



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

# Why women need to stop being told to learn self-defence

## BUSHRA ZAMAN

As a child, I believed karate or self-defence of some sort would help make me invincible.

Watching videos promoting self-defence techniques and attending seminars or classes on self-defence are all sound activities to invest our time in, especially if you take into account how they can help us be better equipped at protecting ourselves in certain situations. Something I asked myself at a much later age, however, was how reasonable the idea of relying on self-defence, to prevent any kind of harassment from occurring, was.

Telling girls to start learning self-defence as the one solution to end all forms of harassment essentially feeds into the culture of victim-blaming, as it may contribute to the idea that if you were ever harassed or attacked, it was because you were not equipped to fight back, instead of how the harassment should never have occurred to begin with.

A potential issue lies in how self-defence could be negatively perceived. In movies, if a girl starts fighting off bad guys and defeats them, the sole reason for her win is usually her extensive training received in fighting. Sometimes the character receives help.

However, in real life, if you were a girl who got into an argument with a man somewhere for some reason, most people would likely just stand and watch the scene, often there only to ridicule the situation. The ways in which any such

situation can go wrong are innumerable. If the man was rude and attempted to raise his hand against you, would you be completely confident about saving your life alone if it came down to it? Should the situation turn worse and you were outnumbered, what would happen then?

The problems do not stop there. Women could be physically unfit to receive self-defence training, may have reached an age where they can no longer vigorously train to protect themselves, or maybe they are too young to understand how to do so. They could have financial difficulties which render it impossible for them to attend classes or seminars on how to defend themselves. Just because these women have these barriers in learning self-defence, does by no means, indicate they have no desire to protect themselves.

Knowing that you have the ability to at least to some extent, whatever the extent may be, protect yourself from bodily harm in the state of a crisis, no doubt is better than not having any clue as to how to defend yourself. It gives you confidence and increases your chances of survival in a fight. However, it is more important to promote better education and teach people how to respect people of all gender identities. It is not a woman's responsibility to protect herself, it is the responsibility of the society to avoid any such occurrences.

*Bushra Zaman likes books, art, and only being contacted by email. Contact her at bushrazaman31@yahoo.com*

# Why guilt-tripping stories on Instagram need to go

## FATIMA JAHAN ENA

During my recent doom-scrolling session on Instagram, I came across something puzzling. Someone posted a story which said "Repost if you're against sexual violence. I can see who skipped."

Thinking this was a bizarre, isolated incident, I continued scrolling. About five minutes had passed when I stumbled upon another variant of the same story. This one said something along the lines of "Share this on your story if you're against xenophobia."

Over the next week, I saw multiple variations of these stories. They all addressed different atrocities or issues, but one common feature among them all was milking people's guilt.

This new trend seemed very reminiscent of old school chain mails. Here's a quick run-down if you missed out on that era: the subject of the email would say something like "FORWARD THIS TO 7 PEOPLE OR ELSE YOU WILL DIE IN A WEEK."

Not very subtle, but sufficiently effective. The actual contents of the email would talk about a tragic incident, usually with supernatural or horror underpinnings. At the end of the email, you would be instructed to forward the email to a certain number of people, or some omnipresent, all-seeing entity would "get you."

Now, I will admit. I did fall prey to those messages and bombard my friends with them. The guilt tripping really did get to me. But that was a long, long time ago. So, imagine my surprise when I saw the same guilt-inducing tactics on Instagram years later.

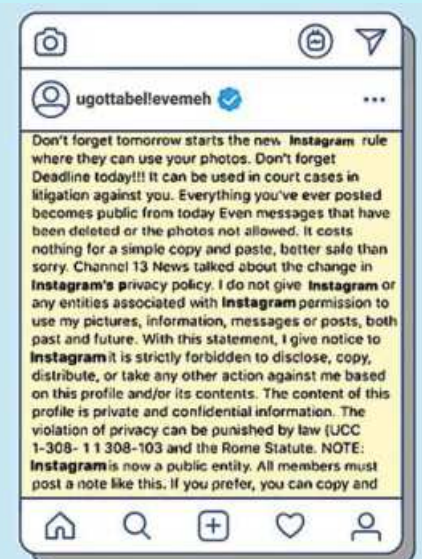
These stories use public perception as a guilt tactic. By stating "I can see who skipped," the person viewing them instantly feels like they're under pressure to repost or risk being seen in a negative light. Some may think not reposting would mean they're not standing in solidarity with the social issue.

Even though the origins of this trend might be rooted in good intentions, it's still a trend at the end of the day. This means its lifespan will be short lived until it's replaced by something else. The short-lived nature of trends makes this specific type of guilt-tripping stories seem like performative activism. Reposting a story that lasts only 24 hours is generally a one-off incident which rarely displays true solidarity.

Furthermore, the guilt is quite misdirected in this trend. The text shines the antagonising spotlight on the people who choose to skip resharing. This redirects attention from the important issue in question. Instead of focusing the guilt on the perpetrators or sharing important information about the problem, the non-sharers are made to stand under public trial.

So, what can be done in the face of these stories? It's always good practice to take a step back and think about what these posts or stories signify. Having said that, these trends aren't always performative. Displaying solidarity in any way is important but obtaining it through guilt is not the right way to go about it.

*Fatima Jahan Ena likes complaining about capitalism and her forehead. Find her at mail2ena@gmail.com*



DESIGN: KAZI AKIB BIN ASAD