Susan Fowler, an employee of Uber, published an essay of around 3,000 words discussing the toxic work culture inclusive of frequent occurrences of sexual assaults and misconduct. Her essay triggered the resignation of Travis Kalanick, the co-founder and CEO of Uber, and 20 other Uber employees, contributing to the toxic work culture. Many other CEOs of Silicon Valley faced a similar fate.
01 April 2017	After Roger Ailes, anchor Bill O'Reilly of Fox News faced charges of misconduct and sexual harassment by five women. While President Trump defended O'Reilly, advertisers began dropping out, pushing him out of his position.
05 October 2017	Cases of sexual harassment by Harvey Weinstein went viral after Ashley Judd, a former Weinstein Company employee, along with other actresses, re-narrated their tales of sexual assault, which, as stated above, was published in <i>The New York Times</i> .
08 October 2017	The Weinstein Company fired Harvey Weinstein
10 October 2017	13 more women came forward to narrate cases of sexual harassment or assault at the hands of Harvey Weinstein, which was published in an article by Ronan Farrow in the <i>New Yorker</i> . Farrow went on to publish another story in the <i>New Yorker</i> on 06 November, as to how Harvey Weinstein employed agents of ex-Mossad to spy on women for fear of publicly condemning him for his ostensible actions.
12 October 2017	The head of Amazon Studios, Roy Price, faced suspension following the accusation of sexual harassment by producer Isa Hackett, who first filed charges in 2015. Price, however, resigned on 17 October.
16 October 2017	#Metoo Movement took centre stage on X and spread like wildfire following Alyssa Milano's tweet on 15 October 2017 (Figure 1).
18 October 2017	Following the accusation of sexual harassment against the gymnastics doctor Larry Nassar by gymnast McKayla Maroney, more than 150 women came forward with similar stories. Accused of seven counts of felony first-degree

	sexual misconduct for decades, in January 2018, Judge Rosemarie Aquilina sent Nassar, after a seven-day hearing in Ingham County Court, to 40-175 years in prison.
19 October 2017	#Metoo Movement further let the cat out of the bag, affecting many industries and small businesses. Vox Media's editorial director, Lockhart Steele, was fired for sexual misconduct. Allegations of sexual misconduct were also raised against several high profiles—John Besh (the restaurateur), James Toback (director), Terry Richardson (fashion photographer), Knight Landesman (Artforum publisher) and Mark Halperin (journalist). The list of accusations of sexual misconduct continued to flow, including high-ranking politicians like George W. Bush, Bill Clinton and Donald Trump, celebrities and CEOs. On 11 December, Mario Batali, the celebrity chef, admitted and apologised for the harassment claims and simultaneously left his show and restaurants. Following the testimonies of models regarding sexual exploitations published in the New York Times in January 2018, the two influential photographers of the fashion industry— Mario Testino and Bruce Weber, were debarred from working with different fashion magazines.
29 October 2017	Using the online magazine BuzzFeed, the actor Anthony Rapp accused Kevin Spacey, the lead actor of Netflix's <i>House of Cards</i> , of making sexual advances towards him as a child of 14 years. While Spacey apologised to Rapp whilst announcing his gender identity as 'gay', however, he faced backlash after several men, including 20 employees of London's Old Vic theatre, accused Spacey of sexual misconduct when he worked as an artistic director between 2004 and 2015. Spacey was terminated from the <i>House of Cards</i> . The director of the 2017 biographical crime thriller <i>All the Money in the World</i> , Ridley Scott, replaced Arthur Christopher Orme Plummer (13 December 1929 – 05 February 2021) with Spacey.
09 November 2017	In an Alabama special election, the Republican candidate for the US Senate, Roy Moore, was accused of sexual misconduct by nine women when they were teenagers. However, on 04 December 2017, President Donald Trump ardently championed the Alabama Senate candidate on X. On 13 December 2017, the Alabama Senate created history in 25 years when Roy Moore faced defeat by democrat Doug Jones, indicating that the #Metoo movement has successfully offered a safe space for women to enable and impact the election. Similarly, a few days earlier, on 07 December 2017, Al Franken, a Democrat Senator, tendered his resignation over misconduct charges, which he doggedly denied.
12 November 2017	Thousands of people joined hands to attend the Hollywood #Metoo survivors' march. Taking placards and banners, the marchers paraded down Hollywood Boulevard, protesting the perennial sexual abuse and rape. The march also traversed over the sidewalk, Walk of Fame, the space embracing the figures of Hollywood legends, including some of the accused.
24 November 2017	The #Metoo Movement knocked on the door of the Swedish Academy, which awards the Nobel Prize in Literature each year, when the husband of one of the academy's member's names came to the surface with allegations of sexual assault. In October 2018, the accused, Jean-Claude Arnault, the renowned French photographer, who married the poet and writer Katarina Frostenson, was found guilty of raping a woman in Stockholm in 2011.

06 December 2017	Time Magazine awarded "The Silence Breakers" as Person of the Year, including Tarana Burke, the movement's founder, and stars like Taylor Swift and Ashley Judd.
01 January 2018	The Time's Up Foundation against sexual harassment was launched by over 300 women in the US film industry. Among the Hollywood stars who supported this project emotionally and financially are Nicole Kidman, Julianne Moore, Scarlett Johansson, Meryl Streep, Salma Hayek, Jennifer Lawrence, Uma Thurman, Susan Sarandon, and Cate Blanchett. The foundation provides subsidised legal support to those experiencing sexual harassment.
06 January 2018	As a way to display solidarity with the #Metoo movement and sexual violence victims, the majority of the guests chose 'black' as a dress code at the Golden Globes Awards ceremony in Los Angeles. Oprah Winfrey's fiery speech: "For too long women have not been heard or believed if they dared to speak their truth to the power of those men. But their time is up ... Nobody, she added, should ever have to say, "me too" again." Winfrey's words beguiled not only the spectators and the media but also millions of TV viewers. Many even wanted her to be a candidate for the next US presidential election, scheduled for 2020.
09 January 2018	Catherine Deneuve, the French film actress and 100 other celebrities, published an open letter in Le Monde, vigorously criticising the #Metoo Movement from their standpoint, arguing that while rape is a crime, flirting is trivial and should not be counted as an offence.
20 August 2018	Aria Maria Vittoria Rossa Argento (known as Asia Argento), an Italian actress and filmmaker who was vocal against Harvey Weinstein for sexually assaulting her in the 1990s, calling the Cannes Film Festival as Weinstein's 'hunting ground', was herself accused of sexually assaulting James Michael Bennett (known popularly as Jimmy Bennett), when he was a child.
27 September 2018	Displaying her audacity, Christine Margaret Blasey Ford accused the US Supreme Court nominee, Judge Brett Kavanaugh, of sexual misconduct during the 1980s when they were teenagers (see below, the section on #Metoo Reckoning).
19 November 2019	In the ongoing era of #Metoo, two Swedish women from Enköping and Stockholm accused Julian Assange, the WikiLeaks founder, of a sex crime committed on 20 August 2010, coercing them into unprotected sex and violating the scope of consent. While Julian Assange denied the allegations, his supporters from the left-wing fraternity personnel like Michael Moore to Naomi Wolf were cynical about the allegations. They suspected that the US had planted the women to seek revenge for leaking classified documents linked to the US military and diplomatic issues in 2010. The alleged sex crime investigation of 2010 was shelved in 2017. However, it was re-opened in early 2019 because of his eviction from the Ecuadorean embassy in London, where he had sought refuge since September 2012. Swedish prosecutors dropped the investigation after interviewing the witnesses.
11 March 2020	Harvey Weinstein was sent to 23 years in prison. However, some of his counts have been overturned, and he would face a retrial, which was supposed to begin on 12 November 2024.

29 June 2022	Singer Robert Sylvester (known as R Kelly) was sentenced to 30 years in prison on charges of child sexual abuse, child trafficking, bribery, coercion and forced labour.
Sources: BBC News, 2019; Bhattacharyya, 2018; Nicolaou & Smith, 2019; North, 2019; Sanction, 2022; Wunsch, 2018	

Now the question is, has the #MeToo juggernaut been able to make a fundamental socio-cultural change or reduce sexual assaults? The answer is perhaps a 'big no', which further raises the question—has the #MeToo movement then faced a backlash, or is it rhetoric, or both? This commentary aims to probe answers to these questions critically. This study is navigated as follows. It begins with a brief review of sexual assaults and violence against different forms of gender, followed by a critical discussion on #MeToo Reckoning. Then, it discusses whether #MeToo has faced a backlash or is simply rhetoric. In doing so, it discusses the newly emergent issues of gender exploitation—Catfishing and Love Jihad.

Sexual Assaults and Violence Against Gender

In the wake of the #MeToo Movement that had gone viral in 2017, a large body of literature was published in this context. These pieces of literature demonstrate that the intersection of layers of 'power', misogyny/misandry, domination, and patriarchal structure culminated in sexual assaults against a gender (BBC News, 2018; Bhattacharyya, 2018; Choo et al., 2019; Huang, 2023; Mondragon et al., 2022; Shi, 2021). Although the movement gained momentum worldwide and became successful in breaking the silence surrounding sexual assaults, the scale of the impact varied across countries depending on the sensitivity against gendered sexual violence, cultural norms of the geographical place, and attitude towards gendered power relations. For example, in South Asian societies—India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal, women continue to be considered as the "honour" of the family (Bhattacharyya, 2015; Bhattacharyya et al., 2018; Das et al., 2015; 2016; 2020; Miedema et al., 2020; Nisha et al., 2024). It is indeed a 'shame' for the family as a whole if the daughter/daughter-in-law of that particular family encounters sexual assault

perpetrated by family members, relatives or outsiders. In other words, the oppressed women, especially from the villages or the rural set-up or even urban setting, who are harassed and sexually exploited by their family members often remain recitent due to familial pressure. While the culture of 'victim blaming' and 'disbelieving' remains widely apparent (Bhattacharyya, 2015), the culture of remaining 'silent' on issues of sexual assault, including rape, remains far more deeply engrossed (Bhattacharyya et al., 2018; Das et al., 2015; 2016; 2020). Written and produced by Kanika Dhillon and directed by Shashanka Chaturvedi, the Hindi-language film *Do Patti* (Two Cards) on Netflix, which was released on 25 October 2024, portrays the precariousness of remaining silent regarding issues linked to violence against women (the film, however, focused on domestic violence against women, displaying how egregious macho power is weaponised to dominate the victim, which is often challenging to prove in the court of law) (Chaturvedi, 2024). In her book, *Semiotics of Rape: Sexual Subjectivity and Violation in Rural India*, Oza (2023) sheds light on the pathological semiotics of rape by arguing that only upon the death of the rape victim a woman is believed (Bhattacharyya, 2023). Hence, there continues to be a consensus that women in South Asia need family protection. Nevertheless, violence against women is a pan-cultural fact. During COVID-19, violence against women emerged as a 'shadow pandemic', markedly indicating a 'culture of misogyny' and 'hegemonic masculinity' (Mlambo-Ngcuka, 2020; Lefafa, 2020; Singh & Bhattacharyya, 2020).

At the same time, marinated in the thick sauce of patriarchy, family and societal structures, it prevents even men of South Asia from reporting violence against them, especially meted out to them by their spouses, and often

on false allegations linked to domestic violence and dowry (Bhattacharyya, 2020-2021; Bhardwaj, 2015; Pathak, 2006; Ramesh, 2007). Indeed, several emerging studies have reported growing violence and sexual assaults against men in different geographical spaces (BBC News, 2018; Kolbe & Büttner, 2020; de Oliveira et al., 2024; Morishita et al., 2024; Tshoane et al., 2024). For instance, with the help of the statistics taken from the Office for National Statistics Figures (2022/23), the Mankind Initiative (2023), one of the first organisations in the UK to support male victims facing violence, shows that “one in three victims of domestic abuse are male, equating to 751,000 men (3.2%) and 1.38 million women (5.7%).” Indeed, it is appalling to witness that a staggering 12,130 male victims reported 7,610 cases of sexual assaults and 4,520 cases of rape in England and Wales in 2016-17, which tripled since 2006-2007, which stood at 3,819 (BBC News, 2018). Ironically, an estimated 94% of cases of sexual assaults against men go unreported. During the same period, that is, from 2006-2007 to 2016-2017, “sexual assaults against females rose from 21,128 to 38,186 (+80.7%), and rape reports went from 12,599 to 36,639 (+190%)” in England and Wales (BBC News, 2018). Arguably, power and position are not gender dependent. Many men often fall victim to sexual abuse at the hands of the female boss under the shields of power. It is also important to note that the UK Femicide Census (2009-2018) unveils that every three days, one woman is killed in the UK (Open Access Government, 2021; Phillips, 2020). Besides, statistics linked to offences related to Honour based abuses (HBA) in the UK in 2022 stand at 2,887 (77- female genital mutilation, 141- forced marriage, 2669- other HBA offences).¹ Disturbing as it is, HBA remains a pervasive problem in many geographical regions (D’Lima et al., 2020; Kardam, n.d.; Pirnia et al., 2020). Needless to say, the sexual violence and various nuanced forms of exploitation faced by the LGBTQIA+ community across the globe

(Grau, 2024; Katsuba, 2024a, b; Messinger & Koon-Magnin, 2019; Ogden & Tutty, 2024; Ritholtz, 2024). Notwithstanding, the #Metoo movement catalysed the survivors of sexual assaults belonging to various genders, especially those belonging to the middle class, to speak about their accounts of sexual assaults. The following section is devoted to discussing the reckoning of the movement.

#Metoo Reckoning

The #Metoo social movement emerged as a reckoning through naming and shaming the perpetrators on various media platforms, including social media, bestowing a sense of empowerment to the victims, which otherwise was endured in silence. In South Asian societies, for instance, in Pakistan, the first #Metoo movement arose when actress Meesha Shafi charged the singer and actor Ali Zafar with multiple counts of sexual harassment on social media, X (Adil, 2021). She wrote:

Sharing this because I believe that by speaking out about my own experience of sexual harassment, I will break the culture of silence that permeates through our society. It is not easy to speak out, but it is harder to stay silent. My conscience will not allow it anymore #Metoo.MEESHA SHAFI@itsmeeshashafi (2018, 19 April).

Although divided opinions about this allegation abounded, creating polarisation, it galvanised and launched the window for the others to speak up. Arguably, in the case of India, the #Metoo movement emerged with the gang rape and murder of Nirbhaya in December 2012. However, alongside the Hollywood rumbling of #Metoo, the accusation of actress Tanushree Dutta on 26 September 2018 in an interview on Zoom TV against the actor cum filmmaker Nana Patekar of sexually harassing her on the set of the film *Horn OK Pleassss* in 2008 re-spurred public momentum. The allegation of naming and

¹ Statistics on so called ‘honour-based’ abuse offences, England and Wales, 2021 to 2022 (2022, 20 October). Official Statistics. Home Office. GOV.UK. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/statistics-on->

[so-called-honour-based-abuse-offences-england-and-wales-2021-to-2022/statistics-on-so-called-honour-based-abuse-offences-england-and-wales-2021-to-2022](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/statistics-on-so-called-honour-based-abuse-offences-england-and-wales-2021-to-2022)

shaming the perpetrator yielded ripples, not only creating a LoSHA (List of Sexual Harassers in Academia), but also the names of several high profiles were out of the close-knitted bag, among which were politicians, journalists, advertising professionals, comedians, actors and directors. Member of Parliament MJ Akbar, who worked as a journalist and as minister of state for external affairs, had to resign following the allegations of sexual misconduct by at least 20 women and charges of rape by one woman (Sood et al., 2019). However, the late veteran choreographer Saroj Khan denied the allegations of #Metoo in Bollywood while adding fuel to the already kindled wildfire; she said:

'Sexual favours for role' [are] a reality. This has been happening for ages and in every field...casting couch is nothing new...even government officials rape women; at least it [the film industry] provides livelihood to girls (The Economic Times, 2018).

Such a misogynistic rant from a high-profile woman signals how deeply entrenched patriarchy is in Indian society vis-à-vis Bollywood and other film industries of India. The recent Justice Hema Committee report (2024) constituted by the Government of Kerala in 2017, following the complaint of the Women in Cinema Collective (WCC), unravelled the rampant existence of cases of sexual assaults in the Malayalam cinema industry. The first few lines of the 235-page report read:

The sky is full of mysteries; with the twinkling stars and the beautiful moon. But, scientific investigation revealed that stars do not twinkle nor does the moon look beautiful. The study, therefore, cautions: 'Do not trust what you see, even salt looks like sugar!' (Justice Hema Committee report, 2024, p.1)

Taking cognisance of the report's findings, 26 FIRs have been registered, and the government of Kerala has informed its High Court of this (Mathrubhumi.com, 2024).

The rumbling and tumbling of the #Metoo movement influenced the ordinary victims of

Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Nepal, alongside Australia, South Korea, Japan, China, New Zealand, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, the UK, the USA and the European Union and elsewhere to come forward to challenge harassment, which was previously withstood with silent forbearance. As stated above, in Argentina, social activists used hashtags like #NiUnaMenos (Not One [Woman] Less) and #YoTeCreo (I Believe You) to magnify and spawn harassment tales to support the victims (De Maio, 2023; Gender Justice Movement, 'Me Too' Global Movement, n.d.; Mondragon et al., 2022). An actress from Argentina, Thelma Fardin, filed charges of sexual assault and rape committed in 2009 against the Argentine-Brazilian actor Juan Darthés in Nicaragua when the actress was 16 and the actor was 45 years. Although Darthés denied the allegations, a Brazilian court sentenced the accused to six years in prison. Following the sentence, Fardin said:

This is a scenario for which I was not prepared because I had already lost faith in justice. This sentence has to be a message of hope for anyone who is suffering any kind of abuse. They should think that there is a possibility of redress in the justice system, even if the person to be denounced is very powerful.

Indeed, #Metoo sparked, strengthened and revolutionised Chilean Feminist activism in May 2018. The movement stemmed from students' protests demanding institutional changes about the implementation of committees and legal cells to address sexual harassment alongside domestic violence, political violence, femicide, limited abortion rights, etc. and increased visibility of Indigenous and racialised women and LGBTQ+ collectives (Cruz, 2023; Silva-Tapia & Fernández Ossandón, 2022).

South Korea's #Metoo movement kicked off fourth-wave feminism by triggering the 'Escape the Corset' movement by nullifying societal beauty standards (Bicker, 2018; Jeong, 2019; Shin & Lee, 2022). Alongside, it also intensified the 4B movement, signalling a protest against gender inequality by resisting patriarchal and misogynistic culture. The four Bs in Korean

respectively represent —bichon (marriage), bichulsan (childbirth), biyeonae (dating), and bisekseu (sex—relationships with men) (Sussman, 2023; Zimmermann, n.d.). Besides, like elsewhere, accusations of sexual harassment against high-profile figures like director Kim Ki-duk and actor Cho Jae-hyun elicited debates about power abuse, invigorating other actors/actresses and others to come forward and speak about their mistreatment. At the same time, it is to be noted that the actor Jo Min Ki, who was accused of sexual harassment by several victims, was found dead (Ong, 2018).

In Japan, journalist cum activist Shiori Ito emerged as a metaphor for Japan's #MeToo movement. She has won a civil suit against a high-profile former television reporter, Noriyuki Yamaguchi, who was accused of raping her and was awarded 3.3 million yen, or about \$30,000 in compensation by the Tokyo District Court (Marszal, 2024; NHK World Japan, 2019). Indeed, the Japanese government conducted research and found that about one in 20 people have been coerced to have sex without consent. Furthermore, 60% of women and 40% of men who encountered such experiences failed to share them (Marszal, 2024; NHK World Japan, 2019).

The #MeToo whistleblower also shook Westminster and the European Parliament —40 Conservative MPs and four Labour MPs of the UK faced allegations of inappropriate behaviour, including unwanted advances, sexual harassment, and extramarital sex. The sex scandal also rocked Harrods, the British luxury department store. Ex-Harrods owner, late Mohamed Al Fayed, and his brother, late Salah Fayed, sexually abused many female employees of Harrods, and ironically, these women took nearly 35 years to break their silence, as it is pretty challenging and stigmatising to open up about accounts of sexual assaults (Lee & Seddon, 2024; Sky News, 2024). Seemingly, the confluence of mishandling of the church child abuse scam was exposed following the publication of the independent review by Keith Makin (2024). John Jackson Smyth QC (27 June 1941 – 11 August 2018) was a Canadian-born

British barrister and was connected with the Church of England. He abused more than 100 boys and young men for decades, including the ones he met in the 1970s and 1980s at Christian camps. The despicable serial abuse was either kept secret or ignored by the Church of England, despite attempts by a critical report prepared by Reverend Mark Ruston in 1982 (Makin, 2024). The independent review report holds the Church of England accountable for failing to report the scandal of serial sexual abuse, for which the Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby, Church of England's most senior official, resigned on 12 November after 11 years in office (Lamb & Haq, 2024; McArthur, 2024; Walker, 2024).

Amid various sexual scams, Time's Up UK has mandated the TV and British film industry to set up an independent entity aimed at dealing with the accusations of felony and sexual assault allegations (Kanter, 2021). Terry Reintke, the Green Party politician and a European Parliament member, recounted the instances of encountering sexual attacks in the city of Duisburg, located in Germany (Wünsch, 2018). Taking placards, women of the European Parliament demanded redressal through a change of attitudes and existent legislation displaying the widespread existence of the problem of sexual harassment in various forms of violence against women (Bhattacharyya, 2018; Payne, 2017; Stone, 2017; Wünsch, 2018). In happenstance with International Women's Day, the protests compelled the European Commission (EU) to adopt a proposal on 08 March 2022, the first-ever EU directive to tackle violence against women, including domestic violence (Ending gender-based violence, 2024). On 07 May 2024, via Directive EU 2024/1384, the Commission proposed new legislation on violence against women. For this, the Commission established an EU network on 29 November 2023 aimed at preventing gender-based and domestic violence by focusing on the engagement of men and boys (Ending gender-based violence, 2024). Comprising of Member State officials and stakeholders, the network should meet twice yearly. By 14 June 2027, Member States will transpose and promulgate

the Directive into their national legislations and policies. The Directive read:

The Directive criminalises at [the] EU level certain forms of violence against women offline (female genital mutilation and forced marriage) and online (non-consensual sharing of intimate images, cyberstalking, cyber harassment and incitement to hatred and violence on the ground of gender). It also provides targeted measures of protection, support and access to justice for victims of any form of violence against women and domestic violence where criminalised under national or Union law. Finally, it requires Member States to set up preventive measures, including specific measures to prevent rape and to promote the central role of consent in sexual relationships (Ending gender-based violence, 2024).

While this Directive appears apparently rhetorical, it, of course, warrants further in-depth studies to assess its impact.

Table 1 has already narrated the threads of #MeToo incidents in the United States. In the midst of #MeToo, professor of clinical psychology Christine Margaret Blasey Ford at Palo Alto University and a research psychologist at the Stanford University School of Medicine, emerged as a prominent figure for her chutzpah when she came forward in September 2018 to publicly accuse the then-nominee of the U.S. Supreme Court, Judge Brett Kavanaugh in the early 1980s of sexual assaults during the days of high school. Professor Ford testified in detail about the sexual assault in the summer of 1982 in Bethesda, Maryland, before a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing the nomination of Kavanaugh's Supreme Court (C-Span, 2018; Gross, 2024). The Senate Judiciary Committee, however, disbelieved and backlashed Professor Ford's claims. This is deplorable in a country of the highest democracy and where the women's rights and liberation movement originated in the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention, 19-20 July, under the leadership of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and her friend Lucretia Mott. Accompanied by male

supremacy and a patriarchal mindset (Choo et al., 2019), Judge Brett Kavanaugh, the nominee of then President Donald Trump (20 January 2017- 20 January 2021) and now President-Elect, became an associate justice of the United States Supreme Court who assumed office on 06 October 2018. With the Republicans back to power in the United States, it is reckoned that it would be challenging for the different forms of gender— girls, women, LGBTQIA+, people of colour, historically marginalised communities and others to fight for gender justice (Global Fund for Women, 2024). The following section discusses whether the #MeToo movement has faced backlash, or is simply a rhetoric, or both.

Backlash or Rhetoric

There is no denying that #MeToo has stimulated and inculcated a sense of socio-cultural shift across countries, invigorating open dialogues about the intersection of power, gender, and harassment. It is increasingly witnessed in different media across the world that the victims now speak openly about their horrid tales of sexual harassment. The number of abuse calls in a US crisis hotline—Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network, rose by 23% between the period October to December 2017 when compared to the same period in 2016 (Seales, 2018). Seales (2018) goes on to say:

Some abuse survivors have cited #MeToo as a stressful influence, saying it resurfaced the pain of their abuse. Others have reported feeling less alone, saying it encouraged them to address past trauma by talking to loved ones, counsellors, or people with similar experiences.

An ethnographic observation further unveils that the #MeToo movement was successful in inculcating a sense of fear among the 'invisible, powerful perpetrators' who were indulging in heinous acts of sexual assault by abusing their 'powerful positions'. Of course, there could be cases of spurious and false accusations to execute resentful revenge. Following the allegations of sexual misconduct, the Welsh Government minister Carl Sargeant was sacked on 03 November 2017. However, he was found

dead at his residence in Connah's Quay, Flintshire, on 07 November 2017 (Halliday, 2017).

Gender safety is arguably a development. Witnessing the young vocal activists/advocates challenging traditional/cultural norms across societies and stipulating and clamouring for safer and more respectful environments is incredible. Indeed, the #MeToo movement in India precipitated a rhetorical #TimesUp movement, especially in social media (Devasar, 2018). In the wake of the gang rape and murder of Nirbhaya in December 2012, legislative actions such as the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013;² 2018;³ Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act of 2013,⁴ following the Vishaka guidelines of the late 1990s (UNgender, 2024) were implemented. Besides, on 06 September 2018, the honourable Apex Court of India passed a landmark judgment, popularly known as the Johar Judgement, by decriminalising section 377 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), categorising homosexuality as an 'unnatural offence' and recognising the rights of LGBTQIA+ (Kakoti Borah, 2018; Kaur, 2024). However, these legal implementations and decriminalisation have failed to change attitudes, behaviour and culture of harassment and exploitation on the ground simply because the implementations of these legislative actions have been inconsistent across the country. The August 2024 gruelling rape and murder of the female doctor at the 138-year-old R.G. Kar Medical College and Hospital (Singh, 2024) speaks volumes about the heightened failure of the enforcement of the legislative actions. Earlier on 04 May 2023, a graphic video made rounds, displaying two Kuki-Zo women being sexually abused. These two abused women were then paraded naked towards a paddy field near Manipur's B Phainom village by

a mob of violent Meitei community members, jeering and harassing these two women a day after the ethnic clashes broke out between Meitei and the Kuki-Zo communities (Sasikumar, 2023). The sheer savagery of the protests and condemnation in Manipur, Kolkata, and the media has been another #MeToo moment for India. A similar national outrage was witnessed in the UK in the aftermath of the abduction, rape and brutal murder of the 33-year-old marketing executive Sarah Everard by the Metropolitan Police officer on duty, Wayne Couzens, when Everard was walking home at around 21:30 hours on 3 March 2021 in Clapham, south London from a friend's house (Morton, 2021). However, it becomes apparent that the ferocity of the protest dies down and continues in low flame until another ghastly incident occurs. This is because fundamental changes in attitudes, culture, and social behaviours take ages to transform (Devasar, 2018).

Catfishing

Nevertheless, the exploitation of gender continues via newly emergent modi operandi. Catfishing is one such technique where the perpetrator fakes one's identity (often a fictitious persona), especially online for nefarious purposes— to cheat, lure, trick, and dominate others (the victim) into believing that the perpetrator is genuine. Central to catfishing is first building trust aimed at scamming people into romance /friendship, seldom for sadistic pleasure (entertainment) but often duping people (the victim) for sextortion, blackmailing for financial gain or even seek revenge to harm them (the victim) in some way or the other (BBC News, 2024; eSafety Commissioner, n.d.; Mercuri, 2024). Coined in 2010 in the documentary film *Catfish* by Yaniv "Nev" Schulman, an American TV host and producer, himself a victim of catfishing, the method has

² The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013, No. 13 of 2013 (2013, 02 April). *The Gazette of India*. Ministry of Law and Justice, Legislative Department. https://www.indiacode.nic.in/bitstream/123456789/15357/1/criminal_law_ammend_act_2013.pdf

³ The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2018, No. 22 of 2018 (2018, 11 August). *The Gazette of India*. Ministry of Law and Justice, Legislative Department.

[https://prsindia.org/files/bills_acts/acts_parliament/2018/the-criminal-law-\(amendment\)-act,-2018.pdf](https://prsindia.org/files/bills_acts/acts_parliament/2018/the-criminal-law-(amendment)-act,-2018.pdf)

⁴ Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act of 2013. *National Commission for Women*.

http://ncw.nic.in/sites/default/files/SexualHarassmentofWomenatWorkPlaceAct2013_0.pdf

emerged as one of the most precarious forms of cybercrime. Evidently and more so dangerously, in many cases, the perpetrators engaged in catfishing “impersonate or hack a real person’s account and pretend to be them” (eSafety Commissioner, n.d.). The catfishers use each piece of personal information—full name, home address, date of birth, hobbies etc. posted online by the targeted individual. The catfishers then piece together the shared information to re-create forged accounts (eSafety Commissioner, n.d.). Alexander McCartney, a 26-year-old man from Northern Ireland, is the UK’s largest catfishing abuser, who targeted 3,500 victims, especially children between the ages of 10 and 16 from across 30 countries (BBC News, 2024). Another real story is that of Kirat Assi, who was catfished for nearly a decade by her cousin, Simran Bhogal; it has been meticulously documented in the Netflix documentary *Sweet Bobby: My Catfish Nightmare* that uncovers the sophisticated ways via which the catfisher swindled the victim for almost a decade (Mercuri, 2024; Sandhu & Pandey, 2024). Disguising herself as Bobby Jandu who is a cardiologist from their Sikh community, Simran Bhogal faked the identity of Bobby and connected with Kirat via Facebook in 2010, which eventually yielded into a serious romantic relationship. However, whenever Kirat wanted to meet Bobby in person, the fake Bobby always made queer excuses—“He’d had a stroke. He’d been shot. He had entered witness protection” (Sandhu & Pandey, 2024) and so on and so forth until the time the identity of the scammer came to surface (Mercuri, 2024). Of course, further research is required to fully understand the short- and long-term implications of catfishing and the #Metoo moments that arise from it. Similarly, in India, the term ‘Love Jihad’ has evolved where it is alleged that some Muslim men, impersonating themselves, prey on women of other communities—Hindu, Sikh, Christian and others by luring them, which often blossoms into a romantic relationship followed by marriage. It is reckoned that the conspiracy behind ‘Love Jihad’ is to transform the demographic profile of the country. The next

section discusses the possible #Metoo moment from ‘Love Jihad’.

Love Jihad

A plethora of news reports address the Concept of Love Jihad as an Islamophobic conspiracy theory (Biswas, 2020; Bridge Initiative Team, 2024; Pandey, 2020; Singh, 2020); the concept perhaps re-emerged in 2009 when the Catholic Church bodies in Kerala, the southern state of India, flagged up the issue of forced conversion into Islam (Singh, 2020), followed by Justice KT Sankaran of the Kerala High Court reinforcing the claims by stating that since 2005, there were 3,000-4,000 cases of forceful religious conversions entailing the angle of love (ET Bureau, 2009). The state of Karnataka also started singing the same tune simultaneously (Nanjappa, 2009; Singh, 2020), and more recently, the phrase Love Jihad, which sounds ‘uncanny’ and ‘bizarre’, has been highly politicised and popularised by the so-called right-wing Hindu nationalists and those close to the ruling party of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) while the opposition and the left-liberals briskly defy it.

The disputation over inter-religious marriage in India is not new. It dates back to the 1920s and 1930s when the idea of creating ‘Pakistan’ was floated and vehemently debated, especially by the then Cambridge student Choudhry Rahmat Ali and his activists’ associates via the pamphlet titled *Now or Never; Are We to Live or Perish Forever?* (known popularly as Pakistan Declaration) in 1933. This idea of ‘Pakistan’ was later adopted by Muhammad Ali Jinnah at the All-India Muslim League’s Lahore Resolution (22-24 March 1940), giving birth to the foundation of the two-nation theory, which subsequently became applicable in the case of undivided India (Das et al. 2022; Tahir, 2017). These developments and examples of cases of abduction, seduction, and forced conversion in the 1920s inculcated a sense of fear among the Hindu communities of colonial India. I argue that these credences echo the observations made by Biswas (2000) as he put it:

In 1924, a Muslim bureaucrat in the city of Kanpur was accused of “abducting and

seducing" a Hindu girl and forcefully converting her. A Hindu group demanded the "recovery" of the woman from the bureaucrat's house.

The abduction of Hindu women was even debated in parliament in colonial India. The Indian National Congress, now the main opposition party, passed a resolution saying that "women who have been abducted and forcibly married must be restored to their houses; mass conversions have no significance or validity, and people must be given every opportunity to return to the life of their choice".

It should be noted here that India has a culture of practising 'arranged marriages' where the life partners are chosen by their parents and relatives and characterised by monogamy,⁵ heterosexual and mainly within the same community (Bhattacharyya, 2009; Biswas, 2020). Although in recent times, inter-religious, inter-caste and inter-lingual marriages have increasingly become a practice under the umbrella of 'love marriage', 'arranged marriages' still dominate the institution of marriage, and inter-religious marriage stands only at 2% (Biswas, 2020).

In India, marriages are legally governed by four pieces of matrimonial legislation—the Hindu

Marriage Act, 1955;⁶ the Special Marriage Act, 1954;⁷ the Indian Christian Marriage Act, 1872,⁸ and the Muslim Personal Law (*Shariat*) Application Act, 1937.⁹ While the Hindu Marriage Act of 1955 extends to Jains, Sikhs, and Buddhists as well as Virashaiva, a Lingayat or a follower of the Brahmo, Prarthana, or Arya Samaj, the Special Marriage Act of 1954 is secular and non-denominational, transcending all religions and to those who are reluctant to get married via the function of a religious ceremony.

Now the question is, when there remains legislation for inter-faith marriages, why is there a need for another law like Love Jihad? Already, the states of Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh have respectively promulgated the Uttarakhand Freedom of Religion Act, 2018¹⁰ and Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Unlawful Religious Conversion Ordinance, 2020.¹¹ The key ingredients of both these legislations are similar: allurement, convincing for conversion, force, fraud, coercion, minor (below 18 years), religion converter (the agent), mass conversion, and unlawful conversion. These ingredients markedly signal that the central aim of these laws bears more profound gravitas linked to the trafficking of women and children as well as the radicalisation of extremism as a part of global terrorist stratagem (Biswas, 2020; Nanjappa, 2009) than mere inter-faith marriages. Of course, there has to be appropriate punishment

⁵ Monogamy was constitutionally validated in the Hindu Marriage Act in 1955. Prior to that, Kulinism (derived from the Sanskrit word *Kulina* signalling 'of good family'; the term was introduced by Raja Vallala Sena of Bengal who ruled from 1158-1169) allowed polygamy in Hindu society (Britannica, n.d.).

⁶ The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955. *India Code: Digital Repository of Laws-A System of Laws for Communication*. <https://www.indiacode.nic.in/bitstream/123456789/1560/1/A1955-25.pdf#search=Hindu%20Marriage%20Act,%201955>

⁷ The Special Marriage Act, 1954. *India Code: Digital Repository of Laws-A System of Laws for Communication*. https://www.indiacode.nic.in/bitstream/123456789/15480/1/special_marriage_act.pdf

⁸ The Indian Christian Marriage Act, 1872. *India Code: Digital Repository of Laws-A System of Laws for Communication*. [https://www.indiacode.nic.in/bitstream/123456789/2186/1/A1872-](https://www.indiacode.nic.in/bitstream/123456789/2186/1/A1872-15.pdf#search=The%20Indian%20Christian%20Marriage%20Act,%201872)

[15.pdf#search=The%20Indian%20Christian%20Marriage%20Act,%201872](https://www.indiacode.nic.in/bitstream/123456789/2303/1/A1937-26.pdf#search=The%20Indian%20Christian%20Marriage%20Act,%201872)

⁹ The Muslim Personal Law (*Shariat*) Application Act, 1937. *India Code: Digital Repository of Laws-A System of Laws for Communication*.

[https://www.indiacode.nic.in/bitstream/123456789/2303/1/A1937-](https://www.indiacode.nic.in/bitstream/123456789/2303/1/A1937-26.pdf#search=The%20Indian%20Christian%20Marriage%20Act,%201872)

[26.pdf#search=The%20Indian%20Christian%20Marriage%20Act,%201872](https://www.indiacode.nic.in/bitstream/123456789/2303/1/A1937-26.pdf#search=The%20Indian%20Christian%20Marriage%20Act,%201872)

¹⁰ The Uttarakhand Freedom of Religion and Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Act, 2018

[Uttarakhand Act No: 28 of 2018] (As amended by Uttarakhand Act No. 13 of 2022).

https://highcourtofuttarakhand.gov.in/files/Freedom_of_Religion_and_Prohibition_of_Unlawful_Conversion_of_Religion_Act,_2018.pdf

¹¹ The Uttarakhand Freedom of Religion Act, 2018 (Act 28 of 2018). *PRS Legislative Research*.

<https://tinyurl.com/46erp77d>

for misusing these laws by those under the pretext of power.

Nevertheless, impersonation could be weaponised by any individual from any faith and caste with an evil intent. Arguably, where there is love, there should be trust and transparency between the couples. Terms and phrases like masquerading religious identity, deception and its associated synonyms, cheating, tricking, and camouflaging should ideally be removed from the dictionary of conjugal relationships. Nevertheless, there is emerging evidence of inter-faith marriages using force and coercion in India (Biswas, 2020; ET Bureau, 2009; Ganguli, 2023; Nanjappa, 2009). Directed by Sudipto Sen and produced by Vipul Amrutlal Shah, the 2023 highly controversial film *The Kerala Story* portrays how the Hindu and Christian women of Kerala were radicalised, converted and trafficked to join the Islamic State group [IS (Islamic State), ISIS (the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria/the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham) and ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant), also acronym as Daesh] and later on exploited (see, Ganguli, 2023; Sebastian, 2023). Although *The Kerala Story* is tagged as fictionalised, the story's plot resonates with the high-profile case of the British-born Shamima Begum, a victim of child trafficking and sexual exploitation by ISIS (Sandford & Durbin, 2022). The 15-year-old Shamima, along with two other schoolgirls from East London—Kadiza Sultana, aged 16, and Amira Abase, aged 15 were radicalised and trafficked to Syria. While it is believed that a Russian Air Strike in Syria killed Kadiza Sultana, the whereabouts of Amira Abase remain unknown. By 2019, Shamima became pregnant for the third time in a Syrian refugee camp, but she lost all her children (Sandford & Durbin, 2022). In 2019, under the UK's Nationality and Borders Act,¹² then, Home Secretary Sajid Javid revoked Shamima Begum's citizenship, disallowing her to return to the UK. Although Shamima's lawyers have challenged the ruling at the Honourable Supreme Court, the justices said

that Shamima would not be able to appeal against an earlier Court of Appeal ruling as the rationale of her case lacks an arguable legal point (Phillips, 2024). Shamima continues to live as a stateless individual in one of the refugee camps of Syria. Indeed, radicalisation, trafficking, recruitment and exploitation of women and children in extremist organisations is a global problem (Berko & Erez, 2007; Bolysbayeva et al., 2024; Cook, 2005; Cook & Vale, 2018; Ida et al., 2023). In a similar context, Smith (2016) reports the ways ISIS treat females as sexual slaves. She goes on to report how the IS treats the minority Yazidi¹³ women as she put it:

These women have been treated like cattle...They have been subjected to physical and sexual violence, including systematic rape and sex slavery. They've been exposed in markets in Mosul and Raqqa, Syria, carrying price tags (Smith, 2016).

In their publication in 2018, Cook & Vale estimated that IS recruited 41,490 individuals from 80 countries, of which 13% (4,761) were women and 12% (4,640) were minors. Amongst the targeted regions, 70% of women and minors were from Eastern Asia, 44% from Eastern Europe, and 42% from Western Europe. While 36% were recruited from the USA, Australia and New Zealand, the Central Asia recruits stand at 30%. It is 35% from Southeast Asia, 27% from Southern Asia, 8% from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), and less than 1% from sub-Saharan Africa (Cook & Vale, 2018). However, the lack of robust data for many countries indicates that the accurate figures for women and minor recruits in IS could not be precisely presented (Cook & Vale, 2018); one can only imagine the extent of exploitation that these IS recruits encounter (Bolysbayeva et al., 2024) and their traumatic and exploited #Metoo moments and atrocious human rights abuse.

Evidently, a large body of literature has demonstrated that women, children, and people

¹² Nationality and Borders Act 2022. *Legislation.gov.uk*. <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2022/36/section/10/enacted>

¹³ Yazidi women are an Indigenous Kurdish-speaking cultural group, geographically found in Kurdistan, located in Western Asia, comprising parts of Syria, Turkey, Iran and Iraq.

belonging to the LGBTQIA+, primarily from the vulnerable (affected by famine, flood, conflict, earthquakes, tsunami and others) and poverty-stricken regions, are often found to go missing or are kidnapped, trafficked and sold into brothels or redlight areas to serve as sex workers; as domestic slaves in the households of the middle class and wealthy and as bonded labour (including child labour) in the factories, brick kilns etc. (Barrick & Pfeffer, 2024; Bhattacharyya, 2017; Chambers et al., 2024; Cockbain et al., 2024; Chamberlain, 2008; 2014a, b; Gattás et al., 2012; Kannan, 2014; Poudel, 2009; Prakash & Vadlamannati, 2014; Richardson et al., 2009). Unsurprisingly and sadly, the #Metoo moments of these vulnerable and marginalised communities mired in extreme precarity are seldom talked about.

Conclusion

#Metoo's reckoning has been a tapestry woven together by incidents of sexual harassment worldwide. While the movement has been successful in fishing out the names of the influential people in positions and toweing figures, naming and shaming them, creating some form of transformation in workplaces, and generating awareness about the magnitude of the perpetual problem of sexual assault, it is highly middle-class and elite-centric. Currently, the #Metoo movement as it stands is both rhetoric and has faced backlash as the movement has failed to transform fundamental socio-cultural attitudes against various genders. This review sets the scene for several in-depth research areas—sexual harassment, domestic violence, sex work, child labour, trafficking, exploitation of gender in conflict and extremist zones, catfishing, Love Jihad, etc., perhaps deploying rigorous qualitative research.

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Ethical Approval

This study was conceived in the aftermath of the #Metoo movement, which went viral worldwide in 2017 and is part of my ongoing study. It is based on secondary literature and data and does not require ethical approval as it involves no direct human participants or

animals. However, the manuscript has been prepared following the guidelines and protocols of Academic Writing.

Conflict of Interest

I hereby confirm that I have no conflict of interest to declare.

Informed Consent

Does not require.

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Being an ardent researcher on gender and violence, this is a self-funded passion project. As already stated above, it was conceived in the wake of the #MeToo Movement. International Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Change (ISSN 2201-1323), Volume 3, Issue 4, Pages 1-12 published my first article titled # *MeToo Movement: An Awareness Campaign* in their special edition *Teaching and Training in Cross Cultural Competencies* (<https://www.ijicc.net/index.php/volume-3-2018/15-vol-3-iss-4-2018>). This article has been cited 118 times until now in Google Scholar (https://scholar.google.co.uk/citations?view_op=view_citation&hl=en&user=lgxi_GcAAAAJ&authuser=2&citation_for_view=lgxi_GcAAAAJ:fFSKOagxvKUC) and has been recommended for further reading in the write-up, MeToo Movement, *Wikipedia* (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MeToo_movement).

Data Availability Statement

All the data employed in this study are available within the study and in the form of references cited within the text and reference list.

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About the Author

Rituparna is an adjunct professor at the Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati; a visiting professor at the University of Science and Technology, Meghalaya; and an independent research consultant and Editor-in-Chief (Joint) of the SCOPUS-indexed international journal *Space and Culture, India* published from the UK. She accomplished her senior fellow position at Advance HE (formerly Higher Education Academy, UK) in 2021. Rituparna is currently the Series Editor for *Gender and Violence*, Routledge, Taylor and Francis. She also works as an Associate Editor for two international journals. They are *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications* (nature.com), *Springer Nature and Diversity & Inclusion Research* published by Wiley. Rituparna was appointed Executive Council member of Cotton University, India, in November 2023.

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- Anand, Subhash, **Bhattacharyya Rituparna**, Das, Madhushree, Das, Tulshi Kumar and Pradhan, Pushkar, K. (2025, **in press**). *Sustainability in South Asian Cities*. <https://link.springer.com/book/9789819774548>
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