**Mob mentality**

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August 26, 2021

According to Wikipedia, mob mentality, ‘also lesser known as gang mentality, describes how people can be influenced by their peers to adopt certain behaviours on a largely emotional, rather than rational, basis. When individuals are affected by mob mentality, they may make different decisions than they would have individually.’

The recent incidents in Lahore, whether it was Minar-e-Pakistan’s horrific sexual harassment of Ayesha Akram, or a video of a man harassing a woman in the middle of Lahore traffic, alarmingly indicates an increase in mob mentality, in how frequent these incidents that involve more than one individual have become as well as the common theme of brazenly sexually dominating women.

It is dominance rooted in misogyny, narcissism and lately almost feels like a remorseless male mentality that is infectious in nature and influencing others to follow them in this inhumane cruelty.

In the recent video of a man running over to inappropriately touch a woman sitting in a rickshaw while many others cheer him on, is an alarming indication of males across the board taking strength from each other to harass and mistreat women. And my fear is that unless the culprits involved in the Minar-e-Pakistan incident are severely punished, this might be the beginning of men ganging up in herds to attack vulnerable women. My greater fear is that in spite of the consequences, a mob mentality might already have developed, enhancing the false sense of power these men experience due to the group’s dynamics.

[Shahbaz Sharif to reach Karachi on three-day visit today](https://nation.com.pk/27-Aug-2021/shahbaz-sharif-to-reach-karachi-on-three-day-visit-today)

An individual’s sense of identity disappears in such a space, making them yet another face in the crowd. Emotions take over, evoked by the emotions of one person and carried throughout, be they excitement or anger. Rational thinking dissipates and an individual’s identity and choice disappear.

What is unique is that this large disorderly group like the one in Ayesha Akram’s incident focuses on destructive or riotous action.

What is causing this especially in terms of cases of violence against women? I believe anonymity is one factor where the perpetrators think they won’t get caught and be held accountable for their actions. The sense of responsibility of the act gets diffused too as it becomes more of a group’s responsibility than an individual’s.

I also want to highlight that most recent cases are from a particular section of men. If a systemic analysis was done, many common factors would emerge. I watched the Lahore incident video a few times and I noticed that most men belonged to the same age group—between the 20’s and 30’s. So there is no sense of purpose that they probably have and might face shame from the family for not doing well in life, almost invisible to their family and visible only to peers.

[Pakistan reports 4,016 Covid cases in single day](https://nation.com.pk/27-Aug-2021/pakistan-reports-4-016-covid-cases-in-single-day)

All the media attention and awareness of sexual harassment and violence against women on one hand is a great thing, but it also attracts the attention of men who have no meaning of life and indirectly become ‘famous’ so to speak. They get the attention that they have always craved.

There is also resentment and almost defiance towards the state. We all know how much accountability there is in Pakistan and that’s a comfort such men find in, almost daring the state to try anything now. And somehow when people like Shah Hussain—who stabbed a girl 27 times—got out earlier than his total sentence, it almost gives a false sense of hope to those with criminal intent and a history of a tendency towards violence against women.

This mob mentality needs to be checked in now before we have a series of such crimes coming our way. These perpetrators need to be punished and made an example of so that the message is loud and clear and they understand that following a criminal act or being a silent witness will also have a severe price to pay.