

Dangers of Catcalling: Exploring the Lived Experiences of Women Catcalled in Quezon City

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ABSTRACT

Despite being a women's problem for a long time, catcalling has recently attracted lawmakers' attention. In 2019, the Philippine government enacted Republic Act 11313, or the Safe Spaces Act, which prohibits and punishes gender-based sexual harassment. However, despite the existence of the law, catcalling continues to be rampant. This study aims to explore the experiences of women in Quezon City who have been subjected to catcalling and to provide answers regarding the effects of catcalling on the victims, the locations where catcalling is most prevalent, the most common perpetrators, and the victim's views on the Safe Spaces Act. This research uses a qualitative descriptive approach. Purposive sampling was used to select respondents, and respondents were interviewed using an interview guide to gather information. The findings indicate that women are most vulnerable to catcalling in public spaces, and the perpetrators are strangers or bystanders. Victims went through mental, emotional, and behavioral changes after the incident. Moreover, not all victims think that the law effectively addresses the problem because catcalling is still prevalent, and public awareness campaigns are lacking.

Keywords: *Catcalling, Safe Spaces Act, Space, Stranger harassment*

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Eighty percent of women throughout the world have been victimized on the street at least once (Walton & Pedersen, 2022). Mostly, the form of victimization is catcalling, defined simply as the use of vulgar expressions (verbal or non-verbal) in public spaces (Di Gennaro & Ritschel, 2019). Philippine senator Risa Hontiveros has explained that public harassment is viewed as an everyday occurrence for most Filipinas and LGBTs, requiring correct criminalization (Senate of the Philippines, 2017). Quezon City was the first in the country to join the United Nations (UN) Women's campaign to combat sexual harassment in the streets (Aquino, 2017). In 2019, the government of the Philippines passed Republic Act 11313, often known as the Safe Spaces Act, which addressed gender-based harassment. However, in less than three years, the Philippine National Police (PNP) has already received 12,492 incident reports of violence and harassment against women (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2022).

This study looks at the narratives of women who have encountered catcalling in Quezon City, particularly within the context of the implementation of the Safe Spaces Act. Furthermore, this research explores the spaces where catcalling occurs most frequently, the individuals most vulnerable to this phenomenon and the perpetrators of it.

In Quezon City, Philippines catcalling is one of the issues that people face. A survey conducted by Social Weather Stations (2016) showed that 88% of women aged 8

to 24 have, at some point in their lives, been the target of sexual harassment; that 70% of sexual harassment comes from a complete stranger; and that 70% of sexual harassment occurs during the day. Due to this, in May 2016, the Quezon City legislative council adopted the law against sexual harassment of women in public areas. People anticipated that unwanted advances would decrease as a result but there are still people who violate the ordinance, regardless of their economic status and profession. Even those who are charged with enforcing the ordinance failed to comply with it within a year after its implementation. For example, two police officers were charged with catcalling while on duty in November 2017 (Montano et al., 2019). Aquino (2017) says that, in their lifetimes, the majority of women in Quezon City encounter sexual harassment. Hence, legislators recognized the seriousness of the issue. As a result, the Safe Spaces Act, or the Republic Act No. 11313, a nationwide initiative to combat sexual harassment, was passed into law in 2019.

The Safe Spaces Act aims to guarantee everyone's security and safety. The law forbids the following acts: sexual harassment against women and sexist, homophobic, and transphobic conduct (Gonzales, 2022). It imposes the following penalties for gender-based sexual harassment in streets and public spaces: for verbal harassment (e.g., catcalling, wolf-whistling, cursing), a fine of ₱1,000 to ₱10,000, and up to the punishment of *arresto menor* (11 to 30 days in jail); for non-verbal harassment (e.g., offensive body gesture, flashing of private parts, groping), a fine of ₱10,000 to ₱20,000, and up to the punishment of *arresto mayor* (one month and one day to six months in jail); for stalking, and any acts touching the body of the victim (e.g., touching the genitalia, arms, buttocks), a fine of ₱30,000 to ₱100,000, and up to the punishment of *arresto mayor* in its maximum period (6 months) (Sec. 11). The Act also states that in gender-based online sexual harassment, the penalty is imprisonment in a prison correctional in its medium period or a fine of ₱100,000 to ₱500,000, or both (Sec. 14). If it is committed in the workplace, the punishment for the perpetrator will be decided by the committee appointed by the company (Sec. 17). However, if the gender-based sexual harassment happened in the educational and training institution, the institution will have the authority to revoke the offender's diploma or issue an expulsion order (Sec. 21).

The law aims to curb the rampant gender-based sexual harassment such as catcalling. However, it is alarming to note that the law may not be well-implemented. For example, in Quezon City, a woman was catcalled by a man unknown to her at a street food place. Another woman suddenly told her it was because of her provocative clothes, so the confrontation resulted in a brawl (Madarang, 2019). A Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) Kagawad was catcalled by a tricycle driver while waiting for a tricycle in front of their house in Novaliches, Quezon City (News5Everywhere, 2019). In another catcalling case, a woman playing with her dog was approached by a man who whistled at her and asked her offensive and demanding questions (Manahan, 2019). Despite the passage of the Safe Spaces Act, data supports the existence of widespread catcalling in the Philippines.

This research gathered two Philippine Commission on Women (PCW) campaigns in 2020 and 2021, primarily on Facebook as a poster, webinar, and Google brochure. On the Law Enforcement Agencies Facebook page, there is one Facebook post in 2019 and one poster for 2022 on Facebook. While in the Local Government Units, there is one

Facebook webinar in Mandaluyong City, one poster on Facebook in Pangasinan, and one Facebook post in Caraga Region; all are in 2023. A Non-Government Organization like The Sanctuary Project had one Facebook post in 2021. Moreover, famous personalities like news anchor Jing Castañeda conducted a webinar in 2021. All of the said public awareness campaigns have a range of 4 to 3,000 reactions, 0 to 3,000 comments, and 0 to 15,000 shares, which confirms that not all individuals are reached by the law's information and details. Inconsistency of mainstream media, lack of access from the municipal to the barangays due to poor roadway situations, lack of concern and enthusiasm, and lack of money assistance are the numerous barriers to the effective dissemination of the law (Gatab, 2008, as cited in Redoble et al., 2018).

Most instances of harassment on the street are committed against women, and men mainly commence it (DelGreco et al., 2021). Though unquestionably not a recent development in women's life, catcalling has only recently attracted the attention of serious academic research. Quite often, it has been explored concerning street harassment or stranger harassment, both largely unexplored occurrences, and studied under the broader category of gender-based harassment (Flouli et al., 2022). As long as this kind of harassment is unaddressed, the inability of women to move freely in public spaces without being abused puts their rights and protection in danger (O'Leary, 2016). Moreover, as Arndt (2018) claimed, street harassment is a tool for demeaning others; when combined with self-objectification, the victim of the harassment begins to believe that their bodies are mere things to be enjoyed and wanted by others.

Why catcalling is prevalent may be viewed by how the patriarchal society perceives a given female. di Leonardo (1981, as cited in DelGreco et al., 2021) states that men may feel intimidated by the feminist movement; thus, they frequently turn to harass women in public to reclaim their power. According to Flood (2011), in patriarchal societies, women are treated like second-class citizens. This problem is inextricably linked to the ongoing stigma of male masculinity. Men who catcall want women to understand that they have the ability to invade their space and will do so because they can (McDonald, 2022). The feminist movement began as a campaign to end gender inequality and oppression of women (Soraya et al., 2020). Another reason is that, with dealings with strangers, there is a lack of repercussions and relationship history (DelGreco et al., 2021). Garza (2019) states that men are displaying their manhood by degrading a woman in front of others, with no fear of consequences or punishment. According to Nielsen (2000), stranger harassment is often disregarded since it is perpetrated by a stranger who immediately leaves when the harassment occurs. In addition, O'Leary (2016) explained that males and society continue to portray catcalling as a compliment. A number of street harassers do not believe they are causing harm to their victims; in fact, some believe their acts are complementary and that women are overly sensitive and misinterpret men's intentions (Quinn, 2002). Catcalling can also be viewed as promoting sexism's normalization. Mellgren et al. (2018) study on sexual harassment reveals that women decide not to report when they are harassed because they think it is meaningless and that it keeps happening, which indicates that it has been accepted and normalized. Manalo et al. (2016) state that it may start as an innocent remark but can escalate to aggression and domination.

Republic Act 11313 identifies the locations where safe spaces should be: streets and public places, workplaces, educational and training institutions, and even in the

online world. This study will focus on the streets and public spaces, where catcalling mostly happens. Fileborn and O'Neill (2023) state that one of the most common types of sexual harassment is street harassment. As reported by Social Weather Stations (2016), in Quezon City, Philippines, there are 58% of sexual harassment encountered on the streets, major roads, and eskinitas (alleys). Due to its disguised as innocuous and society's view of public nature, it increases its predominance (O'Leary, 2016). As Sharma (2022) mentioned, catcalling is the most prominent restriction on women's freedom of movement. As claimed by Neupane and Chesney-Lind (2014), for the person who harasses others, public domains are like a hunting ground where they are unrestrained to do whatever they want. In the study of Eastwood (2015), she discussed that it is very challenging to demonstrate that a random stranger sexually assaulted you on the street when the perpetrator might deny the incident by claiming it was a friendly gesture. As stated by Walton and Pedersen (2022), around the world, 80% of women experience street harassment at least once, and a victim may become the target of violence when it progresses from catcalls.

Catcalling nowadays occurs frequently and is experienced mainly by women but not much attention is being given to this problem. Although there are some studies about them, sometimes it is considered not a serious problem compared to others. Based on the recent literature being presented, there are a few studies pertaining to the phenomenological aspect of women specifically on mapping out spatial studies where victimization happens. This study will provide additional knowledge in terms of spaces, specifically on street harassment, how the lived experience tends to make sense within the space, and how the safe space act tends to work out within the awareness level of the victims in the space.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the theoretical support of the feminist standpoint theory that comes from a broader perspective of critical Feminism. Wood (2008) defines critical feminist from two more general categories of studies: feminist and critical theories (p. 204). She also stated that when these notions meet, the ultimate result is ideas that pinpoint injustices and prejudice, especially those motivated by sex and gender, and work to change them (Dow, 1995; Dow & Wood, 2006; Wood, 1995, as cited in Wood, 2008, p. 206).

The feminist standpoint theory's foundation is that power dynamics create unequal social places in society, with some occupied by members of the dominant group and others by members of subordinate groups (Wood, 2012). However, Rolin (2009) argues that power dynamics may not necessarily be characterized by dominance, but they nevertheless serve as tools of dominance to influence others' decisions and mobilize a complicated web of motives to skew the pertinent data (p. 109). She further notes that the difficulty is better understood as a social phenomenon pervasive in the field of power relations rather than as a cognitive bias that social scientists may be susceptible to (p. 109).

According to Huiem et al. (2020), feminist standpoint theory helps to better understand the views of women in various social contexts since it centers the research on the lived experiences of excluded groups (p. 113). Feminists examine women's past

to comprehend because of women's contributions, values, and experiences in society, and patriarchal society has undervalued them by developing new understandings that change the existing behaviors (p. 106). The study must penetrate the surface of the topic to uncover new dimensions in the realm of social sciences that no other feminist techniques can reach (p. 112).

Objectives of the Study

Catcalling is offensive conduct that has become socially acceptable because of the lack of regulations that deal with street harassment (Perry, 2007, as cited in Farmer & Jordan, 2017). According to Walton and Pedersen (2022), at least once in their lives, 80% of women worldwide have encountered harassment on the street. Catcalling has been a problem for residents in Quezon City.

This study sought to explore the narratives of women that experienced catcalling within the vicinity of Quezon City from the implementation of the "Republic Act 11313", commonly referred to as the "Safe Space Act" or the "*Bawal Bastos Law*", till the present. The following information will be identified within the interview process: the description of the catcaller or the suspect; the geolocation of the incident; the perceptions of the victims traversing to the space of the incident; the reasons for reporting and staying silent with the incident; the effects of catcalling; and, their awareness and opinions towards the "RA11313", known as the 'Safe Spaces Act' or the "*Bawal Bastos Law*", in Quezon City.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The qualitative descriptive approach was used in this study. This research wants to explore the narratives of the respondents in Quezon City who experienced catcalling. Qualitative research looks into actual-life issues and gives more information about them (Tenny et al., 2017). Feminist standpoint theory was the theory used in this study. Feminist standpoint theory is predicated on the wider view of Critical Feminist. Feminist standpoint theory helps us learn more about how women think in different settings as it focuses on the real-life experiences of excluded groups (Huirem et al., 2020).

This research is a phenomenological study as it centered on the women's lived experiences of catcalling from the implementation of the Safe Spaces Act until the present. The respondents were interviewed using an interview guide approved by the advisor and the College of Criminal Justice. The following details were obtained through the interview method: perceptions of the women, the location of the incident, and their awareness and opinions towards the Safe Spaces Act.

Locale and Population

This research focuses on Quezon City, where catcalling is prevalent today, as the site of the study. This study has 15 women respondents who experienced catcalling in Quezon City. Respondents were 18 to 25 years old at the time of the incident, and the incident happened in 2019 up to the present.

Purposive sampling was used in this research. In purposive sampling, respondents are selected based on their knowledge or experience with the subject at hand, their accessibility and openness, and their capacity to communicate clearly and deeply (Etikan et al., 2016). In this method, the research's goals and objectives improve the study's rigor and the reliability of the data and results (Campbell et al., 2020). Respondents are selected because they meet the inclusion criteria for the study. The inclusions are: the respondent is a woman or identifies herself as a woman, her age was between 18 to 25 when the incident happened, the incident took place in Quezon City, and the respondent should be willing to be interviewed. Exclusions for this study are other gender than women, minors, did not experience catcalling, and did not want to be interviewed.

Table 1.
Profile of Respondents

Items	Frequency	%
Sex		
Female	15	100
Total	15	100
Year of the Incident		
2019	1	7
2020	1	7
2021	2	13
2022	4	27
2023	7	47
Total	15	100
Age when the Incident Happen		
18	1	7
19	2	13
20	1	7
21	2	13
22	9	60
23	0	0
24	0	0
25	0	0
Total	15	100
Place of the Incident		
Quezon City	15	100
Total	15	100

Seven of the respondents have experienced catcalling this 2023. While four of them experienced it in 2022, and two respondents encountered it in 2021. In 2019 and 2020, each had a single respondent who encountered catcalling. In terms of age, nine respondents experienced the incident when they were 22 years old. There were two respondents in both the 19 and 21 age groups, while each 18 and 20 age group had one respondent.

At the 15th participant, this study reached its point of saturation. The entries were saturated because of the high rate of repeated responses. Urquhart (2013, as cited in

Saunders et al., 2018) stated that saturation is a stage at which further coding provides no new insights into the data. Given (2016, as cited in Saunders et al., 2018) describes saturation as a moment where no new themes can be found by analyzing further data.

Data Gathering Tools

The data-gathering instrument used in this study is the interview guide. According to Taylor (2005, as cited in Kallio et al., 2016), the most typical approach to acquiring information is through interviews. Aside from ensuring that interviews are consistent, interview guides also connect to the study's problem, questions, and other pertinent research (Pedersen et al., 2016).

Eight questions were posted in the interview guide, each with follow-up questions. The questions were translated into Filipino in order to provide clear comprehension and easy responses from the respondents. In-person interviews were recorded with a phone recorder, while online responses were recorded on a laptop.

Data Gathering Procedure

This study utilized the popularity of social media. The first step in this study's data gathering was the use of publication material or "pub mat." The pub mat in this study was in the form of an image, and it was posted on Facebook, encouraging people who encountered catcalling to be interviewed for research purposes. Publication material includes the qualifications or inclusion of the respondents, the details of the people to contact in case the respondents have queries, and the quick response code that will link the respondents to the Google form whenever the respondents want to be interviewed. From the people who filled out the Google form, eleven people qualified and were interviewed. The previous respondents referred to the other four respondents. Twelve of the respondents were interviewed online using Google Meet, while the other three were interviewed in person. The interview was scheduled at a convenient time and setting for the respondents.

Ethical Considerations

This study was evaluated and approved by the Philippine College of Criminology Research Ethics Committee for implementation, according to the ethical standards for research set forth by the committee and the PCCR. The research adviser reviewed the interview guide through email and approved it. Subsequently, the letter requesting final approval was sent to the Dean of the College of Criminal Justice, which was later approved. This procedure aimed to assess the content and omit any potentially offensive questions.

More importantly, the respondents' consent was sought before conducting the interview. In addition, before the interview, it was made plain to the respondents that they could stop the interview at any time, and if they did, all the information collected from them would be removed. Researchers ensured the confidentiality and privacy of participants as guided by research ethics. In this study, one respondent who answered the Google form declined the interview, and the interviewers respected her refusal.

Interviewers wore proper clothes symbolizing professionalism in their field. The communication between the interviewers and the respondents was in the preferred language of the respondents. All information provided by respondents was used solely for this study, and they were guaranteed that their information would be treated with safety and respect. The respondents were assured confidentiality, privacy, and sensitivity.

In addition, regarding the storage and retention of the information collected from respondents, this study will only retain the data for six months following the final defense and will be deleted afterward. This research used Google Drive as its storage, and due to the sensitivity of the information, only the interviewers are permitted to access the data so as not to disseminate the information obtained and to protect the privacy of the respondents.

Treatment of data

This research used thematic analysis to interpret the result of the interview. According to Terry et al. (2017), thematic analysis is a widespread technique for exploring qualitative data. It includes looking through a set of data for repeated concepts, which are often called themes (Riger & Sigurvinsdottir, 2016).

Braun and Clarke's Thematic Analysis was used to interpret the interviews in this study. As Braun and Clarke (2006, as cited in Chawla et al., 2021) explain, thematic analysis allows for a systematic process and processing of qualitative information utilizing coding. It also involves qualitative data into clusters of comparable entities or conceptual categories and detecting patterns and interactions between themes. The translated interview transcript was thoroughly analyzed and interpreted, and the similar ideas that emerged from the data were coded and put into themes. The themes were later analyzed and explained in more detail to develop this study further.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following themes emerged in this study: (1) Women as the Most Vulnerable to Catcalling (see Figure 1), (2) Catcalling Hotspots for Women (see Figure 2), (3) Women's Place in Law and Space (see Figure 3). These main themes discuss the women's stories about the incident, space, and the Safe Spaces Act.

These themes are presented and discussed below with the explanatory excerpts from the interviews. These main themes discuss the women's stories about the incident, space, and the Safe Spaces Act.

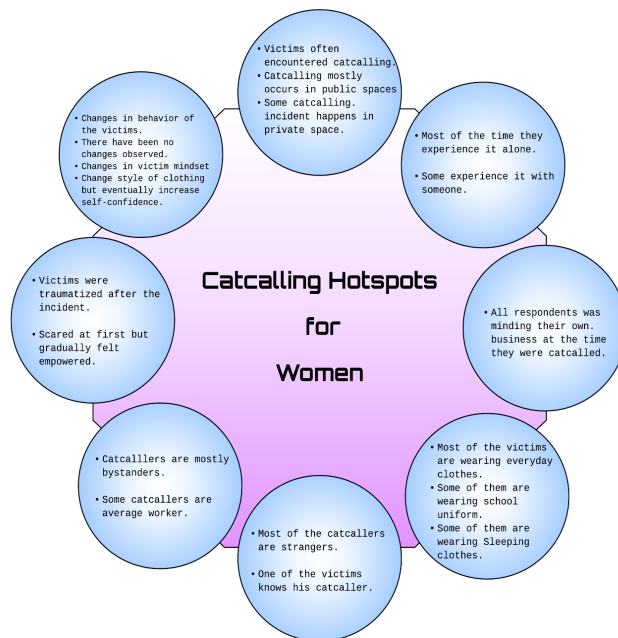
Women as the Most Vulnerable to Catcalling

As the feminist standpoint aims, this theory aids in comprehending the perspectives of women in various social contexts because it emphasizes their real-life experiences. The first theme, 'Women as the Most Vulnerable to Catcalling,' showed the lived experiences of women being catcalled. The data gathered stated that women are often the target of harassment. More often than men, women are the targets of harassment (Gutek et al., 1990; Newman et al., 2003; U.S. EEOC, 2016; York et al., 1997; Foster & Fullagar, 2018). From non-physical violations to women, such as

wolf-whistling, uninvited comments, winking, and intrusive gaze, it can transgress to a more threatening situation like sexual comments and suggestions, stalking, and groping. These findings clearly show the more severe dangers experienced by women. According to Walton and Pedersen (2022), once catcalls escalate into physical threats, the victim is likely to become the subject of aggression.

The incident impacts the victims to be scared and have resentment toward the suspect. However, the incident also made a victim scared but felt empowered. It shows that those who have suffered can sometimes use their experiences as a source of strength. Informant D said,

“At first, I was afraid, but then I feel confident because the way I dress is not the problem.”



After being harassed, participants in the study by Lord (2009, as cited in Manalo et al., 2016) are more likely to express optimism about their appearance as high self-esteem and pleasure with most of their body parts. It reveals that women decide to boost their confidence rather than give in to feelings of embarrassment or shame following the event. Some women used their experiences to have more confidence in how they behaved and dressed. Catcalling victims went through changes in their mindset, emotions, and behaviors, including becoming more alert, being afraid to walk alone in the dark, and

stopping wearing dresses but later realized that the clothes were not the problem. Informant M said,

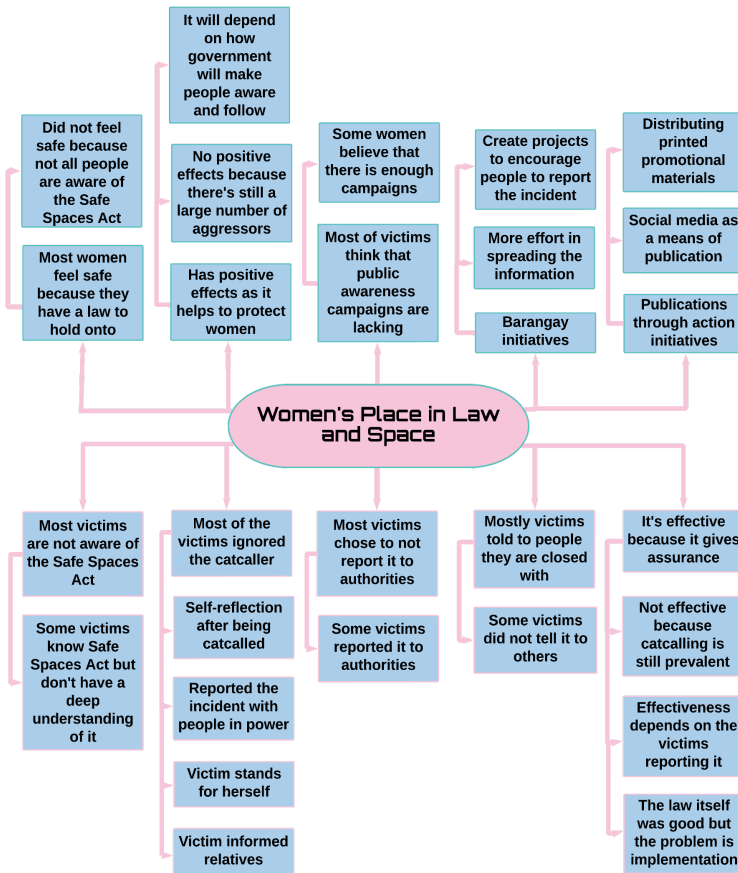
Maybe a few days after the incident, I stopped wearing dresses and got used to wearing pants. But then I realize that the way I dress is not the problem because that is where my confidence came from.

According to Bowman (1993, as cited in Farmer & Jordan, 2017), street harassment can have serious physical, emotional, and psychological repercussions. Moreover, according to O'Leary (2016), although not all ladies get worried when alone in public, many feel unsafe and are always looking for potential threats. Livingston (2015) states that stranger harassment may lead to women changing their behavior, such as switching between different forms of transportation, avoiding particular locations, staying inside at night, or avoiding particular individuals. Women use various techniques to protect themselves from harassment in the street, and sometimes they tend to fight back against the catcaller. Some catcalling victims tend to change how they dress because,

according to Manalo et al. (2016), they began to care more about how they looked and dressed.

When the respondents were asked about the reasons they think why it happened to them, most of them thought that catcallers chose to do it regardless of the reasons. It indicates that this behavior is tolerated. According to Perry (2007, as cited in Farmer &

Jordan, 2017), catcalling is widely seen as a typical form of sexual harassment, thus, revealing that it has become normal in society. However, there is one victim who happened to blame her body for being catcalled. It expressed that catcalling impacts the thinking of the victims. Catcalls also blatantly sexually objectify the recipient (Bowman, 1993; Chhun, 2011; Gardner, 1995; Walton & Pedersen, 2022), leading to self-image judgment (Chaudoir & Quinn, 2010; Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Walton & Pedersen, 2022). Also, some believed that the suspect had a psychological problem, and some thought it was for fun. Moreover, other victims do not know why they were catcalled.



Catcalling Hotspots for Women

The foundation of the feminist standpoint theory is that power dynamics lead to social spaces in society that are unequally populated by members of the dominant group and members of subordinate groups (Wood, 2012). This theme, 'Catcalling Hotspots for Women,' discusses the location where catcalling occurs most frequently and those who perpetuate it. The males are identified as aggressors and members of the dominant group. Women, on the other hand, are oppressed and belong to the subordinate group. The findings of this research show that the victims often endure harassment in public spaces. However, some catcalling incidents can also happen in private spaces. It means that, despite the Safe Spaces Act, women cannot be sure she is safe from catcalling because it can happen in any space. Women are harassed more frequently than men (Gutek et al., 1990; Newman et al., 2003; U.S. EEOC, 2016; York et al., 1997; Foster & Fullagar, 2018). An SWS survey revealed that 60% of women, at least once in their lives, have experienced sexual harassment in a public setting (Manila Bulletin, 2016, as cited in Manalo et al.,

2016). However, sexual harassment on campus is an unspoken problem that has far-reaching consequences for the most vulnerable students (Tugade & Presto, 2021).

Most victims experienced being catcalled alone; however, some even experienced it while they were with someone. It demonstrates that catcallers do not care about their victims and will catcall in any circumstance. The person doing the catcalling does not think about how the victim will feel or affect the victim psychologically (Sulistianingsih et al., 2022). All respondents minded their own business, such as walking, using phones, and waiting for transit. They were wearing their everyday clothes, uniform, or even their sleeping clothes when they were catcalled, thus signifying that the victims gave no provocation for the catcalls.

Most of the catcallers are strangers. This information conveys that catcalling happens because of a lack of social responsibility. Catcallers are not afraid because the victims do not know them; thus, it gives them a free pass to catcall. In the study of Eastwood (2015), she discussed that it is very challenging to demonstrate that a random stranger sexually assaulted you on the street when the perpetrator might deny the incident by claiming it was a friendly gesture. The perpetrator of stranger harassment is typically an unknown person who leaves right after the harassment; hence, the problem is often disregarded (Bowman, 1993; Nielsen, 2000; O'Leary, 2016). Moreover, catcallers are mostly bystanders, while some are average workers. No matter one's social or economic standing, if one is ignorant of the law, one can break it by engaging in prohibited acts. Lies, concealment, forgetfulness, non-disclosure, repression, diversion, avoidance, neglect, verbal tactics, and disinformation are only some schemes that can create ignorance (McGoey, 2019). According to Quezon City Police District, women should not be the only ones to know the law; males and potential offenders should also be aware (Garcia, 2020).

When asked how the victim felt when going to the same place as the incident, victims were mostly traumatized after the incident. According to Bowman (1993, as cited in Farmer & Jordan, 2017), the physical, emotional, and psychological consequences of street harassment can be severe. All of this leads to a withdrawal from public areas. It restricts mobility and can be dangerous. As a result, women dread going to public places for fear of being hurt again.

One victim changed her mindset by becoming more aware of her surroundings. However, there is one victim who was scared at first but gained confidence afterward. Informant M said,

When the incident was still fresh on me I was so scared. But when it lasted, I got used to it because I didn't expect that all people would be like that. I became more confident in the way I dress because it is not right for us women to receive that kind of harassment.

This is in accordance with the present literature that states that women highlight that they no longer feel embarrassed to speak up about sexual harassment they have encountered since they feel better supported and empowered (Keplinger et al., 2019). They give people the confidence to stroll around in public places without worrying since they know they have legal recourse if a catcaller bothers them.

Women's Place in Law and Space

Feminist standpoint theory advocates disseminating information and educating people about the oppression that all people endure and offering solutions to these problems. Ervinda et al. (2021) claim that solutions may be done by socializing the public, distributing posters regarding catcalling, and massive resistance against sexual harassment both in the public environment and through social media. The movement is expected to participate in fighting sexual violence, minimize patriarchal culture, and hinder the widespread oppression of women in this phenomenon. This theme 'Women's Place in Law and Space,' indicates the awareness of the victims towards the Safe Space Act.

Based on the findings, women are familiar with the law but lack a deeper understanding of it. However, the majority of individuals who have experienced catcalling are not familiar with the Safe Spaces Act. To increase public awareness of the law, more needs to be done. One strategy for dealing with this threat is through catcalling instruction for students (Ramadhan & Sihaloho, 2021). Ervinda et al. (2021) state that if the community is likewise unaware of the harmful impacts of catcalling activities on people's welfare, the situation will worsen.

After the incidents, victims mostly ignored catcallers because there were no nearby authorities when it happened. They consider it just a waste of time, that reporting will make it worse, and that others might ignore their feelings. Some victims had self-reflections after they got catcalled and some stood up for themselves. Some victims did, however, report it to the barangay authorities, but they only received inadequate attention.

After the victims reported it to the authorities, the barangay only gave limited action. Informant D said, "There was a "toda (barangay tanod)" that time, then the barangay just took the plate number." Informant E added, "The barangay also said that if you are willing, we will send him out of the area but you will shoulder the expenses."

These discussions demonstrate the lack of understanding of the law by the authorities. Garcia (2020) says that due to a lack of coordination and information sharing with local governments regarding their responsibilities in carrying out laws, the local implementation of laws is sometimes delayed and subject to misunderstanding. As a result, the legal system is ineffective and delayed.

Some victims told their experiences to their relatives. While most became more protective of the victims, some were told to ignore the catcallers, and some were amused by how the victim stood up for herself. According to Angeles and Robertson (2020), victims report and process violent situations using a variety of approaches without the use of police or authority. In incidents of violence and harassment, they choose to tell their families or friends rather than file a complaint with the authorities because they feel like it's more frustrating to do it. Also, they feel sympathy, love, and care if they tell it to their parents. Women believe that if they report it to their families rather than the authorities, they would be understood better and receive less criticism.

Based on the gathered information, most women feel secure because of the law while some do not. Furthermore, the majority of respondents believe the law has positive

effects, while others do not share the same sentiments. On the flip side, one victim stated that positive outcomes would depend on how the government informs and guides people. These findings convey that people's opinions are divided regarding the Safe Spaces Act. It should be alarming, given that not everyone views the law as effective and feels protected. The participants in the study of Cortez (2021), express both doubt and trust regarding the Safe Spaces Act implementation. When asked about the effectiveness of the law, most victims have claimed the law was effective. However, some victims point out that catcalling persists therefore it is not effective.

When the victims were asked if the law was effective in Quezon City, Informant G said, "I think it is still not effective because there are a lot of catcallers." Informant L, on the other hand, said, "I don't think so, because it's not every corner or hour that someone will see harassment happening in those places."

Erdianti et al. (2022), the existing laws and regulations are insufficient to respond to the facts of sexual violence that occur and develop in the community. Some of the victims believed that there were enough campaigns for public awareness of the law. Yet the majority of victims believe that a lack of public awareness initiatives exists therefore, contributing to the reasons for the catcalling prevalence.

When the victims were asked if the public awareness campaigns about the law is enough, Informant H said,

Maybe there's still a little deficiency especially to those areas where the barangay no longer goes to, if ever there is. Because I think they are the ones who need to be more aware about the said law and explain more to them especially to women that there is a law protecting them.

Informant G said,

No, because there are still some people who don't know that there is such a law. Like me, despite always reading and getting up to date in every news, yet here I am, doesn't even know that there is this law.

Informant O added,

Actually it's not enough. There was no public speaking in any community about the said law. It's like it's just implemented and it's gone. So much better if they will do public speaking campaigns about the law so that those circumstances will not happen again especially for us women.

Lack of access to mass media, poor road conditions that make it difficult to get from the municipal building to the barangays, disinterest, and ignorance, and budget constraints are only a few of the problems that inhibit the effective dissemination of law (Gatab, 2008, as cited in Redoble et al., 2018).

Regarding the improvement of the programs, respondents suggested that more effort should be made to promote information, and barangays should take the initiative like everyday roaming of streets and utilization of Close-Circuit Television (CCTV). As highlighted by Cruz et al. (2021), One of the responsibilities of Barangay Tanod is to

conduct daily and night roaming to monitor the peace and order within the community. As Jacoba et al. (2021) asserted, installing Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) cameras contributes to filling the cases and serves as evidence to restrict gender-based sexual harassment. There should also be programs that encourage victims to come forward. The elaboration of Fitzgerald and Cortina (2018, as cited in Chen et al., 2021), the delay in the process of resolving cases of sexual harassment; may even lead to more incidents of sexual harassment in the future. In accordance with Abdelmonem and Galán (2017), WenDo Egypt trainers offer self-defense courses that encourage women to verbally and physically respond to harassment and assault against themselves and other women.

Therefore, when addressing instances of sexual harassment, organizations should concentrate on implementing preventive measures to decrease the likelihood of such incidents occurring. Moreover, to spread the information, publications can be through social media. According to Ervinda et al. (2021), the usage of comic media portrays how to reduce unwanted verbal sexual gratification in public places. Also, there should be action initiatives. In the study of Thomas (2015), organizing regular seminars, workshops, and awareness programs to educate the public on the issues and consequences of sexual harassment by creating a document zero-tolerance policy for sexual harassment instances. Distributing printed promotional materials should also be practiced. The production of advocacy in multimedia was displayed through posters, banners, and television commercials (Local Government of Quezon City, 2016, as cited in Aquino, 2017).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

Catcalling is especially harmful to women and often leads to emotional, mental, and behavioral changes in its targets. Most people who have been the target of catcalling believe that it happened to them because the catcaller decided to do it regardless of the reasons. While some are fearful after being catcalled, others have regained their confidence. The same can be said for past literature, which asserts that women's self-esteem is regained after harassment. These findings help people be more aware that catcalling is still prevalent despite the existence of the law. It encourages individuals to consider catcalling more seriously because it impacts the victim's life. Additionally, as what the feminist standpoint wants to seek, these findings highlight women's perspectives so that others may learn from their experiences and contribute to ending women's oppression.

Catcalling occurs predominantly in public places, and the victims are frequently alone. In addition, victims are going about their business while strangers harass them. These findings follow past literature stating that catcalls often happen in public places, and strangers often perpetuate catcallers. It only indicates that people are unaware that catcalling is illegal, as catcalling is still prevalent today. Due to a lack of social responsibility, strangers are frequently the aggressors because they do not know their victims and believe they can evade the law. According to the theory of this study, power dynamics generate unequal social positions in society, which are the dominant and subordinate groups.

Victims are unaware that a law protects them from catcalling, so most of them did not report the incident. However, some reported it but only received inadequate

responses. The views of the victims are divided as to the effectiveness of the law. Based on the prior literature, more has to be done to increase public knowledge of the legislation. It conveys that government initiatives to spread information about the law still need to be improved. Feminist standpoint theory advocates for disseminating information regarding oppression experienced by all people and providing remedies to these issues.

The study revealed the significance of the Safe Spaces Act based on the lived experiences of women catcalled in Quezon City. Thus, the following recommendations are hereby presented:

According to the result of the paper, there is a need for enhanced training for front-line personnel who handle catcalling cases. This is consistent with current literature, which states that a lack of knowledge about the law causes its implementation to be delayed and susceptible to misunderstanding. Thus, this research recommends that all authorities investigating and prosecuting catcalling occurrences may attend seminars and training to ensure they have the expertise to address this issue successfully. Furthermore, based on the study, there is no strict monitoring of the streets, and it is proven with presented literature stating that it increases the catcalling incident. Therefore, this research recommends that the barangay tanod or police officers may conduct strict day and night patrols to ensure the community's peace and order. This research data also found the insufficient use of Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) to prove catcalling cases, as substantiated by the presented literature that lacking CCTV affects the filling of reports. Therefore, this study recommends increasing the number of CCTV cameras installed as it may provide proof of catcalling cases.

Based on the result of the study, the campaigns regarding the Safe Spaces Act need to be improved. It is also demonstrated by the literature that asserts there needs to be more campaigns about the said law. Therefore, this research recommends intensifying awareness campaigns for the Safe Spaces Act through social media platforms and publication materials. This study's result states that the law could have been better implemented. It is consistent with the present literature stating the need for more information dissemination regarding the authorities' responsibilities. Thus, this research recommends improving guidelines on handling catcalling cases. A copy of this study may be provided to the Department of Interior and Local Government, the Philippine Commission on Women, the Department of Information and Communication Technology, and other relevant agencies who are responsible for disseminating information about the Safe Spaces Act to support them by providing information through this research.

As this study uses qualitative research, future researchers can employ a mixed method, utilizing the qualitative and quantitative data, looking at the perceived effectiveness of the law from the perspectives of its beneficiaries—its constituents. Furthermore, aside from the standpoint of the women, if future researchers would like to delve into exploring the system itself, other critical theories can be utilized such as System Theory and Intersectionality Feminist Theory in critical discourse and critical studies. This will provide an understanding of how the system, along with the collective individual behaviors of people, contributes to the systemic and spatialized victimization happening in our society. As to the aspect not explored in this study, this research recommends future researchers to pursue studies on the front people specifically the

women's desk and barangays, to find probable factors and reasons that contribute to the implementation of the law, especially on the aspect on how and why victims and bystanders tend to report or not report the incident of victimization.

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