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“*She Can Never Be Him*”: Understanding the Impact of Internalised Misogyny on the Levels of Global Self-Esteem and Psychological Distress Among Indian Women

Achint Marwa¹, Namita Srivastava²

Student, BA (Hons.) Applied Psychology, Amity Institute of Behavioural and Allied Sciences (AIBAS), Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, India¹

Assistant Professor, Department of Applied Psychology, Amity Institute of Behavioural and Allied Sciences (AIBAS), Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, India²

ABSTRACT: Majority of women experience being victims of misogyny at least a few times in their lifetime. Such experiences can have a negative impact not only on one’s mood and performance in running time but can also leave long term dents on their self-esteem, causing psychological distress and other signs of discomfort and dissatisfaction. Sadly, misogyny is a deeply engraved fester in our society. It is so deeply embedded in our psyche that many-a-times we make misogynistic remarks or fall prey to such practices without conscious realisation. Although females around the world struggle with this, it is more prevalent and unfought in developing countries like India. While misogyny creates a divide between men and women, internalised misogyny goes further to pit women against one another, and fall prey to the systemic trap of oppression. The present study seeks to find the degree of internalised misogyny among Indian women and observe its impact on their global self-esteem and degree of psychological distress. A sample of 100 Indian females in the age range of 18-60 completed the Misogyny Scale, Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale and Kessler Psychological Distress Scale.

KEYWORDS: Misogyny, Self-Esteem, Psychological Distress, Internalised Misogyny, Oppression, Indian Females

I. INTRODUCTION

Indian women have been victims of misogyny for so long that, in many ways, it has become a “natural” part of them, maybe so natural and deeply engrained that it leads them to also be perpetrators of it. The #MeToo movement played a central role in stirring up a conversation against the sexist, discriminatory and exploitative behaviour against women. This and similar campaigns actively shed light on the plight on women (Kearl, 2018). The movement was heavily criticised, not only by men, but by women as well, which further highlights how fragile this systemic model of oppression is and how defensive are its perpetrators. Almost every woman who had the courage to take a stand was suppressed at every turn, her pleas often going unheard or being labelled as a “cry for attention”. All of this only goes on to exemplify the microinsults and microinvalidations that women face on the daily (Cherry & Wilcox, 2020). Sexism may be defined as the rules and expectations established to support a patriarchal system (for example; a society centred around the dominance of men).

On the other hand, misogyny is defined as the "law enforcement branch" of sexism, or the actions taken to reinforce those rules and expectations dictated by sexism are being adhered to (Manne, 2007). Since misogyny is a product of the ideologies of sexism, the two have been used interchangeably here as well as in other pieces of literature. As a result of women being exposed to such messages and being told to fit in the man-made moulds of “the perfect woman”, they begin to sub-consciously apply these to themselves and other women around them (Bearman et al., 2009). It is not uncommon for women to comment on other women’s choices, actions and discretions, just as a patriarchal man would, showing that patriarchy has been rather successful in corrupting not just the mentality of men, but also that of women. Internalised misogyny is then, often misinterpreted as sexism perpetrated by women, when in reality it is much more than what meets the eye.

Internalised misogyny, arguably the most harmful psychological manifestation of oppression occurs when women promote male dominance or the devaluation of women via the execution of horizontal oppression against other

women (Speight, 2007; Piggot, 2004). In the current socio-political setting, it has become even more essential to talk about such topics. Whilst there are a plethora of studies conducted on misogyny, its internalisation and its impact on women's well-being, very little relevant data was found for developing countries like India. With India aiming to become a global power, it is essential that we first address critical social issues and work actively on improving and safeguarding women's status and safety.

As discussed earlier, oppression plays a central role in the ideation and practice of patriarchy, misogyny and internalised misogyny. To better understand these concepts we must understand the root concept of oppression, which results from one group having more authority and prerogatives than other groups. This inequality is an integral part of upholding the dominance and authoritativeness of the more powerful group (David, 2014).

Patriarchy, and in tail sexism and misogyny are oppressive by nature and conceptualization. An important aspect of the academic conceptualization of oppression is its structural and systemic nature (Young, 1990), which is apparent in patriarchy. Realising the systemic nature of this inequality, we can explain why and how men preserve this system via enforcing such implicit and explicit rules, which we term as sexism, while in the case of internalised misogyny, women continue to enforce the system of sexism, even in the absence of men. Therefore, women enact internalized sexism-driven, almost automatic behaviours to preserve the system of sexism as a whole, albeit often in unconscious ways (David, 2014). In summary, sexism is that face of oppression which is manifested from prejudices, attitudes and behaviours promoting and maintaining the dominance of men, while suppressing women through socially, politically, and economically exploitative means (Hunnicut, 2009).

Internalized heterosexism and racism are two other forms of internalized oppression that have a structure similar to that of internalized sexism: members of a historically oppressed group internalize messages that suggest they are inferior and act in ways that uphold the systems of oppression that they have been subjected to. Any axis of a person's identity in which they belong to an oppressed group can experience internalized oppression; in the same way that people can have numerous axes of identity, likewise multiple axes of identity be the site of internalized oppression. (Crenshaw, 1991).

As Germer (2009) puts it, "We're like fish in the water of our culture, and when the water is polluted with racism, sexism, and ageism, we draw those prejudices inside". Internalised misogyny further elucidates on this point, illustrating how sexism can appear as an ongoing internal criticism that manipulates women's perceptions of themselves and other women (Stevenson & Batts Allen, 2017).

So are women the victims of misogyny or its perpetrators? The answer is that a woman who perpetrates misogyny, is inevitably also a victim of the notions that internalised misogyny elucidates: that on the whole, women are inferior to men (Means, 2011).

According to Piggot (2004), misogyny is a cultural practice that subjugates women in order to uphold the dominance of the male group. As a result, women's place in society is diminished in order to preserve and advance men's authority, which breeds hostility and a devaluation of women and matters associated with femininity (Burch 1987; O'Neil 1981; Worell and Remer 2003). In addition to men, women also contribute to the detrimental effects of devaluing gender by acting as agents of horizontal oppression and omission stemming from internalized misogyny, thus reinforcing the central male culture of devaluing women (Piggot 2004; Saakvitne and Pearlman 1993).

The Dehumanisation Theory of Misogyny (Dworkin, 1974, 1987) outlines the systemic nature of internalised misogyny. It maintains that misogyny comprises those actions, behaviours, institutions, and practices that treat women as less than full persons. The objectification of women is the fundamental cause of sexism. As opposed to being viewed as human beings, women are often thought of as nothing more than bodies, with their bodies serving as nothing more than tools for other people's, often men's, purposes.

When young girls grow up in a world that supports this sexist school of thought, they learn to use their bodies as means of survival in this 'man's world'. So, when we question our women on dressing provocatively, or engaging in other acts to please the men in their lives, we are actually questioning a completely reasonable and adaptive learned behaviour. A state of learned helplessness (Maier and Seligman, 1967) is created, and the only way women can survive is if they abide by the rules of patriarchy.

The Enforcement Theory of Misogyny (Manne, 2017) further explains how women are driven to such an extreme, that they themselves enforce and maintain the rules of patriarchy, resulting in internalised misogyny. Misogyny then is the systematic societal enforcement of patriarchy, i.e. it includes the beliefs and behaviours that uphold or perpetuate a social structure in which women are subordinate to men (Manne, 2017).

Manne put forward the concept of ‘Moral Economy of Gender’, which includes:

- what *women owe men*:
 - love, respect, nurturing, safety, security and acceptance.
 - sympathy, care, compassion, kindness and moral attention.
- what *women cannot take from men*:
 - positions of authority, leadership, influence and/or money i.e. any form of power, prestige and status.
 - reputation, pride and/or social standing.

The System Justification Theory (Jost & Banaji, 1994), supports Manne’s theory, claiming that people are driven—to differing degrees and depending upon situational and dispositional circumstances—to support, uphold, and defend the current social, economic, and political arrangements, i.e. maintain the status quo. System justification motive is thought to appear implicitly, or non-consciously, as well as explicitly, and to serve fundamental relational, existential, and epistemic requirements. It presents itself in a variety of ways, such as stereotyping, ideology, and attribution.

As it is with most topics surrounding gender and oppression, there is a lot to unfold and its nuances are to be studied in depth to do justice. In this paper, we examine internalised misogyny, which stems of misogyny, which itself comes from patriarchy and oppression. In order to understand internalised misogyny, we must first understand the parent concept of misogyny and differentiate it from sexism.

II. RELATED WORK

How does misogyny get internalised?

The Ambivalent Sexism Theory (Glick & Fiske, 1996) is a theoretical framework of sexism. According to this theory, sexism entails a combination of hostility and subjective benevolence, and hence can be categorised as hostile sexism and benevolent sexism, respectively.

Hostile sexism may be understood as the commonly seen sexist attitudes which translates to the aggressive derogation of women who question and threaten the systemic nature of the gender hierarchy. This component is said to have a negative and antagonist attitudes and beliefs about women. It includes overtly prejudiced attitudes, like the idea that women are inferior to men.

Benevolent sexism, on the other hand, holds beliefs and attitudes about women that are ostentatiously positive but still condescending. It maintains beliefs that elevate conventional gender norms and see women as nurturing, innocent, and in need of protection. Benevolent sexism is seemingly harmless, but in the grand scheme of it all it strives to condition women into upholding long established gender stereotypes, which ultimately leads to their oppression going unfought. Thus, benevolent sexism has much in common with the concept of internalised misogyny.

So, while hostile sexism is characterised by blatant prejudice against women, and can be understood as traditional sexism, benevolent sexism is the dimension is parallel to internalised misogyny. Males expressed greater ambivalent, hostile and benevolent sexism as compared to females.

The major common ground between these is that both are designed to uphold the systemic nature of gender stereotypes and safeguard the dominance of men in society (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Although both hostile and benevolent sexism may appear to be contradictory to one another, in tandem, they result in the Gender Relationship Paradox—a sociolinguistic phenomenon which suggests that both hostile and benevolent sexism work together to oppress women, and endorse misogyny sometimes under the cloak of “the perfect woman”. This paradox is proof that sexism and misogyny are not always explicitly hostile, but, more often than not, manifest in seemingly positive light. This plays an essential role in women internalising such attitudes and resulting in internalised misogyny.

How Internalised Misogyny results in Low Self-Esteem

Low global self-esteem is a powerful manifestation of decades of misogyny and its Internalisation. Global Self-Esteem refers to the a person's overall sense of self-worth and personal value (Rosenberg, 1996). Sexist microaggressions, often associated with anger, depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, and trauma, are regularly endured by women around the globe, and are a leading cause of internalised misogyny. Internalisation of sexism and undermining self-compassion, is then, often a result of the cumulative impact of these sexist microaggressions (Cherry & Wilcox, 2020).

Brief and frequent verbal, behavioural, or environmental insults (deliberate or inadvertent) that convey hostile, disparaging, or negative sexist slights and insults toward women are known as sexist micro-aggressions (Nadal, 2010). Sue (2010) identified three types of micro-aggressions: 1) micro-invalidations (subtle, demeaning messages that convey the target's assumed inferiority), 2) micro-assaults (blatant, intentional discriminatory attacks that can be verbal, nonverbal, or environmental), and 3) micro-insults (slights that negate, nullify, or exclude targets and their experiential realities). Other than these three forms, there are eight other themes that further categorize sexist micro-aggressions: denying sexism, assuming traditional gender roles, expectations of appearance, sexual objectification, environmental invalidations, invalidating women's realities, and assumptions of inferiority (Derthick, 2015). As social norms have changed and considerable social punishments against more overt forms of sexism have been implemented, the incidence of sexist microaggressions has increased (Sue, 2010).

A good example of this phenomenon is provided by the countless researches performed on gender issues in the workplace, which highlight three things—

- Women holding leadership positions, qualities or aspiring to hold such positions are more often recipients of negative stereotypes and prejudices which have standing impacts of their affective states, cognitions and behaviour, leading them to doubt, and often sabotage themselves (Hoyt & Blascovich, 2007, 2010; Hoyt & Simon, 2011).
- Women who do manage to fight the odds and secure leadership positions are seldom taken seriously are respected the same way as their male counterparts. There seems to be a lot of resistance in accepting the fact that a woman could secure such a position at work (Catalyst, 2012; Eagly & Carli, 2004; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Ridgeway, 2001).
- Due to the aforementioned points, women have been found to not aspire to be in senior positions altogether (Rollero & Fedi, 2014; Skrla, Reyes, & Scheurich, 2000) and be mentally prepared and anticipative of being recipients of more problems and prejudices than their male counterparts (Lips, 2001).

The Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), provides a good explanation for these findings. This theory seeks to examine how individuals categorize themselves and others in social groups and how these categorisations affect perceptions and behaviour between groups (Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Turner et al., 1987; Turner et al., 1987; Oakes, 1987; Brown & Turner, 1981; Hoyt & Simon, 2011). Key concepts of the Social Identity Theory include:

1. Social Categories: The tendency of people to put themselves and other in certain categories based on shared characteristics such as gender, religion, nationality, ethnicity et cetera. These categories provide a sense of togetherness and belongingness to the members of the group.
2. Social Identity: This afore mentioned sense of belongingness creates a deep sense of “us versus them”, which leads to the creation of in-group and out-group distinctions.
3. In-Group Favouritism: Naturally people favour their in-group over other out-groups, and carry a sense of entitlement and superiority for themselves and hold biased and prejudiced attitudes towards other groups.
4. Social Comparison: People make social comparisons, evaluating the standing and accomplishments of their own group in relation to other groups. This comparison can greatly influence self-esteem and group cohesion.
5. Tajfel's Minimal Group Paradigm: This paradigm suggests that in-group favouritism and out-group prejudice may result from even the most petty and arbitrary divisions between groups, such as a preference for particular artworks or random distributions.

Now, keeping these key concepts in mind, let us examine how men and women operate in society. Sexism and misogyny are clear example of the aforementioned concepts, and social comparison explains the adverse effects of misogyny on women's attitudes about themselves, their self-esteem, and mental well-being.

Correlates between Internalized Misogyny and Clinical Symptoms

Internalised misogyny can have a significantly detrimental impact on women's mental health, by constantly creating feelings of dissatisfaction and irritation. Any form of oppression can put excessive and destructive pressure on the victim's mental health.

There is overwhelming evidence which suggests that internalised oppression, in all its forms, can manifest itself in symptoms of depression and anxiety. (Neal-Barnett & Crowther, 2000; Ross et al., 2007; Thomas et al., 2005). Racial oppression, for example, has been seen to cause tremendous stress, and manifest itself in psychological problems viz. prejudice, discrimination, acute and chronic stress and lead people to have feelings of inferiority, a deep sense of injustice. Mental health and well-being appear to be correlated with the cumulative effects of intersectional discrimination and all forms of structural, institutionalized, interpersonal, and internalized racism. Since all subtypes of oppression are systematic in conception and practice, similar results are expected in the case of internalised misogyny.

Women's mental health issues are likely to be directly impacted by sexism due to experiences with sexist events and internalization of constrictive and negative messages about being a woman. Furthermore, internalized sexism may either lessen or increase the impact of sexist events on psychological suffering, as suggested by Feminist Therapy Theory (Brown, 1994; Enns 2004; Worell & Remer, 2003). Sexist events have been conceptualized as gender specific, negative life events that are unique to women, socially based (e.g., they stem from relatively stable underlying patriarchal social structures, institutions, and processes beyond the individual), chronic, and cause excessive levels of stress (Klonoff & Landrine, 1995; Swim et al., 1998).

The Feminist Therapy Theory maintains that there is a causal relationship between sexist events and mental health that is enhanced or synergistic by different forms of internalized sexism (Brown 1994; Enns 2004; Worell and Remer 2003). That is, there is a higher correlation between sexist occurrences and psychological discomfort the more internalized misogyny (i.e., the moderator) there is. Since internalized sexism is a form of self-blame, it may exacerbate the negative effects of sexist experiences on mental health. In other words, when a victim of sexism agrees with the sexist beliefs expressed by the victimization event, the experience of sexist discrimination is more traumatic. Moreover, negative self-perceptions and negative opinions of women in general may be more detrimental to oppressed women than good self-perceptions (Moradi and Subich 2002, 2004).

Studies on oppression (viz. racism, sexism, and heterosexism) have looked at the trauma that oppressed people experience when subjected to oppression for an extended period of time (Carter, 2007; Kira et al., 2015). Trauma, as stated in the Trauma Theory, is recognized as abrupt, uncontrollable, bad events that are followed by a shared set of symptoms, such as distortions in attitudes and beliefs about oneself (Van Der Kolk et al., 1996). The assumption is that sexist microaggressions could be considered a traumatic stressor because, as this theory suffetes, they undermine women's views and beliefs about other women as well as their own sense of worth and value.

Passive acceptance of traditional gender roles and ignorance of or denial of institutional, cultural, and individual sexism are other conceptualizations of internalized sexism that have received empirical support (Bargad and Hyde 1991; Downing and Roush 1985; Fischer et al. 2000; Worell and Remer 2003). Among presumably heterosexual women, passive acceptance has been found to be positively connected with psychological suffering (Moradi and Subich 2002) and foreclosed identity (Fischer et al. 2000). Evidence suggests that sexist events may be responsible for gender variations in somatic, depressive, and anxious symptoms. Sexist events have also been linked to psychological discomfort above and beyond significant and small generic stressful life events (Landrine & Klonoff, 2000).

One of the most popular manifestations of internalized sexism that has been researched is the construct of self-objectification (McKinley and Hyde 1996; Noll and Fredrickson 1998). Self-objectification refers to the internalization of sexually objectifying experiences that occurs when women treat themselves as an object to be looked at and evaluated on the basis of appearance (Fredrickson and Roberts 1997). Researchers have consistently found positive correlations between self-objectification and both depression (Miner-Rubino et al. 2002; Szymanski and Henning 2007; Tiggemann and Kuring 2004) and disordered eating. Self-objectification has also been found to be a mediator between experience of sexual objectification and disordered eating. (Moradi et al., 2005; McKinley and Hyde 1996; Moradi et al. 2005; Muehlenkamp and Saris-Baglama 2002; Noll and Fredrickson 1998; Tiggemann and Kuring 2004; Tiggemann and Slater 2001).

Guided by these concerns, the present study sets out to assess the degree of internalised misogyny among adult Indian women (ages 18-60) and how it affects their levels of global self-esteem and psychological distress. Apart from understanding this phenomenon, the study also seeks to provide ground for future research, as there is a dearth of research of this subject in the Indian context. In light of the western researches, it is hypothesized that:

1. Internalised misogyny will negatively impact self-esteem.
2. Internalised misogyny will increase the level of psychological distress.

III. METHODOLOGY

PARTICIPANTS:

A sample of 110 women participated in the study. Data was collected via convenience and snowball sampling techniques. 50% of the women were in the age range of 18-40 years, while the remaining 50% were women in the age group of 41-60 (as on 2024). Majority women were married or in a relationship (68.2%), while the remaining were either unmarried/single or separated/divorced (30% and 1.8%, respectively).

INCLUSION CRITERIA:

- Participants must identify as females.
- Participants must be in the age range of 18-60 years, as of 2024).
- Participants must be Indian Residents.
- Participants must have comprehension ability in English.

SCALES USED

Misogyny Scale

To assess the level of internalized misogyny, the Misogyny Scale (**Rottweiler & Gill, 2021**) was employed. The scale is subdivided into three dimensions which prove valuable to the current study. These are- 1) Manipulative and exploitative nature of women, 2) Distrust of women and 3) Devaluation of women. The scale consists 10 items measured on a 7-point rating scale where 1 corresponds to “Strongly Disagree” and 7 corresponds to “Strongly Agree”.

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

To assess the level of self-esteem of the participants the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (**Rosenberg, 1965**) was used. This unidimensional scale includes 10 items, rated on a 4-point Likert scale when 1 stand for “Strongly Agree” and 4 stands for “Strongly Disagree”. The RSES generally shows high internal consistency, with Cronbach’s alpha coefficients often exceeding 0.80, indicating that the items reliably measure the same underlying construct of self-esteem.

Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K6)

To assess the level of psychological distress Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K6) (**Kessler et al., 2003**) was used. This version has 6 items, and uses a 5-point rating scale. Cronbach’s alpha for the K6 typically ranges between 0.82 and 0.89, indicating excellent reliability of the items in capturing the underlying construct of psychological distress.

IV. EXPERIMENTAL RESULTS

Table 1 shows the respective means and standard deviation scores for the three dimensions of Internalised Misogyny, the concept, Self-Esteem, and Psychological distress. The mean of the three dimensions of internalised misogyny was found to be 11.4700 (SD=6.35714), 7.2000 (SD=4.30644) and 6.5200 (4.03640), respectively. On the whole, the combined mean of all the dimensions of internalised misogyny was 25.1900 (SD=11.71867). The mean of self-esteem was 37.3300 (SD=6.00682) while that of psychological distress was 13.5766 (SD=5.56540).

TABLE 1: Pearson Correlations, Means and Standard Deviation Scores of Indian women’s levels of internalised misogyny, self-esteem, and psychological distress.

	(IM 1)	(IM 2)	(IM 3)	(IM T)	(GES)	(PD)	Mea n	SD
Manipulative and exploitative nature of women (IM 1)	1	.429*	.399*	.838*	-.065	.215*	11.4700	6.35714
Distrust of women (IM 2)	.429*	1	.521*	.779*	-.227*	.159	7.2000	4.30644
Devaluation of women (IM 3)	.399*	.521*	1	.753*	-.213*	.221*	6.5200	4.03640
Internalised Misogyny (IM T)	.838*	.779*	.753*	1	-.192	.247*	25.1900	11.71867
Global Self-Esteem (GES)	-.065	-.227*	-.213*	-.192	1	-.650**	37.3300	6.00682
Psychological Distress (PD)	.215*	.159	.221*	.247*	-.650**	1	13.5766	5.56540

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The Impact of Internalised Misogyny of the levels of Self-Esteem and Psychological Distress among Indian women

To understand how women’s level of internalised misogyny impacts their levels of self-esteem and psychological distress, Pearson’s product moment correlation was calculated, as shown in Table 1. The results of the present study show that, the dimensions of manipulative and exploitative nature of women (IM 1) and devaluation of women (IM 3) show a positive correlation with psychological distress ($r=.215, p<0.05$ and $r+.221, p<0.05$ respectively). Dimensions of distrust of women (IM 2) and devaluation of women (IM 3) have a negative correlation with global self-esteem ($r=-.227, p<0.05$ and $r=-.213, p<0.05$ respectively). On the whole, internalised misogyny (IM T) has a positive correlation with psychological distress ($r=.247^*, p<0.05$) and psychological distress has a significantly negative correlation with global self-esteem ($r=-.650, p<0.01$)

Therefore, the results clearly indicate that internalised misogyny seriously degrades the global self-esteem of women and cause psychological distress. The results also highlight how a catch-22 situation is created where low levels of self-esteem and high levels of psychological distress are not only manifestations of internalised misogyny, but further fuel one another (as evident by the strong negative correlation between global self-esteem and psychological distress).

V. CONCLUSION

Indian women are made to feel inferior and as second-class citizens on the daily. From not being taken seriously at school, work and home, to being deemed unable to think for themselves, every effort is made to oppress them. A woman’s cries against dowry harassment are dismissed in a court of law for she failed to wear vermilion, or when a young woman is raped and thrown in the gutter as she was “asking for it”, or when women are beat up and often set on fire for “failing as a wife”. Women in India have been and continue to be identified by the men in their lives- she is a daughter, sister, wife, mother, daughter-in-law and sister-in-law, but she is never herself, and she is never enough. No matter what, in India a woman is never enough on her own.

The system of patriarchy looks so strong, because women are not let anywhere near it to actually see how hollow it is. Women are always kept at bay. From the day that they are born, they begin to be brainwashed, that is, is they are *allowed* to live at all. They are taught to eat less, because their brother and father need more food, and also because they ought to look pretty and dainty. They are taught to let men take the lead and to guide them. In other words, women are not born disabled, they are taught to become so.

The present study shows that among a sample of 100 Indian women in the age range of 18-60, the proposed hypothesis stands proven. Internalized Misogyny, as hypothesized, has a negative correlation with Global Self-Esteem and a positive correlation with Psychological Distress. Results of the study are consistent with the review of literature done, and provides ground for further research in this domain.

Years of oppression has penetrated deep into the functioning of our society, and this pressure on women of never being enough, or not being good enough for the men in their lives becomes seriously detrimental to their self-esteem. Sure, we have advanced to a time where women have jobs and careers, but they are never treated the same way as their male counterparts, their successes are not celebrated with the same cheer, and their struggles are seen as mere responsibilities. Despite all the advocacy for equal rights for women, they are still expected to manage housekeeping, as that is their primary duty, and the 'freedom' to work is a privilege given to them. In fact, a man's failures are often attributed to the women associated with him, but the opposite is seldom even imagined. Such sheaths of casual sexism seem harmless, but overtime they become so thick that women stop seeing past them. This results in women limiting themselves, and not realizing their untapped potential. They learn to live in this man's world, and seeing them the younger generations also learn that there is no world for women. Therefore, internalized misogyny is deep stain, which has resulted from decades of oppression against women. Women are subjected to a constant barrage of discriminatory messages by everyday sexist microaggressions, which can have a detrimental impact on their identity, performance, mental and physical health, and self-esteem (Sue, 2010). As established above, all forms of oppression i.e. direct and internalised, such as misogyny and internalised misogyny can be extremely detrimental to not only the social, but also the mental and emotional wellbeing of its victims. All the aforementioned theoretical frameworks shed light on how detrimental internalised misogyny (as a result of misogyny) can be to women's perception of themselves and other women resulting in low levels of self-esteem (Dworkin, 1974, 1987; Manne, 2017; Jost & Banaji, 1994).

High levels of psychological distress are bound to persist when women are constantly under so much pressure. Internalised misogyny becomes a compulsion with women being highly strung on having to be a certain way at all times. This dark combination of discrimination, internalisation of misogyny and even projection at some levels can lead to musturbation. Such dented patterns of thinking become so strong during the course of life that their practice become almost automatic. For example, meeting beauty standards (McKinley and Hyde 1996; Noll and Fredrickson 1998), acting "ladylike", being caring and nurturing, putting your male counterparts before yourself, are all actions that become automatic. Thus, all the evidence points in the same direction, the systemic oppression of women leads to the internalisation of misogyny and consequently has a negative impact on their self-esteem and levels of psychological distress.

No relevant study was found in the Indian context. Therefore, this study may be used as a basis for further research to be conducted or a bigger sample of women, and women from different backgrounds. Similar studies should also be conducted to understand the nature of misogyny independently and to also bring other minority groups, such as the LGBTQIA+ community into focus. Future research may also include the development of more comprehensive tools. Further, this paper may also serve as a basis for the advocacy of equity of women, and spark a conversation of change in the socio-political scenario to better cater to the needs of Indian women.

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