Chapter – 9

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

A major finding of the present study was the gender differences found in the perception of feminine worth. Also, there was a difference in the experience of eve teasing as reported by girls and the indulgence in eve teasing that the males admitted to.

Perhaps, there is a gender difference in the perception of what behaviours constitute sexual harassment. There is a possibility that what males consider as normal behaviour is perceived as harassing by the females. This suggests that there is a strong need to sensitize both males and females towards each other’s feelings to bridge the gap between the thinking of the two genders.

It was also ascertained in the present study that the attitude of males towards women in general was the principal factor that contributed in their indulgence in eve teasing. It was found that the more egalitarian the males were with respect to the perception of feminine worth, the less likely they were to indulge in eve teasing. This suggests that there is a need for an attitudinal change pertaining to the perception of feminine worth in the society in general. One way to bring about this change is through gender sensitization. Another way to bring about this attitudinal change is if one...
focuses on the various factors, which contributed towards enhancing the perception of feminine worth.

Some socio-demographic variables that contribute to the males' perception of feminine worth were identified in the present study. Foremost socio-demographic variable that contributed to the males' indulgence in eve teasing was the type of school that the males had attended. It was found that the males who had attended co-ed schools had a better perception of feminine worth and indulged less in eve teasing.

Interestingly, the type of school that the girls attended did not contribute to their perception of feminine worth. Perhaps, the preferential treatment given to males at home makes it more important that they interact with girls outside home, to know them and respect them as human beings. This opportunity to interact with girls is provided in the co-ed schools. These schools provide a platform to compensate the effects of preferential treatment given to boys at home. The attitudes of males coming from homes that are discriminatory with respect to gender are furthermore strengthened if they attend only boys' schools. Co-ed schools provide ample opportunity for boys to interact with girls and get to know them better and respect them as human beings.

The education of parents' was another demographic variable, which was found to be contributing to the males' perception of feminine worth, and also to their indulgence in eve teasing. Higher the level of education of parents better was the perception of feminine worth and lesser was the likelihood of their indulging in eve teasing.

Parents are the primary sources from where the children acquire their attitudes overtly or covertly. The level of education has been found to have a positive relation with the non-traditional gender role ideology. In other words, as the level of education rises, there is a tendency of people to endorse a less traditional gender role ideology.
Educational level of parents especially that of mother's significantly emancipates the attitude of children. It is rightly said that educating a male is educating an individual but educating a female is educating the whole family. The mother is more instrumental in inculcating the value system in her children as she usually spends more time with them as compared to the father. If she is better educated, she is better equipped to inculcate in them a respect for the opposite sex.

Another related socio-demographic variable, which contributed to the males' perception of feminine worth, was the employment status of the mothers.

Children, both sons and daughters, of working women were found to have a better attitude towards women than the children of non-working women. The level of education of working women is also usually higher than that of the non-working women. Work also means more exposure to the world outside home and being independent. The children of working women are less likely to perceive women as the weaker sex. Moreover, the working mothers tend to give quality time to their children rather than the quantity of time. Merely spending more time with the children as in the case of non-working women does not mean spending quality time. By spending quality time with their children, probably working women unknowingly also inculcate in their children a general respect for women. The children see their working mothers as independent, strong, and no less than their fathers. Probably the husbands of working women must be sharing some amount of household chores with their wives, which also must be influencing their children to be more egalitarian towards gender roles.

It was also found in the present study that both males and females from affluent families endorsed more egalitarian attitudes towards women.

Again the economic status of the family could be related to the level of education of parents, especially the mother. Women from economically
weaker sections of the societies are usually less educated than those from the economically well off families. Less education means more likely to endorse traditional attitudes pertaining to gender roles. The implication of this finding is that social agencies should focus on implementing programmes to educate women so that they become aware of their rights and attain a higher self-esteem. This in turn would educate the whole family and bring about the desired attitudinal change in the society.

The family income of males also influenced the indulgence of males in eve teasing. Males from economically weaker families were found to be indulging more in eve teasing than the ones from affluent families.

However, the girls from affluent experienced more eve teasing than the girls from economically weaker families.

The fact that females from affluent families had a better perception of feminine worth must be reflected in their behaviour, in their way of dressing up, etc.; and makes these girls more vulnerable to be the victims. These findings imply that the offenders committing are from economically weaker section of the society while the victims come from the affluent section. Probably the offenders are protective towards the females from their own class but are threatened by the females who come from affluent families. Perhaps, victimising these girls gives them a sense of power and dominance and by indulging in such behaviour they seem to let these girls know that they should adhere to the traditional gender roles lest face the consequences.

An interesting finding in the present study was that the presence of a male sibling lowers the perception of feminine worth in both males and females. In case of males having a brother at home probably strengthens in them the stereotyped image of women. In the case of females, perhaps it is the preferential treatment given to their brothers at home, which lowers the perception of feminine worth.
With regard to experience of eve teasing, the perception of feminine worth was not found to be contributing much. Only in case of mild forms of eve teasing, was the females’ perception of feminine worth an influential factor. It implies that it is not the girls’ attitude that makes them the victim of eve teasing but something else. Besides, it is not the girls who decide whether they would be victimised, but it is the male offenders who decide who their victim would be.

Various demographic variables were also identified in the study, which contributed to the experience of girls being teased. The type of school that the girls had attended contributed to their experience of attention seeking behaviour by boys. It was found that the girls who attended co-ed schools had experienced more attention seeking behaviour by boys. This is quite obvious, as the girls who had attended co-ed schools would also have had more opportunities to experience such behaviour. As far as the other forms of eve teasing are concerned, the type of school that the girls attended did not contribute to their experience of severe or mild forms of eve teasing. It implies that the girls who attend co-ed schools are more likely to experience attention seeking by boys than the girls who attend only girls’ schools.

The economic status of the family to which the girls belonged also was found to contribute significantly to the experience of attention seeking behaviour by boys. The girls from affluent families experienced more attention seeking by boys than the girls not belonging to affluent families. Because the girls from well off families also endorse more liberal attitudes than the girls from economically weaker section of the society, their attitudes must be reflected in the mannerism. Possibly these girls dress up according to the latest trends in fashion as they can afford, because of which they get more attention from boys and the boys in turn want to impress them by indulging in attention seeking behaviour.
The level of education of mothers was found to be significantly contributing to experience of severe forms of eve teasing with daughters of less educated women experiencing severe eve teasing more than the other girls. It implies that the educated women set a better example for their daughters, and the daughters have a higher self-esteem, while the daughters of the less educated women might be acquiring the submissiveness of their mothers. The offenders of severe forms of eve teasing perhaps look for a submissive victim so that their harassing behaviour goes unreported. The mother is a role model for the daughter and if she is submissive and dependent herself, the daughters also acquire the same values. Once again the results of the study imply the importance of education.

To sum up, the results of the present study suggest that the males’ perception of feminine worth influences them to indulge in eve teasing. And it is not in the hands of the girls whether they would be harassed or not. Any girl can be a victim of eve teasing, no matter what her perception of feminine worth is. To eradicate this menace from the society, one should focus to enhance the males’ perception of feminine worth. The key variable that could enhance this is education, especially educating the women. Gender sensitization programmes should be organized so that males get to know the females better and only then can they respect them. Gender sensitization in a male-female relationship and the role of both genders in society are issues that can be tackled in schools and colleges. Coeducation also helps in sensitizing both the genders towards each other. Coeducation in a manner that promotes mutually respecting inter-mingling between the genders should be encouraged. Efforts to create social forums to facilitate inter-gender interface should be made.