



Niqabi Women and Catcalling: A Phenomenological Study of Sexual Harassment Towards Niqabi in Surakarta

Dinda Angela Dinanti

Universitas Sebelas Maret Surakarta
e-mail: dindaangela@student.uns.ac.id

Yuyun Sunesti

Universitas Sebelas Maret Surakarta
e-mail: yuyun_sunesti@staff.uns.ac.id

Abstract

Catcalling is a form of sexual harassment involving the use of indecent language towards victims, typically women. While it is commonly assumed that catcalling targets female victims based on the exposure of certain body parts, it is noteworthy that women, even those who wear modest clothing or even a niqab, also experience catcalling. This article delves into the phenomenon of catcalling as experienced by niqabi. Data for this study were generated through field research conducted in Surakarta, utilizing in-depth interviews with ten niqabis of various ages and educational backgrounds. Employing a phenomenological approach and applying Blumer's theory of symbolic interactionism, the study reveals diverse causes, forms, and impacts of catcalling on women who wear the niqab. Despite facing catcalling, these niqabis employ both active and passive strategies to protect themselves. This research sheds light on the multifaceted aspects of catcalling experienced by women who choose to wear the niqab. This article contributes to the discussion on the issue of sexual harassment against women and the study of the dynamics of niqabi women.

Keywords: Catcalling, Sexual Harassment, Niqab, Niqabi

Abstrak

Catcalling adalah salah satu bentuk dari pelecehan seksual yang berupa komentar dengan kata-kata tidak senonoh kepada korban yang biasanya adalah perempuan. Meskipun seringkali diklaim *catcalling* menysar para korban perempuan karena mengekspose bagian tubuh tertentu mereka, nyatanya *catcalling* juga dialami perempuan-perempuan dengan pakaian yang tertutup, bahkan berniqab. Artikel ini mengkaji fenomena *catcalling* yang diterima oleh para perempuan berniqab atau biasa disebut niqabi. Data dihasilkan melalui penelitian lapangan yang dilakukan di Surakarta melalui wawancara mendalam terhadap sepuluh niqabi dari beragam usia dan pendidikan. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan fenomenologi dan mengaplikasikan teori interaksionisme simbolik Blumer, kajian ini menemukan bahwa beragam penyebab, bentuk dan dampak *catcalling* yang diterima oleh niqabi. Namun, meski para niqabi mendapatkan *catcalling*, mereka juga membangun strategi untuk memproteksi diri mereka, baik secara aktif maupun pasif. Artikel ini turut berkontribusi dalam melanjutkan diskusi tentang isu pelecehan seksual terhadap perempuan dan studi tentang dinamika perempuan berniqab.

Kata Kunci: *Catcalling*, Pelecehan Seksual, Niqab, Niqabi

Introduction

The issue of sexual violence is not a new occurrence in Indonesian society, with women being the most frequently reported victims. Data from Komisi Nasional Perempuan-Komnas Perempuan (the National Commission on Violence Against Women) over the last five years indicates a concerning increase in the number of cases. In 2017, there were 230,881 recorded cases, followed by 280,185 cases in 2018, 302,685 cases in 2019, 226,062 cases in 2020, and 338,496 cases in 2021. As of January 2022, the Central Java Provincial Service reported 117 cases, with Surakarta City having the highest number of complaints at 37. One notable trend in these case reports is the rising number of sexual violence cases against women (YAPHI, 2022).

One manifestation of sexual violence is sexual harassment, as defined by the Komnas Perempuan. It is described as "sexual acts through physical or non-physical touch targeting the victim's sexual organs or sexuality." This includes behaviors such as whistling, flirting, making sexually suggestive remarks, displaying pornographic material and sexual desires, poking or touching specific body parts, and engaging in movements or gestures of a sexual nature. Such actions can lead to feelings of discomfort, offense, humiliation, and may even pose health and safety risks (Komnas Perempuan, n.d.).

One prevalent form of sexual harassment is catcalling. According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, catcalling is "the act of shouting harassing and often sexually suggestive, threatening, or offensive comments at someone publicly." This behavior qualifies as sexual harassment because it encompasses actions directed by the perpetrator toward the victim and involves elements of a sexual nature. Verbal catcalling typically involves whistling or making comments about the victim's appearance, while non-verbal actions can include the use of physical gestures (Qila, Azizah & Rahmadina, 2021).

According to a 2019 survey involving 38,755 women and 28,403 men, a concerning 64% of women and 11% of men reported being victims of sexual harassment in public spaces. Among those who experienced harassment, approximately 60% revealed that the predominant form was verbal, including body comments, whistling, honking, pecking or kissing sounds, racist or sexist remarks, sexual comments, and persistent stalking. Additionally, around 24% reported instances of physical touching, such as being touched, blocked, rubbed, stalked, peeped on, or photographed without permission. Approximately 15% of respondents experienced visual harassment, which included sexually glaring eyes, vulgar gestures, displayed acts of masturbation, or openly showing genitals (Farisa, 2019).

Catcalling is frequently linked to the way women dress in public spaces. Rahman's findings challenge the misconception that catcalling selectively targets its victims. Even women who wear modest, covered clothing fall prey to catcalling. Rahman emphasizes that irrespective of their attire, women remain susceptible to objectification and harassment. Wearing more conservative clothing, he asserts, does not guarantee immunity from catcalling (Rahman, 2019). Adding to this, Dwiyantri's research in 2014 revealed a troubling aspect of harassment cases: women victims were often unfairly blamed for the clothes they wore. This highlights a concerning tendency to shift responsibility from perpetrators to victims based on their attire (Dwiyantri, 2014).

Supporting evidence for these findings can be derived from a national survey conducted by Koalisi Ruang Publik Aman-KRPA (the Safe Public Spaces Coalition), which consists of various foundations and organizations, including Hollaback! Indonesia, Jakarta Feminist, Dear Catcallers Indonesia, *PerEMPUEan*, and the

Indonesian Lentera Sintas Foundation. The survey, accessible at ruangaman.org/Survei (2019), specifically addresses harassment in public spaces and provides insights into the clothing worn by victims of sexual harassment. According to the survey, which involved diverse respondents, 17.47% of those who experienced sexual harassment were wearing long skirts and trousers. Following closely were women in long-sleeved shirts (15.82%) and school uniforms (14.23%). The data also highlighted 19 other types of clothing that were subject to harassment. Notably, women who wore the hijab were not exempt, with approximately 13.20% wearing a short/medium hijab, 3.68% wearing a long hijab, and 0.17% wearing a hijab with a niqab. In total, around 17% of respondents who experienced sexual harassment also wore the hijab (Safe Public Spaces Coalition, 2019).

Numerous studies have delved into the phenomenon of catcalling in Indonesia, with a diverse focus on legal and women's issues. Several studies explore catcalling in relation to legal aspects (Halim, 2021; Hardiman & Saefudin, 2023; Hidayat, Hesti & Fauzi, 2021; Salam, Madjid & Aprilianda, 2023), while others examine its impact on women (Pangestu, 2023; Ervinda, Zumi & Marpuri, 2022). Two predominant strands of research emerge: one investigates the legal implications of catcalling, scrutinizing the extent to which such acts can be subject to legal sanctions. The other strand focuses on women's experiences, exploring how catcalling targets women and the consequences they face. Notably, there is a limited yet emerging body of research specifically addressing catcalling directed at women wearing the hijab. Several studies shed light on the experiences of hijab-wearing women who encounter sexual harassment (Mulianti & Syukur, n.d.; Ramadhania, 2021; Nugraha & Zuhriah, 2023).

The undeniable reality that women who wear the hijab or adopt a Sharia appearance are not immune to sexual harassment underscores the indiscriminate nature of such incidents. This challenges the commonly asserted notion that sexual harassment is solely linked to revealing clothing. If catcalling extends to women dressed in modest and veiled attire, the pertinent question arises: Do women who wear closed clothes and even don the niqab also face the potential for catcalling? Given the absence of studies exploring this specific issue, this article aims to delve into the impact of catcalling on women who wear the *niqab*—those who dress in loose clothing covering

the entire body, including the face, typically leaving only the eyes visible. The exploration will encompass the causes and forms of catcalling experienced by *niqabis*-- Individuals who wear the niqab, and investigate the strategies they employ to respond to these actions. The research was conducted on 10 niqabis with various ages and educational backgrounds. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with niqabis during the period from November 2022 to June 2023.

This article adopts Herbert Blumer's symbolic interaction theory as its analytical framework. Blumer (1969) articulated three fundamental principles of symbolic interactionism: meaning, language, and thought. In this theoretical perspective, these three concepts are interconnected and mutually influential. Individuals utilize language to convey symbols imbued with meaning, and their thoughts shape the interpretation and significance attributed to these symbols. In social interactions, the meaning assigned to symbols is shaped by individual thoughts and is communicated through language to facilitate understanding by others.

Moreover, this research adopts a phenomenological approach within qualitative research methods. The phenomenological approach seeks to interpret and elucidate individual experiences in everyday life, particularly during interactions with others and in various environmental settings. Emphasizing the exploration, understanding, and articulation of the meaning inherent in phenomena and events within an individual's life in specific situations, phenomenological research is categorized as pure qualitative research. Its primary objective is to comprehend and describe the intrinsic characteristics of phenomena as experienced by individuals (Sugiarto, 2015). In this study, the phenomenological approach is employed to explore the experiences of ten niqabis in Surakarta who encountered catcalling in public spaces.

Catcalling dan the Causes: Niqabi's Perspectives

Men who engage in catcalling do not discriminate based on the clothing worn by their victims. Contrary to the assumption that catcalling is exclusive to women in revealing attire, our interviews with niqabis in Surakarta reveal a different reality. These women, who are fully covered, have not only experienced catcalling but have encountered such harassment repeatedly. This highlights that catcalling is not confined to women who dress openly; those who wear the niqab and closed clothing also face

unwarranted attention from men. The interviews underscore the absence of a guarantee that women, irrespective of their clothing choices, will be free from catcalling in public spaces.

When questioned about the causes of catcalling persisting among women who wear the niqab, Niqabi 1 expressed surprise and attributed it to internal factors within the perpetrator. He hesitated to entirely affirm the public's belief that catcalling is linked to the clothing worn, emphasizing that even with complete body coverage and a niqab, he still experiences catcalling. This perspective echoes the findings of prior research conducted by Liyani & Hanum (2020), which asserted that a woman's clothing is not the primary factor influencing catcalling behavior. The limited awareness surrounding catcalling is attributed to inadequate socialization on the subject, leading to the perception that catcalling is trivial and merely a joke.

Niqabi 2 also confirmed Niqabi 1's statement which emphasized that catcalling was caused by each perpetrator. According to her, the perpetrator felt more powerful when he was with his group of friends, so that when the perpetrator saw a woman he would think she was weak. Apart from that, catcalling can also be a means of proving for the perpetrator that men have power over women.

Niqabi 3 recounted a distinct encounter, noting that initially, the perpetrator seemed to inquire innocently, possibly out of concern. However, the nature of the questions escalated in intensity and breached the victim's personal space with an inappropriate tone. Niqabi 3 suggested that the situation unfolded this way because she consistently responded to the perpetrator's questions, inadvertently making herself more 'noticeable' in the perpetrator's eyes.

In the beginning, I maintained a positive outlook, thinking that perhaps the person's initial intention was merely to ask questions. However, as time passed, the inquiries delved into private matters, and the tone adopted by the person also became flirtatious. I ponder whether my consistent responses to their questions unknowingly conveyed an openness, prompting the individual to push boundaries further. The dynamics are perplexing, and I find myself questioning the motivations behind these interactions. (Interview with Niqabi 3).

Niqabi 4 asserts that catcalling stems from the perpetrator's inherently impure thoughts, suggesting a lack of control over their mind from the outset. Additionally, he

holds the belief that if catcalling persists without intervention, it may evolve into more severe forms of sexual violence over time.

In my view, the individual's impure thoughts and predisposing factors are pre-existing, making it difficult for him to exercise control over his own mind. This means that whether woman wears revealing or modest attire, she remains susceptible to such behavior. The genuine concern lies in the risk that, if left unaddressed, these incidents may grow bolder and evolve into outright harassment. (Interview with Niqabi 4).

Through interviews with six women who wear the niqab, a recurring theme emerged — they had all experienced catcalling on multiple occasions. This collective experience challenges the notion that the choice of dressing, whether open or closed, determines a woman's likelihood of facing harassment. The reality is that wearing closed clothing does not inherently shield women from catcalling. Despite their attire, women remain at risk of being objectified and subjected to sexual harassment.

In addition to factors rooted in the perpetrator, environmental elements also play a significant role in fostering catcalling. Instances of catcalling are often observed in public spaces, including highways, malls, and markets, where diverse individuals coexist without prior acquaintance. Moreover, the absence of robust security infrastructure in public spaces can render these areas vulnerable not only to catcalling but also to other criminal activities.

In addition to individual and environmental factors, niqabis posit that the root cause of catcalling lies in power relationships ingrained in society, where men wield dominance over women. This deeply embedded system, often referred to as patriarchy, fosters a mindset where men perceive the degradation of others, especially through harassing women, as a means to assert their masculinity. The prevailing culture in society further amplifies these behaviors, with media representations frequently portraying women solely as sexual objects (Kearl, 2014).

Another significant cause identified is the discrimination faced by specific groups of women, particularly those who wear the niqab. Women with the niqab are often considered a minority due to their relatively small numbers. Frequently, minority groups are stigmatized and subjected to different treatment within their environment. In our society, there exists a construct associating the niqab identity with radicalism, perpetuating discriminatory attitudes. Discrimination, in turn, leads to feelings of belittlement and oppression among minority groups. Stereotypes, often based on

unfounded assumptions stemming from experiences, observations, or circulating rumors, contribute to this discrimination (Tria, 2022). One informant shared their experience of being labeled a terrorist and shouted at due to wearing a niqab. This discrimination not only reinforces negative stereotypes but also serves as a catalyst for individuals to exert power over minorities.

Forms of Catcalling in Niqabis

Catcalling not only manifests as verbal ridicule towards the victim in public places but also takes on non-verbal forms. Triwijati (2020) emphasized that verbal sexual harassment occurs when someone uses speech or words directed at another person with purposes or elements of a sexual nature, often referred to as verbal sexual harassment. In our research, we identified five distinct forms of verbal catcalling perpetrated against women wearing niqabs: probing for the victim's personal information, making derogatory comments based on the victim's clothing and incorporating racism, exploiting religious elements, expressing invitations with negative intentions, and making physical comments.

Catcalling often takes on deceptive forms, such as being called '*cantik* (pretty)' or '*manis* (sweet)' under the guise of praise. Additionally, perpetrators employ religious elements by using a lilting tone in greetings. Advice, seemingly innocuous, is another guise for catcalling, with comments like '*Jangan cemberut dong* (Don't frown, please)' or '*Senyum dikit dong* (Smile a little, please),' specifically directed at women wearing the niqab. Furthermore, catcalling extends to actions like whistling, making physical comments, and probing for personal information, as witnessed in incidents like asking, '*kuliabnya dimana nih?* (Where are you going to college?)'. An example from the experiences of Niqabi 6 at a traditional market illustrates catcalling in the form of physical comments.

While I was shopping at the traditional market, I found myself seated, waiting for my friend who was busy shopping. Nearby, three men caught my attention from the moment I arrived, with their unsettling and leering gazes. One of them audaciously remarked, 'it's closed, how come it still looks big?' In response, feeling uneasy, I shot a glare at the man and promptly decided to leave the vicinity. (Interview with Niqabi 6).

Niqabi 5 encountered a similar situation when she was en route to teach a lesson at her student's house, located nearby. Opting for a shortcut through the village settlement due to its proximity, she faced a comparable experience.

One day, on my way to tutor students, I had to pass through a *poskamling* (gathering place--usually located in the village center) typically frequented by young men. Despite being dressed modestly, wearing a full niqab, and maintaining a polite and neat appearance with glasses, I found myself subjected to unwarranted attention. As I walked, I was whistled at and received comments like '*wah ada ukhty cantik, masyaallah* (Wow, there's a beautiful sister, *masyaallah*),' and 'Miss, where are you going?' Unfortunately, the situation escalated when one individual approached, saying, 'Ma'am, can I take you home? Please share your cellphone number,' all while laughing with his friends. It was an uncomfortable experience that highlighted the persistence of catcalling even in seemingly ordinary and safe situations. (Interview with Niqabi 5).

In addition to verbal harassment, women who wear the niqab also endure non-verbal harassment, characterized by the use of physical gestures to assess the victim's appearance. This can manifest through explicit actions such as displaying vulgar gestures, including the exposure of genitals, stalking, or obstructing the victim's path. Other forms include honking and leering, where a man gazes at a woman with a lustful look. Within the scope of this study, non-verbal harassment encountered by the niqabi community took the form of the perpetrator using their own body parts and objects to perpetrate these unwarranted actions.

Niqabi 1 recounted a disturbing incident when a stranger exposed his genitals while she was on her way to the dormitory kitchen. In this instance, she had to cross a small public road separating the dormitory from the kitchen. Niqabi 3, on the other hand, disclosed experiencing non-verbal catcalling in the form of intense stares and glances with sexual undertones while on her university campus. Additionally, she faced physical contact at a gas station when buying petrol. While attempting to pay, the male attendant not only took the money but also inappropriately touched her hand.

Both Niqabi 1 and Niqabi 2 encountered another form of catcalling when they were followed by men on motorbikes. While riding their motorbikes, they were pursued and even physically grabbed by the perpetrators. Fortunately, Niqabi 1 managed to escape from the perpetrator's stalking upon reaching the safety of the dormitory. In a different approach, Niqabi 2 and a friend decided to halt at a house with an open door along the road. Thankfully, the homeowner understood the gravity

of the situation, inviting them inside. After spending 15 minutes at the resident's house, the stalker eventually departed.

Catcalling and its Impacts on Niqabis

The catcalling behavior experienced by women, who constitute the majority of victims, unquestionably has an impact on the women themselves. Women often feel afraid when going out alone. Macmillan et al. (2000) stated that one of the impacts resulting from catcalling is the limitation of a person's freedom of movement. Catcalling induces fear and a constant need to be alert when in public spaces. The impact of the catcalling experience varies for each individual, with some being traumatized by the incident, leading to persistent reminders of the event.

These impacts also occurred in women who wore the niqab in this study. Niqabi 1 stated that after being catcalled, she felt more afraid, uncomfortable, insecure, and became wary when meeting the opposite sex. She overthinks if a man approaches her or asks her to talk. She feels traumatized, fearing that the catcalling incident she had experienced might happen again. As a result, she no longer dares to go through quiet streets, always opting for busy roads when she wants to go out and avoiding traveling alone.

Meanwhile, Niqabi 3 decided to stop refueling her motorbike at the gas station where she had experienced catcalling because she frequently encountered the perpetrator there.

I became fearful of refueling at that gas station. Several times, while wearing a veil, I was subjected to unclear questions. In an attempt to avoid such incidents, I once replaced the veil with a medical mask, and the perpetrator remained silent without asking anything. However, when I reverted to wearing the veil and refueled there again, the unclear questioning resumed. Consequently, I've chosen not to refuel at that gas station anymore. (Interview with Niqabi 3).

Niqabi 6 also experienced catcalling while wearing a niqab. She perceived that she received different treatment when veiled, acknowledging an unpleasant and distinct gaze directed at her. Consequently, she consistently felt afraid of being stalked or physically harmed by the perpetrator.

The fear stemming from catcalling has inflicted deep trauma on Niqabi 5. This fear has given rise to feelings of disgust not only for the perpetrator's behavior but also

towards herself. She experiences self-disgust, believing that despite wearing very modest clothing, she is still perceived as sexually attractive to men. Consequently, she no longer has the courage to venture out alone, and her freedom of movement has become significantly restricted.

To be honest, what I'm sharing with you is not the first time I've experienced catcalling. I've been through this ordeal several times, and even though those incidents have become a blur, the discomfort and fear persist. Despite these repeated occurrences, I find myself still uneasy and afraid to this day. Now, whenever I need to go anywhere, I have to be accompanied by friends. When passing by a group of men, I instinctively lower my head, avoiding eye contact altogether. The repeated experiences have left me deeply traumatized to the point where I feel a sense of self-disgust. It's disheartening to think that even with the veil, I am still subjected to harassment. (Interview with Niqabi 5).

The traumatic feelings experienced by women who wear the niqab are not exclusive to this group; many other women who do not wear the niqab share similar sentiments, as evidenced in a study conducted by Qila, Azizah & Rahmadina (2021). This study asserts that catcalling, as a form of verbal sexual harassment, has a detrimental impact on the victim's life. The catcalling incidents reported by the informants in this research had profound and lasting effects, leading to traumatic experiences.

Niqabi's Resistance Against Catcalling

Despite experiencing catcalling and enduring deep trauma, the niqabis did not immediately succumb to silence regarding this mistreatment. In their efforts to resist the perpetrators, we observed two forms of resistance employed by niqabis against catcalling—namely, passive and active resistance. Passive resistance involves a natural response of remaining silent, indifferent, appearing oblivious, and carrying on with normal activities. This approach stems from a fear that the perpetrator might escalate their actions. Moreover, the women perceived this catcalling culture as deeply ingrained in society, especially among men, making it challenging to effect change. On the other hand, active resistance is characterized by adopting a cynical attitude and even responding to the perpetrator's words. This proactive stance aims to educate men that such actions are inappropriate and disruptive when in public spaces. It reflects a commitment to challenging the prevailing norms and fostering a more respectful environment.

While some niqabis acknowledge that their resistance is often spontaneous, many carefully consider the response they will give when faced with catcalling. Shocked and unable to do anything but remain silent, some admit to feeling powerless in these situations. In such conditions, ignoring the perpetrator and promptly leaving the scene is often seen as the best course of action for niqabis. However, an active response is not ruled out, and niqabis are willing to engage if the situation allows. As expressed by Niqabi 1, they are prepared to fight back when circumstances support such a response. Nevertheless, when feeling cornered or anticipating unwanted consequences, the preferred choice is to dodge and avoid escalating the situation.

In contrast, Niqabi 4 shared that she found the courage to fight back after enduring multiple incidents of catcalling. She revealed that, at this point, she would respond assertively and shout back if faced with catcalling. Niqabi 4 attributed this newfound courage to her maturity, explaining that age had bestowed upon her the boldness to confront men who harassed her. Her decision to confront the perpetrators stemmed from a sense of empowerment, having experienced repeated catcalling from much younger men. Feeling that her age gave her an advantage over these young perpetrators, Niqabi 4 chose to respond actively, successfully silencing the harassers in one instance.

At first, I remained silent, but as the instances piled up, it became too much to endure. Finally, I addressed them, saying, 'Gentlemen, if you speak politely, I am older than you. Weren't your parents taught good manners? Instead of loitering aimlessly, it's better to focus on your studies.' This statement caused them to fall silent for a moment. (Interview with Niqabi 4).

The choice to actively respond to the perpetrator is not frequently embraced by Niqabi women. Niqabi 2, Niqabi 3, Niqabi 5, and Niqabi 6 opt for a strategy of avoidance. They perceive it as safer to ignore and evade rather than to respond, fearing that a reaction might escalate the aggressiveness of the perpetrator. These women express a tendency to ignore verbal catcalling but assert that, in the face of physical harassment, they are prepared to fight back.

Catcalling and Symbolic Interactionism

In the analysis of catcalling using Blumer's (1969) symbolic interactionism approach, the key concepts of meaning, language, and thought serve to illuminate the

formation of meaning and interpretation in catcalling actions, the role of language in catcalling communication, and the influence of individual thoughts on perceptions and responses to catcalling. By delving into these three concepts, the analysis of catcalling provides a deeper understanding of the symbolic interactions between perpetrators and victims within a broader social context.

This theory posits that human behavior is intricately tied to the meaning ascribed to various stimuli by individuals. Individual actions are shaped by their thoughts, emotions, and comprehension of specific situations, ultimately resulting in unique responses and interpretations to external stimuli. This incident involves the interpretation of symbols or communication, conveying meaning through body movements, language usage, and expressions of sympathy, empathy, or various other behaviors that manifest as responses or reactions to the stimuli encountered by the individual.

In the context of meaning, catcalling involves the interpretation or understanding given by both the individual perpetrating the catcalling and the individual who becomes the victim of such actions. For catcalling perpetrators, the meaning attributed often encompasses intentions to insult, dominate, or attract negative attention. On the other hand, victims of catcalling may associate the experience with feelings of threat, humiliation, or insecurity. This assigned meaning is intricately shaped by individual experiences, values, social norms, and the broader societal context in which catcalling takes place.

Various forms of catcalling will have their own impact on the niqabi who experiences it. Catcalling has an impact on women's psychological health and fulfillment of human rights and social relations, including feeling embarrassed, uncomfortable, depressed, afraid and humiliated. Then the impact on the fulfillment of women's human rights and social relations is that their space for movement in public spaces becomes limited due to catcalling because they avoid certain streets in order to minimize catcalling from happening again to them.

Some individuals affected by catcalling experience a noticeable decrease in confidence when navigating public spaces due to frequent encounters with such behavior. Consequently, they adopt a defensive posture, avoiding eye contact, especially with the opposite sex. Additionally, these individuals may feel uneasy about meeting

new people, fearing a repetition of the catcalling experience. In an effort to safeguard themselves, they actively minimize situations that might lead to catcalling recurrence. The profound impact of catcalling on its victims underscores the blatant violation of their human rights, particularly the right to be treated with respect as sovereign individuals free from undue pressure.

Within the realm of catcalling, language pertains to the words, phrases, or verbal actions employed by catcallers to articulate their intentions. This language often encompasses sexual comments, taunts, or insults directed at the victim, serving as a form of communication to express the symbols associated with catcalling behavior. The language utilized may involve vulgar expressions, sexual judgments, or inappropriate insults. In the context of this research, catcalling perpetrators aim to engage with their intended targets, specifically niqabis using these symbols. These symbols, in this context, can be understood as the language wielded by the perpetrator to capture the attention of niqabis.

In the analysis of catcalling, the element of thought encompasses the thoughts, perceptions, and interpretations of both the perpetrator and the victim regarding the action. Individual thinking profoundly influences how one comprehends and interprets the meaning behind catcalling. The thoughts of the catcalling perpetrator may reflect a condescending, belittling, or domineering attitude, while the catcalling victim's thoughts may encompass feelings of anger, humiliation, or insecurity. This cognitive dimension plays a pivotal role in shaping an individual's response to catcalling, whether it involves confrontation, avoidance, or a sense of intimidation.

Once meaning is ascribed to the act of catcalling, the victim decides on a course of action based on that interpretation. Therefore, individuals engaged in these interactions are regarded as conscious and reflective actors, capable of responding in alignment with their interpretations, rather than reacting impulsively or without consideration. The victim, having interpreted the catcalling experience, will then determine their response. Given the varied forms of catcalling experienced by each victim, their responses will naturally differ. Consequently, factors such as interaction, movement, language, and empathy play pivotal roles in shaping the assigned meaning and subsequent reactions.

Conclusion

Sexual harassment, commonly attributed to the perceived exposure of certain body parts, extends beyond such assumptions, affecting even women who wear covered clothing, including the niqab. Catcalling, a prevalent form of sexual harassment, targets women irrespective of their attire. Factors contributing to catcalling against niqabis encompass internal aspects of the perpetrator, environmental influences, and power dynamics ingrained in patriarchal culture.

Catcalling manifests in various forms, encompassing intrusive inquiries into personal information, clothing-based racial comments, the use of religious elements, expressing invitations with negative intentions, and making physical comments. Non-verbal manifestations involve the use of body parts and certain objects. The impact of catcalling is highly individualized, evoking emotions ranging from anger and disgust to fear and deep trauma.

Responses to catcalling among niqabis vary. Some opt for passive resistance, appearing silent, indifferent, or seemingly unbothered. Conversely, others actively resist by confronting perpetrators, aiming to raise awareness and silence them. Within the framework of Blumer's symbolic interactionism, the phenomenon of catcalling among niqabis can be understood through three interconnected concepts: meaning, language, and thought. This perspective delves into the nuanced dynamics of how individuals interpret, communicate, and think about the experience of catcalling within broader social contexts.

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