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Empowered but Endangered? An Analysis of Hegemonic Womanhood in Indian Gender Advocacy Campaigns

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Abstract

This research examines digital gender advocacy campaigns in India during the 2010s. By employing thematic analysis and conceptual tools of the social representations theory into the analysis of 250 gender advocacy videos published on YouTube, we answer the following questions: a) How are dangers to women in India discussed in recent video campaigns? b) How is the topic objectified and anchored in multimodal narration? c) How is hegemonic womanhood constructed in the campaigns? The findings suggest that campaigns present two social representations of dangers with sexual harassment depicted as a danger for urban middle-class women and the issues of early marriage, lack of female education, and gender-biased sex selection as rural dangers. The primary solution suggested by the campaigns is to encourage women to actively claim their place in society, placing the main responsibility for changing the situation on women themselves. The secondary solution suggested is to encourage families to support girls and women. Thus, the analysis shows how social representations created by gender advocacy in India put responsibility on individuals and excuse social institutions from addressing inequality, while maintaining power relations and class disparities.

Keywords

gender advocacy campaigns, hegemonic womanhood, India, multimodal analysis, social representations

Non-Technical Summary

Background

Gender issues are a topic of much debate in India, especially after the country was ranked the fourth most dangerous country and then the most dangerous country in the world for women by two consecutive surveys conducted by the Thomas Reuters Foundation in 2011 and 2018. The poor international attention to the state of women's treatment in India following the surveys resulted in a plethora of digital media campaigns launched by different organizations and institutions, claiming to empower women.

Why was this study done?

Considering the different positions that women occupy in Indian society depending on their background, it is important to understand which women and what issues are being prioritized in digital gender advocacy. Research suggests there are biases in media reporting of sexual harassment with issues of marginalized women being neglected and those of middle-class women sensationalized. Moreover, the influence of neoliberalism on feminist movements has resulted in narrow ideas of womanhood and placed the burden of solving deep-rooted social issues on individuals, instead of the state and other powerful actors. This study thus explores digital gender advocacy campaigns in India and sheds light on how social hierarchies and neoliberal ideals of womanhood are maintained or challenged by these campaigns.

What did the researchers do and find?

We studied 250 campaign videos shared on YouTube between 2014-2019 by three different organizations in India, with mandates focusing on gender, representing a government ministry, an international non-governmental organization and a local non-governmental organization. We classified the campaigns according to the issue in the video, the actors, the setting and the solution to the video. We found that sexual violence and harassment was a common focus across organizations, with the highest number of videos dedicated to this issue, followed by gender biased sex selection, female education and early marriage. We also found that sexual harassment videos across organizations located harassment in an urban setting and presented the protagonist as a middle-class woman, targeted by unfamiliar working-class men. Meanwhile, early marriage, discontinuing female education and gender-biased sex selection were presented as problems specific to rural India. Additionally, the solutions promoted by the organizations to all these different issues was for women and girls to claim their rights and change the attitudes of their families and communities.

What do these findings mean?

Our findings of sexual harassment as an issue of urban middle-class women and early marriage, female education and gender biased sex selection as rural dangers preserve social hierarchies and perpetuate the idea that the middle class is free from patriarchy and oppression of women, placing all responsibility for these issues onto poor and rural populations. Additionally, solutions emphasizing individual responsibility and homogenizing womanhood take the onus away from the state apparatus and other powerful institutions in ensuring the rights and dignity of women and results in exclusionary ideas of women and ways of achieving their emancipation.

In 2011, Thomas Reuters Foundation ranked India the fourth most dangerous country in the world for women (Anderson, 2011). Seven years later in a follow-up survey, India claimed the top spot as the world's most dangerous country for women (Narayan, 2018). Different agents responded to the results in opposing ways: while the Ministry for Women and Child Development, a government agency for women, released a statement dismissing the survey's results as foreign propaganda, grass-root activists welcomed the survey as a needed wake up call for the country to prioritize gender issues (Narayan, 2018). The publicity brought by these polls made the subject of dangers to women a socially salient topic for activists, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and governmental bodies across the country.

In the present study, we focus on the role of gender advocacy campaigns in constructing and disseminating social representations of dangers to women in India. Different organizations are increasingly using social media platforms to convey their message and reach their audiences (e.g., Zhou & Pan, 2016). Organizations in India are no exception and during the 2010s, a crusade of digital media campaigns was launched to address harmful norms and behaviour. As different issues can affect Indian women differently depending on their caste, class, geographic location and other identities, this raises questions on what issues affecting which women are prioritized in digital gender advocacy and what solutions are demanded to tackle these issues.

Rutherford (2018) suggests that neoliberal ideologies have co-opted feminist movements worldwide, homogenizing the category of "women" and individualizing the solutions to deep-rooted structural problems. While Roy (2015) has theorized that this is also occurring in India with the "NGOization" of gender issues, there is a dearth of empirical research on how this manifests in gender advocacy. This research thus elaborates on how hegemonic femininity is socially constructed and how neoliberalism propels ideals of womanhood by analysing 250 digital gender advocacy campaign videos in India.

Additionally, research within social psychology has largely neglected to consider how multimodal communication is deployed to advocate the meaning of social issues. The present study understands multimodality as meaning construction contributed by moving images, verbal and textual narration and music and sound (Kress, 2010). de Rosa (2014) and more recently, Hakoköngäs and Sakki (2019) and Martikainen (2019) have suggested that the social representations theory (SRT) is well suited to answer these questions as it gives importance to the iconic dimension of knowledge formation. More broadly, SRT focuses on how ideas, values and beliefs around topical phenomena are negotiated and communicated in society (Moscovici, 1961/2008, 1984). By focusing on SRT's concepts of *anchoring*, *objectification* and *naturalization*, we aim to explore how different organizations represent dangers to women in India and the outcomes

of their representations, paying specific attention to the relationship between power and social representations. In the sections below, we discuss existing literature on dangers to women, then explicate on the processes, power dynamics and mediums shaping social representations before presenting our material and methods, followed by our results, discussion and conclusions.

Understanding Dangers to Women: A Background

Legislation and Definitions

Dangers to women are commonly framed in terms of gender equality and violence against women (VAW) (e.g., WHO, 2009). Gender equality has been defined by United Nations as "equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and boys and girls" (United Nations, 2001, p. 1). Meanwhile, VAW refers to:

> Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life. (United Nations, 1993, p. 2).

Literature analysing advocacy campaigns has primarily concentrated on how gender is represented in them rather than the kinds of dangers/risks to women as rape and violence are presumed to be the primary threats (Cahill, 2001; McDonald & Charlesworth, 2013). While Thomas Reuters Foundation (2018) did not use a definition of VAW, it highlighted six categories of dangers to women, providing a useful way to operationalize the United Nations (1993) definition of VAW more concretely, discussed further under the section "Materials and Method".

In India, civil liberties for women were inscribed into the constitution and numerous legislative measures were introduced to prevent violence and exploitation of women such as the Dowry Prohibition Act (1961, amended in 1985), the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (2005) and the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act (2013). However, patriarchal norms, corrupt institutions, and apathy to effective implementation of laws lead to continued high rates of female feticide and infanticide, child marriage, trafficking, sexual and non-sexual violence, dowry harassment and bride burning, sexual harassment at work, eve teasing and violence against widows (National Crime Records Bureau, 2016).

Gender and Social Hierarchies in India

Studies also point to the caste-based nature of violence against women in India where women at the bottom of the caste hierarchy are subject to sexual violence by dominant caste men (Dabhi, 2009; Swabhiman Society & Equality Now, 2020). Yet, victims of caste-based violence rarely obtain justice due to a judicial system that runs in favour of powerful castes (Pal, 2018; Swabhiman Society & Equality Now, 2020). The National Crime Records Bureau (2016) estimates there were 40,801 incidents of crime reported against Dalits, the marginalized communities relegated to the bottom of the caste hierarchy, of which a majority were estimated to be crimes against women including assault, sexual harassment, stalking and voyeurism. Meanwhile, conviction rates for offences against Dalits remain at just 32% nationally (National Crime Records Bureau, 2016). Phadke et al. (2011) draw attention to how public discussions on safety in India focus on middle-class women who are discouraged from spending time in public spaces due to the omnipresent threat of rape and harassment. The villains in these narratives are usually poor migrant workers from villages, Dalits and other subjugated castes and Muslims, stereotyped as criminals and potential terrorists. These men claimed to be dangerous are at high risk of violence themselves, resulting in brutal exclusions and vilifications of marginalized male citizens in the name of women's safety (Phadke et al., 2011).

The tendency to attribute the country's harmful gender practices to poor and rural populations has a long history. Rao (1999) highlights how sati, the practice where widowed women jumped into their husbands' funeral pyre was rejected by the urban bourgeoisie to distinguish themselves from the rural poor. Additionally, women's involvement in India's independence struggle against British colonialism created dichotomies between middle-class women and working-class women. Prior to this, the only women present in public spaces were so called "common women" including street vendors and sex workers (Thapar, 1993). To distinguish the "brave new woman" venturing from the domestic sphere to advance her country's emancipation from such "common women", the former was constructed as

virtuous and gentile and the latter as promiscuous and vulgar. This cemented the idea that middle-class women must have a legitimate reason to be in public to differentiate themselves from working-class women whose public presence was always considered nefarious. (Thapar, 1993).

Rao (2014) suggests that present-day media reporting of rape and sexual assault have focused on and sensationalized cases involving urban middle-class women. Consequentially, Dalit women are largely missing from reports despite being more vulnerable to these brutalities, often by men from privileged castes (Grey, 2005). Rao (2014) interprets this bias to stem from pressures to please middle-class audiences, perceived to want to see their own troubles in media content. In this line, the class-based dimension to dangers to women in India can be situated in wider theoretical debates around 'hegemonic femininity'.

Hegemonic Femininity and NGOization of Feminism

Eisenstein (2017) discusses how international feminist movements positioned their struggles for liberation of women within wider socialist agendas criticizing capitalism until the seventies. However, neoliberal economic reforms in the eighties and nineties shifted responsibility for welfare from governments to individuals and simultaneously led to the apoliticization of feminist movements and a retreat from class-consciousness. The resulting post-feminism has been a topic of debate among scholars, with some claiming it to be a new kind of feminism and others seeing it as a backlash against feminism (Banet-Weiser et al., 2020). However, as Gill (2007) discusses, post-feminism is best described as a sensibility with distinct characteristics including the idea that consumption of fashion and beauty are markers of women's choice and that femininity is a bodily property. Consequentially, "post-feminist" agendas embraced 'empowerment' instead of 'liberation', conceiving empowerment as a personal psychologized feeling involving the dimensions of autonomy, mastery and control, rather than access to structural, social and material resources. (Eisenstein, 2017). As Rutherford (2018) argues, these dimensions are more accessible to those higher in the social hierarchy, positioning white upper middle-class women as ideal subjects in neoliberal regimes to undertake the self-transformative work that empowerment demanded. Simultaneously, racialized women and girls from the Global South were constructed to need saving by enlightened white philanthropists and yet also capable of initiating wide-scale social transformations if empowered well enough (Dosekun, 2015). The resulting 'girl power effect' of development embraced a narrative emphasizing how third world women had the potential to pull their entire countries out of poverty by going to school while ignoring structural, social and historical factors contributing to the impoverishment of nations in the Global South (Rutherford, 2018).

According to Rutherford (2018) "hegemonic femininity" thus represents a collusion between post-feminism and neoliberalism, profoundly shaping the terms and visions of contemporary feminist movements. Roy (2015) argues that the adoption of the empowerment paradigm in the Global South reproduces global inequalities. The growth of different organizations dedicated to gender justice in response to the indexing of the status of women as a development goal led to 'NGOization' or the professionalization, managerialism and bureaucratization of social movements, domesticating their agendas, limiting their ability to challenge the status quo and making their structures more hierarchical owing to donor dependence where organizations are increasingly dependent on external funders (Roy, 2015). Such developments in India have contributed to hegemonic and exclusionary constructions of the category "woman", claiming to speak for all women but articulating a vision primarily serving women of dominant castes and elite classes (Roy, 2015). The present study will observe the extent to which these aforementioned ideas are challenged or reinforced in social representations constructed and disseminated in online gender advocacy.

Social Representations: Processes, Power Dynamics and Mediums

Processes and Types of Social Representations

The social representations theory explicates on the social construction of meanings. According to Moscovici (1973, p. xviii), social representations (SRs) can be defined as "*a system of values, ideas and practices*" functioning to help social groups make sense of their world. Three central processes are involved in the formation and transformation of SRs: anchoring, objectification and naturalization. *Anchoring* involves a classification process in which groups attempt to make sense of a phenomenon by evaluating it in terms of familiar categories of knowledge but can also function to stig-

matize certain groups by marginalizing them to the sphere of otherness (Kalampalikis & Haas, 2008). In *objectification*, the iconic qualities of the phenomenon are highlighted, giving abstract ideas a tangible form through the use of symbols, images, metaphors or persons (Moscovici, 1984). Finally, through *naturalization*, the deep-rooted social representation may acquire a widely shared taken-for-granted position within the network of social representations (Moscovici, 1984).

Accordingly, Moscovici (1988) distinguishes between three types of representations based on the degree to which they are shared in society. While *hegemonic* representations are uniform and consensually shared across a society, *polemic* representations emerge in situations of conflict when groups challenge the meaning of a representation, leading to different groups holding mutually exclusive representations. Between this spectrum, *emancipated* representations consist of complementary versions of a representation within subgroups.

In closed societies, representations were mainly homogenic owing to the centralization of institutions that regulated knowledge (Duveen, 2001). However, contemporary societies with modern communication technologies and open public spheres are argued to have a plurality of knowledge forms (e.g., Moscovici, 1961/2008). Wagner et al. (2000) have illustrated the polyphasic nature of knowledge in India in relation to mental illness representations, suggesting that the country offers a complex and rich context to analyse the emergence of social representations where polemic and emancipated representations are likely to exist alongside hegemonic ones.

Hegemony, Power and Master Narratives

Jovchelovitch (1997) suggests that the distinction between the aforementioned types of representations is rooted in power. Representations attain hegemonic status when certain groups have greater access to resources particularly media and communication channels, increasing their opportunities to impose their versions of reality (see also: de la Mata et al., 2022). Thus, power construes legitimacy, inscribing hegemonic representations in institutions, routines and social thinking. Meanwhile, polemic representations lack concrete objectification in institutions and are consensual only within the subgroup that created them. When public spheres are open, groups can draw on different knowledge sources and transform their thinking through emancipated representations (Jovchelovitch, 1997).

Gervais and Jovchelovitch (1998) remind that in the process of legitimising certain beliefs, ideas and practices, social representations delegitimize others, naturalizing relations of domination. This corresponds to ideas of silence as power whereby shared understandings and normative expectations offered by culturally dominant narratives do not need to be explicated because they are so engrained and naturalized (Fivush, 2010). Such hegemonic narratives have been termed master narratives, referring to cultural myths that offer moral, ethical and affective guidelines for understanding events (de la Mata et al., 2022). Paying attention to master narratives can reveal interests at stake and alternative representations that are marginalized, in line with Howarth's (2006) vision for more critical applications of SRT.

De la Mata et al. (2022) have noted how gendered master narratives defining ideal womanhood place women in a subordinate position. Consequently, the dominance of hegemonic femininity in development agendas (Rutherford, 2018) may produce a uniform consensus across organizations about the meaning of women's empowerment. The organizations engaged in gender advocacy in India could be seen as part of a dominant group with access to media, with the potential to influence the meanings of particular social phenomena. Yet, simultaneously, organizations' specific agendas and relations with the state could lead to differences in how they represent the topic at hand. As the organizations might try to introduce new ideas and change existing ways of thinking, their social representations may also include polemic or emancipated features (Moscovici, 1988). Accordingly, to explore potential differences and similarities in representations across organizations, we include material from a government institution, international NGO and a local NGO. However, our analysis remains material-driven.

Multimodal Mediums of Social Representations

Conventionally, research has focused on the role of SR processes in verbal communication (de Rosa & Farr, 2001). However, the emergence of digital technologies and social media in the last few decades necessitates a better accounting of multimodal social communication (Adami, 2016). Iconic systems have different properties from textual systems (de Rosa & Farr, 2001; de Rosa, 2014), leading to differences in the range of meanings that can be transmitted through them. For instance, images have strong emotion and reality-evoking dimensions, influencing how audiences identify with the

subject matter (Joffé, 2008). By claiming to show "how things are", images hide the selection and exclusion inevitable in communication (de Rosa & Farr, 2001; Kress, 2003).

These qualities are exploited by advertisers to appeal to their audiences. Producers of social justice campaigns may seek to elicit donations and also change social values, ideas and practices, thus uniting rhetoric and social representations as images in a way that can be used persuasively to trigger the formation of new representations (Hakoköngäs & Sakki, 2019; Martikainen, 2019). Simultaneously, images are products of existing social representations held by those creating and disseminating them (de Rosa & Farr, 2001).

While all images are technically multimodal in nature, further nuances are likely in moving images as the latter usually contains sound and text in addition to visuals (Adami, 2016). Hakoköngäs and Sakki (2019) illustrate how advertisement videos on social media subtly convey ideological meanings and employ all dimensions of multimodal communication, namely sound, voice, text, and moving image in persuasion. Hence, when considering anchoring, objectification and naturalization in relation to representations of dangers to women in campaigns disseminated through YouTube, it is essential to pay attention to the relationships across different modes of communication (see also: Kress, 2010).

Moreover, in the field of communication, Sontag (1977) and Haraway (1991) have illustrated how specific visions of social difference and hierarchies of class, gender and sexuality are produced through iconic mediums. In the present study, we aim to develop a social-psychological analysis of visual manifestations of social hierarchies through a critical exploration of how dangers to women are discussed in various digital gender advocacy campaigns in India. Specifically, we strive to answer the following research questions: a) How are dangers to women in India discussed in recent multimodal video campaigns? b) How is the topic objectified and anchored in multimodal narration? c) How is hegemonic womanhood constructed in India through digital gender advocacy messages?

Materials and Method

The Organizations

To answer the research questions, we sought organizations active in gender advocacy campaigning on social media in India. The organizations need not to focus solely on gender, however it was essential that gender issues were prioritized in their areas of intervention and their mandate was not limited to a single issue but broadly discussed different gender issues. The Delhi bus rape case in 2012 made headlines worldwide, becoming pivotal in shaping rape prevention agendas in India (Shepherd, 2020). However, organizations took time to initiate campaigns in response to the incident. For example, Amnesty International India's earliest gender advocacy campaign on YouTube dates to 2014. Hence, the study focuses on a five-year period from 2014–2019, the latter being the year when material collection was initiated. As organizations often focused on different issues across the years, the five-year span allowed the inclusion of material covering a range of topics. We found over fifty different organizations with mandates on different gender issues but few met all the aforementioned criteria. We do not claim that the three organizations included and described below to be the only suitable ones but rather ones representing our parameters and belonging to the categories of a central government institution, an international NGO and a local NGO.

Firstly, we selected the Ministry for Women and Child Development (MWCD) which represents a governmental body. Located in India's capital, New Delhi, in North India, MWCD was formed as a separate government Ministry in 2006 and their stated mandate is to promote social and economic empowerment of women through awareness-raising among other things. On YouTube, MWCD has a following of 13.7k and 603 videos. Videos ranged from 18 seconds to 20.25 minutes with a majority under 3 minutes.

Secondly, Amnesty International India (AII) was chosen to represent an international NGO. AII established their Indian headquarters in Bengaluru, a metropolis in South India in 2012, but was banned from operating in the country in 2020 due to conflicts with the government. It considers itself a grass-roots organization campaigning for a world where human rights are enjoyed by all. One of their key focus areas is gender, justifying its selection in this study. On YouTube,

AII has a following of 2.08k and a total of 186 videos. Videos ranged from 30 seconds to 7 minutes in length with a majority under 2.30 minutes.

Thirdly, we selected Breakthrough India (BI) which represents a local NGO, having originated in India in 2000. BI is also located in Delhi. Their focus is solely on gender, aiming to make discrimination and violence against women unacceptable by speaking to a diverse audience in different languages and mediums. While not state funded, they have collaborated with the Indian government on various campaigns. On YouTube, BI has a following of 15.6k and an output of 545 videos. Majority of videos were between 30 seconds to 3 minutes in length with a few between 5 to 21 minutes.

Material Collection and Preparation

The material, consisting of 1334 videos in total from the period 2014–2019, was collected from the organizations' YouTube Channels. The videos' contents varied from advocacy campaigns to fundraising invitations and presentations of the organizations. All 1334 videos were watched but to further delimit the analysed material, we decided to focus on videos that were part of campaigns specifically addressing dangers to women. To aid in the preliminary selection of videos for analysis, we were guided by the six categories identified as dangers to women by the Thomas Reuters Foundation (2018). These included healthcare; economic resources and discrimination; cultural, tribal, religious or customary practices; sexual violence and harassment; non-sexual violence; and human trafficking. Videos dealing with these six broad issues were included for further analysis. In total, 250 videos met these criterions. The videos were distributed between the organizations as follows: MWCD 69, AII 18, and BI 163.

The shortlisted videos were watched multiple times. The material in this study was multimodal, comprising moving image, verbal narration, text, and sound/music. Hence, attention was paid to all these different elements during the analysis (Kress, 2010). Videos were transcribed verbatim with different elements placed in parallel columns to observe the holistic construction of meaning (see: Hakoköngäs & Sakki, 2019).

The Analysis

To answer the first research question, a preliminary content analysis was undertaken whereby the contents of the videos were categorized deductively by using Thomas Reuters Foundation's (2018) classification of dangers to women. For example, in videos from Breakthrough's (2014) "Board the Bus" campaign, women shared their stories of sexual harassment on public buses and hence, the content of these videos was categorized as "sexual violence and harassment." A brief synopsis of each video was written. Narrative structure including actors, setting and solution of the video provided a way of characterizing shared elements across the material. Hence in the second step, thematic analysis was inductively utilised to provide a more nuanced account of patterns in the material (Braun & Clarke, 2006) by paying attention to the following four elements when coding the transcribed videos: i) the issue represented in the video, ii) the actors, iii) the setting, iv) the solution to the issue. Finally, the material was coded according to dimensions such as text, image, sound, music (Kress, 2010). The content and thematic analysis familiarized us with the material, allowing a theoretical reading of the elements of multimodal narratives to answer the second and third research questions.

Social representations theory constituted the theoretical framework through which we answered these research questions by analysing *objectifications*, the processes through which something abstract is made tangible, and *anchorings*, the process by which a phenomenon is given a meaning through classifying and naming (Moscovici, 1984). In the videos, objectifications were often visual (e.g., city, countryside). However, sound and text were also used as objectifications (e.g., folk music and text references to villages objectified rural settings). The anchorings were connected with the identified objectifications, for example, the objectification of countryside as primitive was interpreted to anchor the dangers to women with traditionality. Initial identification of anchorings related to settings and persons (in terms of physical appearance and cultural attributes) was undertaken by the first author who, as a woman with an urban middle-class background from (South) India, familiar with the cultural context and proficient in Hindi and English (languages used in the videos), provided an emic (insider) perspective. Interpretations were then triangulated from an etic (outsider) perspective by the second author to enhance reliability of analysis.

To answer the third research question, we utilized findings from the analysis described above. While the first and second questions are answered in the analysis section, the third question is answered in in the discussion section by interpreting the results in light of previous research.

To provide an example of how the analysis was accomplished we draw from the video "My dad my ally". Excerpt 1 shows a passage from the transcription of one of the videos analysed.

Excerpt 1

Rashmi Matric Pass (Breakthrough, 2017)

Time	Moving image	Language/Narration	Language/Text	Music/Sound
...	...	...	...	...
00:21	A young girl skips through countryside scene without shoes, singing all along the way.	Girl (Hindi): I am Rashmi and I am a matric pass		Instrumental folk music
00:45	A farmer in the field looks at the girl and comments.	Farmer (Hindi): Aren't you dreaming too big little girl?"		
...	...	...	...	...
03:10			In English: Every parent needs to	Music
03:31	The girl and the father at an outdoor graduation. The father puts his arm around the girl proudly	Girl (Hindi): I am Rashmi, I am a matric pass	cooperate to fulfill a father's promise so that Rashmi can avoid a marriage before she turns 18 unlike 80 million of her peers. With your support, Rashmi can graduate	
03:35	Breakthrough logo		school. [same text also in Hindi].	

The video depicts a young girl repeating the sentence, "I am Rashmi and I am a matric pass" (00:21) when walking home from school. The phrase "matric pass" refers to completing the national matriculation exams and graduating from high school. The people she meets, like the farmer (00:45) discourage this ambition. However, in the concluding scene, adult Rashmi graduates from high school, her father proudly watching her (03:31). In the excerpt, the setting, countryside, people, folk music in the background and used language, Hindi, objectify the idea that the represented danger arises from rural areas. The specific danger –lack of female education – is presented by the girl's own will to matriculate (00:21) and anchored to the setting's prejudiced attitudes towards education (00:45). The supportive father (03:31) objectifies the solution to the threat: changing patriarchal attitudes and rejecting dysfunctional traditions like arranged marriage. Thus, this video epitomizes the "girl power effect", a womanhood ideal that locates social change within the hands of individual girls from the Global South (Rutherford, 2018).

Analysis: Sexual Harassment as an Urban Danger and Prejudicial Traditions as Rural Dangers

We analysed the contents as well as objectifications and anchorings of 250 gender advocacy videos by the three selected organizations. The themes characterizing the contents of the videos of each organization are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

The Themes in Gender Advocacy Campaigns Over Three Organizations (N = 250)

Themes	MWCD (69)	BI (163)	AII (18)
Sexual violence and harassment	15	46	13
Gender-biased sex selection	33	36	
Female education	2	34	
Early marriage	1	36	
Domestic violence	2	11	
Maternal malnourishment	14		
Online violence			4
Dowry	2		
Transgender rights			1

Sexual violence and harassment was a common area of overlap between all organizations and roughly half of the videos focused on this danger. While BI and MWCD use the term "sexual harassment", AII uses the term "sexual violence" to refer to this danger. Thomas Reuters Foundation (2018), whose parameters guided our content analysis, employ the term "sexual violence and harassment". Hence, we also utilize this phrasing. Without exception, across organizations, videos focusing on sexual violence and harassment were set in cities. Meanwhile, BI and MWCD's videos focusing on early marriage, female education and gender-biased sex selection were mainly set in rural areas. Regarding other topics, such as transgender rights by AI, maternal malnourishment by MWCD and anti-domestic violence campaigns by BI, clear environments were hard to distinguish as most videos depicted footage from events and conversations with staff from the respective organizations. Hence, to answer the second and third research question, we focus on the two identified contexts from which the campaigns' representations of dangers to women emerge, namely sexual harassment as an issue of urban context, and early marriage, female education and gender-biased sex selection as rural problems, which together depict the construction of hegemonic womanhood.

Sexual Violence and Harassment: An Issue of Urban Middle-Class Women

Sexual violence and harassment was a common focus of all organizations and we observed a remarkable consistency in how they portrayed the issue though their communication styles differed, suggesting the presence of a hegemonic representation. A majority of videos objectified the subject as a young woman. At the level of anchoring, it was possible to interpret that these women belonged to the urban middle-class through their clothes, white collar jobs, skin colour and language. Differences across organizations were less visible in what content was depicted and more apparent regarding how content was depicted such as language differences, with MWCD largely communicating in Hindi, without English subtitles, compared to BI and AI's communications, which were either in English or with English subtitles. The lack of English subtitles in MWCD's videos may suggest a desire to distinguish the organization as authentically Indian, free from Western influences, in line with the Modi government's Hindutva ideology (Sen, 2005).

Dalit designer Purushu Arie (2021) draws attention to "savarna gaze" or dominant caste conventions of representing marginalized castes and classes in "traditional" and shabby looking clothing in cinema that mirror rigid rules around caste appropriate clothing still enforced in India, providing cues on how to interpret the appearances of protagonists and perpetrators in gender advocacy campaigns. In a 2016 "Erase the Shame" campaign video from AII, the woman's trendy t-shirt, employment in the IT industry, fair skin and use of English signify her elite status. In turn, perpetrators are objectified as working-class men in 24 of BI's campaigns and 7 of MWCD's campaigns by direct depictions of their line of work or lack of work as well as physical appearance. In 10 of AII's videos and 22 of BI's videos, the focus was on women's experiences without reference to perpetrators. Seven of MWCD's campaign videos on sexual harassment depicted white-collar workplaces and showed the perpetrator as a boss or colleague, giving a more nuanced view of harassment than the other organizations. Table 2 below sums up the main elements of the multimodal narration in campaigns focusing on urban dangers to women.

Table 2

Elements of Multimodal Narrative of Dangers in Urban Setting (N = 74)

Organization	Protagonist	Perpetrator	Setting of video	Immediate Solution	Implied Solution
BI (*N* = 46)	• Urban middle class woman (*n* = 44) • Urban lower middle-class woman (*n* = 1) • Rural, class background could not be interpreted (*n* = 1)	• Working class male (*n* = 24) • Not shown/ referenced (*n* = 22)	• City: public transport, streets, urban residences (*n* = 45) • Rural (*n* = 1)	• Donation (*n* = 10) • Participation in campaign by sharing of stories (*n* = 24) • Awareness-raising (*n* = 25)	• Women should claim their rights (*n* = 14) • Better infrastructure (*n* = 8)
MWCD (*N* = 15)	• Urban middle class woman (*n* = 13) • Factory worker (*n* = 1) • Not shown (*n* = 1)	• Working class male (*n* = 7) • Upper middle class (*n* = 7) • Not shown (*n* = 1)	• City: public transport, streets, offices (*n* = 15)	• Awareness-raising (*n* = 13)	• Women should change behaviour/ stand up for rights (*n* = 15) • Institutional change (*n* = 2)
AII (*N* = 13)	• Urban middle class women (*n* = 10) • Foreign migrant workers (*n* = 3)	• Perpetrator not depicted or discussed (*n* = 10) • Foreign diplomat (*n* = 3)	• City: offices, public street, urban residential houses (*n* = 13)	• Participation in campaign by sharing stories (*n* = 10)	• Women should claim their rights and report harassment (*n* = 13) • Institutions should ensure justice to women (*n* = 4)

To illustrate the finding that sexual violence and harassment is represented as an urban middle-class issue, Excerpt 2 depicts a typical theme in one of BI's 46 videos on sexual harassment called, "Make it safer".

Excerpt 2

#Make it safer, Real Life Stories 2 (Breakthrough 2016)

Time	Moving image	Narration	Text	Music/Sound
00:00	A woman wearing jeans and a t-shirt, sitting at a park bench	The girl: I walk to college every day and I have all these vendors, cycle rickshaws and the men, they always whistle and honk. And they are in a group and they are actually school kids most of them.		Soft music playing
00:05	In the background there are trees and a gate			
00:20	Breakthrough logo			
…	…	…	…	…
00:28	The camera zooms onto the girl's face	and I wanted to fight back and I did. I scolded him and I shouted at him.		The music swells to a crescendo
…	…	…	…	…
00:34			Make it safer	
00:52	Breakthrough logo		Donate today	
00:56			www.inbreak through.tv	

In the video, a young woman narrates in English how she has to deal with "vendors, in the street" when walking to school (00:00–00:20). Her trendy clothes and use of English (00:00–00:05) objectify her class-background as English

has been associated with the indigenous elite since British colonisation (Roy, 1993). Meanwhile, the working-class background of her harassers is highlighted when the girl refers to them as "vendors, cycle rickshaws and the men [in the street]" (00:00-00:20).

The video is shot in a park (00:00), which could be considered an accessible public space. However, Phadke et al. (2011) argue that due to increasing gentrification across Indian cities, parks are primarily confined to urban residential areas, patrolled by guards to keep out the working classes. In the video, there is a gate (00:05) separating the park from the street, further anchoring the setting as urban middle-class. The persuasive appeal is accomplished by providing a morally trustworthy source, in this case the girl's "real life story." By zooming in on the girl's face and heightening the music (00:28), the distance between the viewer and the subject is bridged, appealing to emotion and encouraging empathy. The immediate solution, "Donate now," calls for the audience to "make it safer" by contributing monetarily to the campaign, also indicating the audience's presumed middle-class background that the organization seeks to utilize in eliciting donations. This also suggests a master narrative drawing on expectations of middle-class womanhood to provide moral, ethical and affective guidelines that a presumed middle-class audience could relate to. The implicit solution of the video is that women should "fight back" (00.28) and claim their rights.

Similar anchors and objectifications could be observed in AI's campaigns videos for "Ready to Report" (2015) and "Erase the shame" (2016). Despite claims to inclusivity in the Ready to Report campaign which states: "we're uniting the voices from all walks of life and talking about how we'd like to be treated," (What I want #WhenIFileAnFIR, 2016), the imagery suggests otherwise. The women represented in 10 out of 13 videos correspond with BI's images of stylish women who mainly speak English, recorded in urban residential neighbourhoods or in offices, further positioning the subjects as city dwelling, employed in white-collar jobs. The solution promoted by the videos is for women to claim their rights and report violence. In a video entitled, "What I want #WhenIFileAnFIR- Ankita speaks up!" (2018) a young woman in a fashionable blouse, in front of a gate says in English, "When I file an FIR, don't tell me to go to another police station." The immediate solution is presented through flashing text on the screen: "Share your video with the hashtag #WhenIFileAnFIR and tell the police how you want to be treated!" Using the girl's name in the video title makes the same persuasive appeal through empathy to convince the audience of the moral trustworthiness of the source. Simultaneously, the latter also reveals the implied solution of the video: that all women should speak up and be like the video's protagonist.

Other solutions promoted by campaign videos involved improving infrastructure (e.g., bus services exclusively for women, better street lighting) and self-defence classes. For instance, MWCD's campaign called "Self-defence techniques for girls" showcases young women disrupted from their journeys on public buses and auto-rickshaws by advances from male passengers and drivers and how they could defend themselves from these threats as demonstrated in Excerpt 3.

Excerpt 3

Self-Defence Techniques for Girls by Delhi Police Part-1 (MWCD, 2015)

Time	Moving image	Language/Narration	Language/Text	Music/Sound
06:00	Street surrounded by the leaves.	Female Narrator (Hindi): When you stop an auto on the road you always have doubts in your mind		Menacing music Sounds of traffic
06:08	A woman wearing jeans and sneakers stops an auto.	Lady (Hindi): Will you go to Connaught Place?		
06:12	Women gets in and the auto starts moving. The driver is	Auto driver: Yes, sit	Arrows: Right Way / Wrong Way	Dramatic music
06:24	wearing simple cotton clothes. At a crossroad, the auto needs	Narrator (Hindi) The auto starts driving but goes the wrong way		
06:35	to turn right, but purposely turns in the opposite direction The woman starts to look scared. Then she grabs his	Lady: You have to go that way. Why are you going this way? Auto driver: This is a short cut		

Time	Moving image	Language/Narration	Language/Text	Music/Sound
06:45	shirt collar from behind and keeps pulling it tight till he starts to slow down			
	…	…	…	…
06:53	The video shows the lady grabbing the driver's shirt from behind and shaking the driver, then putting her handbag straps around his neck and pulling backwards tightly till he is forced to stop	Narrator: If talking does not work, grab his shirt from behind and if the auto still does not stop, you can use your scarf, dupatta or handbag straps around the auto driver's neck.	Step 1 Step 2	Woman yells, dramatic music continues

The video described above gives practical advice to women on how to behave in threatening situations, explicated by the captions (e.g., "Step 1", "Step 2"). The scene is situated in an urban context (06:00) and the woman's middle-class status is objectified by her fashionable clothes and light skin (06:08), a symbol of class privilege in India (Nadeem, 2014). Similarly, the working-class background of the harasser is explicated through darker skin, shabby clothes, untidy appearance and occupation as a driver (06:12). Drivers typically comprise of men, often rural migrants who move to cities for work (Govinda, 2020). Hindi is the main language used in the video, presumed to be the language of the working classes. The dramatic music escalating at different points (e.g., 06:53) also functions to reinforce the threat posed by the driver. The implied solution of women needing to stand up for themselves is explicitly conveyed by the video's title "Self-defence techniques", stating that these threats could be overcome by training women to fight back.

Early Marriage, Education and Gender-Biased Sex Selection: Problems of Rural India

While sexual violence and harassment is depicted as a threat for urban women in the campaigns, a different representation is constructed of rural dangers. Both BI and MWCD had several videos focusing on girls' education, preventing gender-biased sex selection stemming from son preference and preventing early marriage. Through visual imagery depicting rural scenery in 82 videos, these issues were anchored as problems largely confined to rural India. Furthermore, while 42 of BI's videos against gender-biased sex selection, early marriage and female education were set in urban areas and featured celebrities or famous entrepreneurs, these dangers were still depicted as rural threats by portraying these mass cultural icons as role models who made statements contrasting themselves and their enlightened practices with those of rural India. While this depiction also points to a hegemonic representation, there were some differences between the two organizations. For instance, MWCD portrayed gender biased sex selection among middle class rural families while BI only depicted it among socio-economically disadvantaged rural families. The main findings are summarized in Table 3 below.

Table 3

Elements of Multimodal Narrative of Dangers in Rural Setting (N = 142)

Organization	Threat	Protagonist	Perpetrator	Setting of Video	Immediate Solution	Implied Solution
BI (*N* = 70)	• Early marriage/ Female education (*n* = 70)	• Socio-economically disadvantaged girls in rural areas (*n* = 67) • No direct reference to subject (*n* = 3)	• Fathers and families and communities in rural India (*n* = 67) • Not specified (*n* = 3)	• Rural areas (*n* = 34) • Urban areas (*n* = 33) • Events in public spaces (*n* = 3)	• Donation (*n* = 19) • Awareness (*n* = 16) • Participate in campaign by signing/ sharing stories (*n* = 9)	• Girls should fight for rights (*n* = 33) • Changing mindsets of families, particularly fathers (*n* = 39)
MWCD (*N* = 3)	• Early marriage/ Female education (*n* = 3)	• Girls in rural areas (*n* = 3)	• Families and communities in rural India (*n* = 3)	• Rural areas (*n* = 3)	• Awareness (*n* = 3)	• Girls should fight for rights (*n* = 2) • Changing mindsets of families (*n* = 3)

Organization	Threat	Protagonist	Perpetrator	Setting of Video	Immediate Solution	Implied Solution
BI (N = 36)	• Gender-biased sex selection (n = 36)	• Socio-economically disadvantaged rural girls (n = 34) • Not specified (n = 2)	• Families and communities in rural India (n = 34) • Not specified (n = 2)	• Rural areas (n = 25) • Urban area (n = 9) • Not specified (n = 2)	• Awareness (n = 8)	• Girls should fight for rights (n = 25) • Changing mindsets of families (n = 16)
MWCD (N = 33)	• Gender-biased sex selection (n = 33)	• Middle class rural girls (n = 20) • Middle class, urban (n = 6) • Not specified (n = 7)	• Families and communities in rural India (n = 20) • Family members (n = 6) • Not specified (n = 7)	• Rural areas (n = 20) • Urban household/ hospital (n = 6) • Events (n = 7)	• Awareness (n = 29)	• Girls should take charge of their lives (n = 20) • Changing mindsets of families (n = 23)

To illustrate the representation of early marriage and female education as rural issues, Excerpt 4 presents a passage from BI's video "Pinky's legacy":

Excerpt 4

Pinky's Legacy – The Conflict Within (BI, 2017)

Time	Moving image	Narration	Text	Music/Sound
…	…	…	…	…
00:33	Village scenery	Narrator: This village is situated about 45 km from the district headquarters		Rhythmic drumming
00:39	Young children walking down the street.	If we see it from a social and economic perspective, this village is very backward [In Hindi]		
…	…	…	…	…
01:21	A man in close up image in the classroom. Children and women participating in activity organized by BI. A man in the classroom.	Man: When Pinky was in the 10th standard, her parents began to arrange her marriage. We knew about this but as we are in a rural place, we didn't want to interfere in her life. However, when Breakthrough adopted our school in 2012, it held an event for students to challenge early marriage (showed footage from the event) and Pinky was inspired by that programme. She decided to write a petition against her marriage and submit it to the nearest police station.	Raj Kumar Sinha Vice Principal, Dharampur High School.	
02:10	Girls cheering.			
…	…	…	…	…
02:56	An old man wearing a cloth braids a rope.	At first I was shocked she went to the police. I thought someone had influenced her wrongly.	Nago Singh Grandfather of Pinky	
…	…	…	…	…
03:28		When I saw the impact of her actions, I recognized that Pinky had done the right thing. She was right in going to the police.		
…	…	…	…	…

The video narrates the story of a girl (Pinky) who resists the tradition of arranged marriage. It utilizes a documentary style: presenting exact details (00:33: "This village is situated about 45 km from the district headquarters") and compiling testimony of different "eyewitnesses" (e.g., Vice Principal, Grandfather) creating a sense of authenticity. Introducing each actor by name also adds to the real life feel of the narrative (e.g., 01:21). The context is described at the beginning

as a "backward" rural village (00:33). The accompanying sound/music consisting of rhythmic drums common at rural festivities also objectifies the setting as rural. Additionally, the use of language in the video demands attention. While conversations, narrations and dialogues are in Hindi, which function to further objectify the setting as rural and appeal to ethos or trustworthiness and authenticity, the subtitles are in English, suggesting that BI is targeting an English-speaking audience.

The scene indicates that men have the power to decide which behaviour is acceptable or not. The interviewed "Vice Principal" claims that the NGO encouraged Pinky to take action (01:21). That her action changed attitudes is shown by the grandfather, representing traditional men, who explains how he was initially suspicious of the unwanted behaviour but then realised it was "the right thing." (03:28). Although the video implicitly connects harmful attitudes to men's position, the explicated solution is that girls should solve the issue by being active in resisting traditions and bringing about larger change in their families, particularly male figures. The idea that girls should fight for their rights was a reoccurring theme in majority of dealing with these alleged rural dangers. The protagonist in a video by MWCD (Like Sisters, 2018) explicitly states: "All stories don't have a happy ending. I am grateful that I took charge of my life and made the right decisions at the right time." (03:50), pointing to the dominance of neoliberal ideologies emphasizing individual responsibility.

Rural middle-class families were also depicted in 20 of MWCD's videos on gender-biased sex selection. Excerpt 5 presents a passage from the video Muskaan (2017), a 21-minute animated film depicting a family living in the rural mountains contemplating committing female infanticide.

Excerpt 5

Muskaan (MWCD, 2017)

Time	Moving image	Language/Narration	Language/Text	Music/Sound
...	...	...	...	...
00:32	Background of mountains, pine trees and houses. A young girl dressed in colourful tunic-leggings and a boy are playing outdoors with a lizard	Unknown female voice calls, "Muskaan, ey Muskaan. In Hindi, "Coming grandma"	Muskaan (name of short film)	Cheerful music, similar to something in a cartoon
...	...	...	...	...
4:24	Grandmother sits cross-legged on a bench outside the house, with head covered and the young girl (named Muskaan) sits on the floor facing her and looking worried.	Muskaan, in Hindi, "Grandma, don't you love me?"		Kissing sound
4:30	Grandmother kisses Muskaan's forehead	Grandma in Hindi, "Look, how much I love you!" Muskaan in Hindi, "But if mother bears another girl,		
4:35	Camera zooms onto Muskaan's face	why do you want to kill her?"		Dramatic music
4:39	Camera zooms onto grandmother's face, she gets up as she delivers the last line.	Grandma in Hindi, "You don't understand. This is adult conversation."		
...	...	...		...
18:24	Muskaan runs to grandmother and her parents who have returned from a visit to the clinic. The grandmother touches Muskaan's face. Grandma and Muskaan hug	Grandma in Hindi, "You win, Muskaan. I understand now that boys and girls are equal."		Cheerful music, same as at the start of video

From this excerpt, the mountains and landscapes (00:32) situate the video in a rural setting. However, the family's middle-class status was evident from their well-constructed home with well-decorated interiors (00:44). In a later scene, they use a car to get to a clinic, further displaying their middle-class status. Like its counterparts, the solution advocated by this video was for girls to stand up for themselves and claim their rights. This is depicted in different scenes, firstly when Muskaan, the young girl stands up to her grandmother and challenges her on wanting to terminate the mother's

pregnancy if it is a girl (4.35) and at the end of the video, when the elders return from a hospital visit and the grandma hugs the girl and tells her, "You win, Muskaan." (18.42), reinforcing the idea that by standing against patriarchal traditions, girls can convince their families of a new way forward. Meanwhile, MWCD's choice to use animated imagery to portray middle-class rural families who live in homes that are in stark contrast to the crumbling shanties depicted in BI's videos was also notable. One possible explanation for this difference could be the ministry's attempt to hide certain images of rural India such as poverty and dilapidation, which the current government has a history of doing (Naqvi, 2020).

Discussion

In the present study, we analysed 250 gender advocacy videos addressing dangers to women in India from a governmental agency (The Ministry for Women and Child Development, MWCD), a local NGO (Breakthrough India, BI) and an international NGO (Amnesty International India, AII). While the different agents included in the study represent different voices with varying positions of power in society, the remarkable consistency across the campaigns suggests the presence of hegemonic representations of dangers to women in India. Through the use of multimodal narration – specific images, languages, sounds and text – the selected organizations constructed and conveyed two social representations of danger to women: the first representation locates sexual violence and harassment in an urban setting and presents the protagonist as a middle-class woman, targeted by unfamiliar working-class men. Meanwhile, early marriage, discontinuing female education and gender-biased sex selection were presented as problems specific to rural India in a second representation. Together, the urban–rural, working-class–middle-class, uneducated–educated dichotomies in these two representations are complementary, depending on each other for existence by perpetuating the idea that the middle class is free from patriarchy and oppression of women, placing all responsibility for these issues onto poor and rural populations.

As Fivush (2010) reminds, silence reflects power, making it necessary to consider what is missing from representations to reveal the views that are delegitimized (see also: Gervais & Jovchelovitch, 1998). The one-dimensional representation of perpetrators as unfamiliar working-class men and failure to visualize men in culturally respected positions as potential harassers allows the patriarchy of urban Indian middle-classes to go unchecked while rigorously policing it among working-classes. This does not mirror the reality of Dalit women and other marginalized women being more vulnerable to sexual harassment (National Crime Records Bureau, 2016). The illustration of urban middle-class women and girls being sexual harassed in public spaces on their way to work and school points to the enduring historical dichotomy between middle-class women given legitimate reasons to be out in public and working-class women who are denied such legitimacy (Phadke et al., 2011; Rao, 2014). Simultaneously, by choosing to focus on early marriage and gender-biased sex selection among the rural poor, the campaigns neglect to consider their occurrence in cities among elite classes. The continued use of sex determination technology through bribes (Madan & Breuning, 2014), despite it being banned is testimony to its occurrence among the elite who can afford bribes. Additionally, sexual harassment videos that claim to represent all women while showing only middle-class protagonists embody the hegemony of middle-class womanhood, excluding other women's realities.

This is also evident from differences in persuasion techniques in the different representations. Compared to sexual harassment videos which appealed to their presumably middle-class audience through identification with middle-class protagonists, videos against early marriage, discontinuing education and gender biased sex selection attempted to distance viewers from these issues while also giving them the opportunity to prevent these alleged rural practices.

The solutions advocated in both representations are largely the same: for girls to claim their rights and to a lesser extent for families to change their attitudes. This secondary solution is ultimately bound to the first one as in most cases, families were shown to change their attitudes and traditional ways only after the women and girls challenged them and stood up for themselves. In a patriarchal society, showing women to be active agents can be considered empowering by encouraging women to defy oppressive practices and indicates the potential of cultural transformation through gender advocacy. However, when empowerment is individualized and homogenized, it takes the onus away from the state apparatus and other powerful institutions in ensuring the rights and dignity of women and results in

exclusionary ideas of women and ways of achieving their emancipation. The absence of advocacy for structural changes and clear political solutions reflects current discourses around hegemonic neoliberal feminism where individuals are held responsible for their own position in society (Colley & White, 2019; Rutherford, 2018), resulting in individual resilience and positive mental attitudes being used as a cure all for deep-rooted structural problems (Dabrowski, 2021).

Given the SRT's assumption regarding the heterogeneous nature of knowledge in contemporary societies, the similarities across the different organizations' representations is somewhat surprising. To return to issues of power, this consistency across organizations points to the existence of hegemonic representations tied to a neoliberal master narrative that individualizes social change and represents women and their issues according to ideals of middle-class womanhood (de la Mata et al., 2022). As Jovchelovitch (1997) suggests, hegemonic representations emerge when certain groups have greater access to resources than others, particularly communication channels. In India, middle and upper-class urban dwellers usually have the greatest access to such resources and, as Dabhi (2009) discusses, are over-represented within governmental and non-governmental organizations due to the NGOization of women's movements (see also: Roy, 2015). Additionally, Rao (2014) suggests that such representations are advanced by the media to appeal to their middle-class audiences, likely to be the case in this research as India's digital divide results in the primary consumers of YouTube videos being urban middle-class (Parsheera, 2019). The primary use of appeals to trustworthiness where so-called trustworthy sources in videos were largely middle-class representatives also suggests that representations are catering to an audience belonging to this social stratum. Consequently, it is understandable that narratives and representations that advance the self-interests of the urban elite are prioritized in digital gender advocacy, even when they run counter to the organizational mandates of creating a more egalitarian society. As a result, instead of advancing representations that challenge social hierarchies and represent different issues in their full diversity (Farr, 1995), the campaigning reinforces the neoliberal ideological status quo.

Such representations have tangible consequences. A recent report by a Dalit organization called the Swabhiman Society and Equality Now (2020) identifies the barriers to justice that Dalit victims of sexual harassment face in contrast to cases involving dominant caste women. While the former is largely ignored, rarely result in convictions and are subject to community pressures that impede access to justice, the latter receive immediate attention and justice. The police's hesitation to register a rape and murder complaint by the family of a Dalit victim of gang rape at the hands of dominant caste men in Hathras, Uttar Pradesh in 2020 exemplifies this (Taskin, 2021). Meanwhile, working-class rape suspects have been executed when the victims were from the urban middle class as in the case of the Delhi bus gang rape in 2012 and Hyderabad rape case of 2018. (Shepherd, 2020).

It is worth mentioning that there was some evidence of more emancipated and polemic representations in the material, indicating the possibilities for transformation of hegemonic way of thinking about dangers to women. For instance, some of MWCD's campaign material advanced an emancipated representation, where perpetrators of sexual harassment were shown to be colleagues and bosses in white collar jobs. Three of AI's videos featured migrant women from Nepal who experienced harassment at the hands of a foreign diplomat, a representation that can be considered polemic by challenging the hegemonic narrative and holding men in power accountable for their crimes against marginalized women. In addition, MWCD also advanced a polemic representation of gender-biased sex selection by also visualizing it in urban middle-class households. It will remain the subject of future research to explore if these more emancipated and polemic representations can provide material for the construction of alternative narratives (de la Mata et al., 2022).

This study is not without its limitations. Firstly, when applying qualitative methods to large quantities of visual material, the richness of the material is compromised. Decisions made during the data collection process may have affected the possibilities to identify all details of the discussed issues. In practice, more nuances, similarities and differences are likely in the objectifications and anchorings of gender advocacy campaigns than this study was able to identify. Detailed analysis of differences across individual videos, the production value of the organizations and single issues raised exclusively by a particular organization were beyond the level of analysis employed in this study but could provide topics for future research. Secondly, it remains confined to the content side of digital gender advocacy without analysing the reception of the campaigns. The audiences may not deterministically accept the suggested social representations, but can creatively interpret and question them (Moscovici, 1961/2008; Jovchelovitch, 1997). Using the parameters of Thomas Reuters Foundation (2018) in classifying dangers to women also delimited the material that was

analysed. On the other hand, Reuters' criteria provided a framework with concrete categories missing from conceptions of violence against women (VAW).

Conclusion

Through the analysis of gender advocacy campaigns in India, this study has opened the discussion on the relationship between social representations and advocacy campaigning. The results highlighted hierarchies in digital gender advocacy anchored in historical stratifications of middle-class womanhood that continues to define feminist projects in India. To our knowledge, it is the first study to delve into these issues at the level of gender advocacy campaigning. Our findings suggest that going forward, digital gender advocacy in India must re-think the hierarchies they are perpetuating, in direct contradiction to their alleged goals. In addition, solutions must expand beyond those emphasizing personal responsibility of women and girls in preventing oppression to ones that make the state and larger society accountable for the dangers women face in India to bring about holistic change.

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