

Humiliation at the Intersection of Gender, Religion, and Caste: A Social Psychological Study Among Muslim Women in India

Abstract

Gender-based inequality is a significant global issue in our times. Social psychology has played a crucial role in elucidating the impact of gender inequality across multiple settings. However, there has been limited attention to the concerns of dignity and self-respect among women in general and those belonging to marginalized communities in particular. This thesis explores the experiences of humiliation among women belonging to marginalized groups, particularly Muslim women in India. The thesis attempts to understand these experiences within the intersections of religion, gender, and caste while situating the findings in the context of the rising Islamophobia and hate crimes against Muslims in India. The thesis comprises four distinct studies: first, a qualitative study utilizing interview data from Muslim women uncovers forms of humiliation resulting from targeting women's bodies and valued social identities. In addition, the analysis reveals women's resistance to humiliation perpetrated by both ingroup and outgroup members in a hostile political landscape. Second, an experimental study further investigates the consequences of humiliation perpetrated by either ingroup or outgroup members. Ingroup-perpetrated humiliation compared to the outgroup-perpetrated humiliation led to reduced social identification and increased distance from the ingroup. Next, a qualitative study follows up on the findings of the previous studies by investigating experiences of intragroup humiliation. Intragroup humiliation undermined core community values and reduced trust in family and community, thereby affecting an individual's agency and mental well-being. The final study examines Indian Muslim women's experiences of humiliation from an intersectional lens and shows how the intersection of different power structures create unique humiliating experiences among Muslim women. Overall, this thesis provides a nuanced social psychological and intersectionality informed analysis of humiliation, and underscores a need of serious research attention to women's experience of humiliation.