

# Misogynist Internet Objectification of Women Celebrities on Social Media Platforms (Facebook) in Bangladesh

Kuntala Chowdhury

*kuntalachowdhury@yahoo.com*

*Assistant Professor, Gender & Development Studies, Begum Rokeya University, Rangpur, 5404, Bangladesh*

---

## Abstract

Social Media platforms are giving open access to everyone. Everyone is getting the power to write something in someone's post hiding behind the monitor. However, the problem is that people are trying to carry their offline identity to the online platform and they are trying to impose misogynist hegemonic masculine power on women by bullying them. As celebrities' lives are very public, they are often being the victim of bullying and online harassment. Especially, women celebrities are the victim of online bullying and harassment more in comparison with male celebrities. Moreover, perpetrators think that they can say anything about them as it's not possible to identify them or there are no strict laws against cyberbullying. Because of these situations women celebrities are the victim of misogynist internet objectification, cyberbullying, and online harassment. After following the content analysis method, it's been noticed that they are being bullied for their personal life, dresses, or age. Some people are also trying to impose their thought on them regarding their matter. Women celebrities are just praised for their beauty. The appreciation regarding their work is not that noticeable among followers' comments. This study will provide a deep insight into how embodied experiences or offline identities of misogynistic people are carried away to online platforms like Facebook and how they are trying to defame women celebrities and establish power over them. The lack of proper knowledge regarding digital security is increasing the objectification of celebrities and women on social media platforms.

Keywords: Social Media Platform; Misogyny; Internet Objectification; Embodied Experience, Offline and Online Identities

---

## 1 Introduction

The fluidity of identity from offline to online is creating new forms of harassment or violence (Powell & Henry, 2017) which can include spreading obscene material, hate speech through social media, cyberbullying and providing threats using personal photos, blackmailing, online trolling, sharing private photos without permission, etc. (Mengu & Mengu; n.d.). There is a tendency to bully women more in comparison with men on social media. According to Communication and a Cultural Studies Professor, Radhika Gajjala, "It is important to examine how individuals and communities are situated within the complex global and local contexts mediated by unequal relations of power (cited in Daniels, 2009)." Using technological fluidity, a person can be concurrently empowered or subjugated (Powell & Henry, 2017). However, the level of subjugation can be different based on intersectional identities like class, gender, age, or color (Daniels, 2009). This paper aims to explore the misogynist internet objectification of women celebrities on social media platforms (Adobe Spark, 2020). As Facebook is a popularly used social media platform in Bangladesh so shared content, photos of women celebrities on Facebook, and their followers' comments would be analyzed from gender perspectives. Especially, understanding the background of why young women movie celebrities are becoming the victim of cyberbullying, what kinds of sexist comments they are receiving from their followers, how these bullies are making them vulnerable or powerless because of their gender and socio-cultural

context, and how they are trying to cope up with the misogynist comments of their followers. Following the content analysis approach, this study explored how women celebrities are the victim of misogynistic hatred statements in their online profiles.

## 2 Literature Review

According to the Pew Research Centre in the United States, 21% of women aged 18-29 are sexually harassed online (Pew Research Centre, 2021). Social media are used by misogynists as an effective tool to harass women as they are not visible. Bringing the misogynist offline identity online and writing derogatory comments towards women, they are trying to establish power over women.

Jinsook Kim conducted a study in South Korea to explore misogynistic discourses in a male-dominated online community. Here, Jinsook Kim tried to explore how online misogynistic discourses are the result of the crisis of hegemonic masculinity and the changing gender relationship. The researcher also explored how men are trying to re-establish solidarity producing hate discourse against young women. It was expected among early scholars that an anonymous fluid identity would create a space that is more equitable online and it would be a genderless platform. However, online identities are not that much different from offline identities and people produce existing power relationships and strengthen the existing inequalities in our society (Kim, 2018). Kendall also showed how hegemonic masculinity and women's objectification keep online as a male domain (cited in Kim, 2018). Kim's study also focused on how women's voices kept silent over history and justified the process. Even after exploring the previous history, it has been found that online misogyny not only hampers individual women's agency but also created socially justified discourse to prevail against gender discriminatory practices. Even during the economic crisis, it had been noticed that how men co-related the "breadwinner" stereotypes with the "real men" concept and how they call themselves "loser" (Kim, 2018). Therefore, the online platform is a misogynistic domain where anti-feminism statements and hate speech toward changing gender relations and progressive women have been produced (Kim, 2018). This study will complement the idea of Jinsook Kim's study and help to contextualize country perspectives by analyzing the misogynist hate comments towards movie celebrities.

Bangladeshi professors conducted a study regarding "Cyber-crimes Against Womenfolk on Social Networks: Bangladesh Context". The researcher noticed how the increased participation of Women on Facebook and sharing data with a large group of people are becoming problematic for women and how female users are becoming more victims of cyber crimes in comparison with male users. In conducting this study researchers tried to cover the broader perspectives of cyber-crime for example: what kinds of cyber-crimes are happening against Bangladeshi women and why they are reluctant to seek legal justice (Ahmed et al., 2017). However, the above-mentioned study is not specific and especially focused on the general understanding of cybercrime and considered all women as a homogenous category ignoring their intersectional differences.

A group of researchers conducted another study in 2019 to understand the non-participation of Women in online movement. It has been noticed that women from Bangladesh did not participate that much in the Me-Too Movement. The reasons behind the non-participation of women have been explored in mentioned study. Because of the cultural differences, women did not get the courage to share their stories as they thought they could be the victim of defaming because of sharing this story. After thinking about social constraints and bindings, lack of hope, and the cultural context of Bangladesh, women could not share their stories (Hassan et al., 2017). This study clearly shows us how women, as well as men, carry their embedded thoughts and cultural identity online and how these offline identities shape one's online identity. This study supplements my study regarding misogynist internet objectification of women and shows defamation is also used for powerful women and how they become the victim of cyberbullying or trolling just because of being women.

## 3 Organization of Key Concepts

The conceptual framework of this study focused on Popular misogyny (Banet & Weiser, 2018), misogynist internet objectification (Powell & Henry, 2017), and the theoretical framework would follow the Embodiment theory (Powell & Henry, 2017). This study explored the nature of sexist comments and the coping strategies of women celebrities. The below-mentioned concepts and theory will help to analyze misogynist internet objectification of women.

### 3.1 Popular Misogyny

Popular misogyny follows the traditional definition of misogyny and most cases follow the forms of hegemonic masculinity (Powell & Henry, 2017). Popular misogyny is reactive to popular feminism and hurts women using the digital Platform (Weiser, 2018). This study explored how 'Popular misogynists' are trying to demean the women celebrities who are using social media platforms like Facebook.

### 3.2 Misogynist Internet Objectification

According to Nussbaum (2010), misogynist internet objectification is connected with shame punishment, resentment, and hegemonic forms of masculinity. These concepts help us to understand the reason for online harassment. The misogynist produces hatred comments just to satisfy the hegemonic masculine ego and most of the time it is connected with beauty standards and physical appearances. To get power over women and to let them down the misogynist act in a reactive way and express resentment. These kinds of misogynist attitudes and hegemonic masculinity are strongly connected with power relations (Powell & Henry, 2017). The study explored the power relation in the online platform using the idea of misogynist internet objectification.

### 3.3 Embodiment Theory

This theory helps us to understand how the digital embodiment of misogynists can harm women using their private images and commenting derogatory statements though they are not making any harm physically it is directly linked with the shame punishment. Following the social and cultural context how gendered bodies are spreading misogynist statements and or experiencing power and domination are the main arguments of this theory. Therefore, disembodiment and the dualism between thought and the material world according to philosopher Rene Descartes is not possible rather people carry their embodied experience in the digital world and produce the same inequality (Powell & Henry, 2017). Using this theory, the dualism between online and offline can be dismissed as people usually carry their embedded experiences on the online platform.

## 4 Methodology of the Study

### 4.1 Subjective Experience

When I was working as a radio jockey on Dhaka FM 90.4 (Radio station) in 2012, several radio followers were using my photos and sharing abusive posts. When we used to ask for the requested song from listeners using Facebook, we received derogatory sexual comments just because of being women. Because of my subjective experiences (Code, 1993) as a woman media worker, I know how tough it is to handle these misogynist statements. Considering my subjective experiences, I would like to work on the misogynist internet objectification of women celebrities on social media platforms in Bangladesh. I believe that content analysis based on their online posts would be a great option for me. To understand online victimization, I critically analyzed their social media posts and what kinds of comments they threw toward women.

### 4.2 Content Analysis of Social Media (Facebook) Posts

This study will consider the top three contemporary movie actresses who are active in social media and analyze the content of their social media platforms for the last two months who belong to the age group from 30-50. After analyzing the content, this study will explore types of comments and how misogynists are targeting women celebrities based on their dress, beauty standard, etc. Based on their career span, the number of popular works, and critically acclaimed work their posts have been selected. This study showed the attitudes of our society toward powerful women on social media platforms. The profile of Jaya Ahsan, Apu Biswas, and Purnima is the best suitable celebrities for this study so I purposively selected their social media posts (Facebook) for content analysis.

## 5 Findings

### 5.1 Few Comments from Facebook

As Facebook is a popular social media platform so that analyzing Facebook posts and comments it's been noticed that no matter how successful women are in their professional life, they are always being appreciated because of their beauty, and criticized because of their personal life. A glimpse of Facebook posts and misogynist attitudes by writing comments are given below.

Table 1. Analysis of Facebook Comments

Actor Name	Content of Post	Comments from Followers	Intention of followers
Jaya Ahsan	Posted regular photo	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. There is no value in your beauty without a husband. Try to find a husband first and then evaluate your beauty.</li> <li>2. Women would go to hell because of their dress. May god make you understand what you are doing.</li> <li>3. Aunty</li> <li>4. Aged women</li> <li>5. Your kind of product is not going well because of the rise in market value for oil and egg. No need to advertise yourself. Whenever the market value of a regular product will drop again, they will go to the product like you.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Showing derogatory ideas toward a single woman and telling her that she is unworthy as she is single.</li> <li>2. Imposing religion and cultural values on woman</li> <li>3. Bullying women because of their age</li> <li>4. Misogynist Internet objectification of women</li> <li>5. Not recognizing the value of their work rather objectifying them as product</li> </ol>
Apu Biswas	Video of Advertisement	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Try to be slim. You will look more beautiful.</li> <li>2. Your figure is beautiful.</li> <li>3. Go to your husband with your child. All of us want the three of you will live together happily.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Body shaming</li> <li>2. Attacking comments on personal life though they knew that they divorced each other in an extreme situation</li> <li>3. Considering women as object</li> </ol>
Purnima	Advertisement of own program	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. So, Purnima aunty got married again.</li> <li>2. I used to consider you a good woman. Whoever the husband is, you should stay with your husband. You should think about your daughter.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Imposition of cultural values on women</li> <li>2. Bullying because of age</li> <li>3. Considering her a bad woman because of her second marriage</li> </ol>

---

3. Grandmother

4. Aged Bitch

---

## 5.2 Hatred Comments Towards Women

After analyzing the comments on social media platforms, I have got derogatory comments towards women celebrities demeaning their work. The users of social media platforms who followed them are clearly defining bad women and good women according to their stereotypical gendered ideologies. A few of the followers mentioned that they expect women to act according to religious values or they should wear dresses following the cultural order of society. Interestingly, these kinds of misogynist statements are not only coming from men but also are coming from women. Therefore, these kinds of hatred toward women celebrities who are not maintaining the conventional standard of society is common and they become the victim of cyberbullying. Moreover, this is not the same situation for male celebrities.

## 5.3 Internet Objectification of Women

Women are objectified just because of their gender and the idea of considering women in media as bad women are also reinforcing the objectification of women celebrities. A few of the followers are also connecting or mentioning their personal life in social media posts. Some of them are discussing their divorce and spread negative comments. Again, in some cases, women celebrities are scolded for divorcing their partner whereas male celebrities are not scolded or do not lose that much popularity for taking their personal decision.

The followers are simply objectifying women carrying their offline identities online. The followers are not discussing their work life rather they are discussing their personal life which is not related to their work and does not define who they are. Most of the followers are not discussing their work rather they are praising their beauty considering them as the object. It's been noticed in followers' comments they are ganging up together and expressing sexual desire for celebrities as their profile is public. The tendency toward considering women celebrities as the object is embedded in the thought process of misogynist men.

## 5.4 Bullying

Women celebrities are the victim of cyberbullying. Our society always wants to observe women from the perspective of standard body image so that their body is also criticized if they are not maintaining the expected standard of society. Even if they are being bullied for their age, it does not apply to male celebrities. The way they are bullying women celebrities is a reflection of our society where most people believe in misogynist hegemonic masculinity. After analyzing the Facebook posts of movie celebrities it's been noticed that they are not considered according to their work rather they are criticized for their body, work, or not following the stereotype of a good woman in our society. There is also a tendency to connect their age with everything. Women celebrities are bullied for their figure or age.

## 5.5 Coping up Strategies of Women Celebrities

Women celebrities are not replying much when they are getting these kinds of negative comments on their Facebook. They are coping up usually being silent or ignorant towards them those who are posting negative comments. They are not seeking any help under Digital Security Act, 2018 because of the lack of consciousness and information regarding this act. The digital Security act discourages defamatory comments and encourages punishment for the perpetrators. Though the lack of proper knowledge and information regarding this action is helping the perpetrators to spread these kinds of comments. In most cases, it is nearly impossible for celebrities to file a case against perpetrators because of their large numbers. Considering the religious and cultural context of Bangladesh, women celebrities remain silent being ignorant of these comments.

## 6 Discussion and Recommendation

The comments toward women celebrities clearly show how they are treated in front of a misogynistic society. Women celebrities are only considered sexually beautiful beings, not being appreciated for their work rather they are being criticized for their dresses, age, or personal life. Sometimes, it's also noticed that they are trolled for their second marriage, not getting married, or suggested to stay with their ex-husband just because of their children. Sometimes, they are threatened using religious quotes or misinterpreting religion. Therefore, it's noticeable that the followers are carrying their gendered misogynist offline identity online and expressing their toxic masculine identity posting hatred comments or expressing sexual desires toward women celebrities. Despite being powerful women celebrities, they are being victims of cyberbullying just because of their gender. The hegemonic masculine nature of controlling dominance or superiority over women is being established by these misogynist perpetrators. They are just carrying their offline identities online and posting negative comments to powerful women to justify their superiority over women and they are also ganging up to spread misogyny against the empowerment of women. Our government should take strict legal steps to stop cyberbullying ensuring the proper legal system. As well as social institutions like family, educational institutions should not provide or encourage gendered behavior subjugating women. The online victimization of powerful women shows the vulnerabilities of powerless women on social media platforms like Facebook.

## 7 Conclusion

There was an expectation that the digital platform will be genderless and create a more equitable platform for everybody irrespective of sex, or age. Women's life can be miserable when misogynist men try to provide 'shame punishment' to women by sexually objectifying them online or on social media platforms (Powell & Henry, 2017). It is easy to show misogynistic attitudes to celebrity movie personalities using online media as they are working in the entertainment industry and their lifestyles always become news and they need to be connected in the public domain (Gabler, n.d). The people who consider themselves weak want to establish power over powerful women using social media platforms. They try to draw the barriers for women commenting on their personal life, dresses, or figure. Surprisingly, there are very rare comments regarding their work. The unrecognition of their work and constant praise or criticism for their beauty proves that misogynist society considers them as object and make them unworthy for not following the conventional rules of society. Therefore, the offline identities of people shape the expression of misogynist followers and the experience of women celebrities. Lightly considering this crime, it is just encouraging perpetrators to do heinous crimes so that these kinds of criminal activities should be taken under the law. A strict law to prohibit gender-insensitive behavior on social media platforms should be established to ensure security and mental peace for women.

## Reference

- Adobe Spark. (2020). *Social Media in 2020*. <https://www.adobe.com/express/learn/blog/top-social-media-sites>
- Ahmed, S., Kabir, A., Sneha, A. S. S., Jafirin, S. (2017). Cyber-crimes Against Womenfolk on Social Networks: Bangladesh Context. *International Journal of Computer Applications (0975 - 8887)*. 174 (4), 9-15.
- Ahsan, J. (2022, August 8). *Jaya Ahsan - Jaya Ahsan added a new photo*. Facebook - log in or sign up. <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=644255020400428&set=pcb.644255063733757>
- Biswas, A. [Apu Biswas]. (2022, July 7). *Apu Biswas*. Facebook - log in or sign up. <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=621310116032153&set=a.281018913394610>
- Code, L. (2011). Taking Subjectivity into Account. In Claudia, W. R; & D.C. Phillips (Ed.), *Education, Culture and Epistemological Diversity* (pp 85-100). Dimensions. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-2066-4\\_5](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-2066-4_5)
- Daniels, J. (2009). Rethinking Cyberfeminism(s): Race, Gender, and Embodiment. *Women's Studies Quarterly, Technologies (Spring - Summer, 2009)*, 37 (1/2), 101-124. The Feminist Press at the City University of New York. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27655141>
- Gabler, N. (n.d). Toward a New Definition of Celebrity. The Norman Lear Centre. Accessed on 15 April, 2021 Retrieved from: <https://learcenter.org/pdf/Gabler.pdf>
- Government of the People's Republic in Bangladesh. (2018). <https://file:///C:/Users/Admin/Downloads/Documents/Digital-Security-Act-2020.pdf>
- Hassan, N., Mandal, K. M., Bhuiyan, M., Moitra, A., Ahmed, I. S. (2019). Nonparticipation of Bangladeshi Women in #MeToo Movement. Tenth International Conference on Information and Communication Technologies and Development (ICTD '19), Ahmedabad, India. ACM, New York, NY, USA. <https://dl.acm.org/doi/10.1145/3287098.3287125>
- Kim, J. (2018). Misogyny for Male Solidarity: Online Hate Discourse against Women in South Korea. In Vickery, J. R., & Everbach, T. (Ed.), *Mediating Misogyny: Gender, Technology, and Harassment* (pp. 151-169). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Kyoko, K. (2021). *ED52.9008 Analyzing Qualitative Data*. Asian Institute of Technology, Thailand. [https://moodle.ait.asia/pluginfile.php/31899/mod\\_resource/content/1/analysis%20of%20interviews.pdf](https://moodle.ait.asia/pluginfile.php/31899/mod_resource/content/1/analysis%20of%20interviews.pdf)
- Mengu, M & Mengu, S. (n.d). Violence and social media. *Athens Journal of Mass Media and Communications*, 1 (3), 211-228. <https://doi.org/10.30958/ajmmc.1-3-4>
- Powell, A & Henry, N. (2017). Chapter 3. Conceptualizing Technosocial Sexual Harms. In *Sexual Violence in a Digital Age* (Pp: 49- 76). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Pew Research Centre. (2021, May 25). *The state of online harassment*. Pew Research Center: Internet, Science & Tech. <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2021/01/13/the-state-of-online-harassment/>
- Purnima [Purnima]. (2022, July 10). <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=591679732322065&set=a.200497844773591>. Facebook - log in or sign up. <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=654625049363425&set=pcb.654625212696742>
- Weiser, B. S. (2018). Introduction. In *Empowered: Popular Feminism and Popular Misogyny*. Duke University Press.