

INVISIBLE BOUNDARIES: GENDER–BASED RESTRICTIONS ON PUBLIC MOBILITY

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Abstract

The world is ours too.

This article highlights the silent yet powerful restrictions that shape girls' daily lives — especially the belief that their visibility must be controlled. Rooted in personal experiences and social patterns, it questions why a girl's presence is often treated as something to be hidden. Through reflective storytelling, it exposes how these invisible rules damage freedom, confidence, and identity. The article calls for change — for a world where girls are not confined by fear or judgment, but empowered to live freely, visibly, and with dignity.

I. The Unseen Rule of Visibility

In many neighbourhoods and families, there is an unspoken rule: girls must not be visible. Even something as simple as going to the terrace is not allowed until it gets dark — not for safety, but so that no one sees us. We are told to move only when the world can't watch. This invisibility is presented as a form of protection, but in truth, it is a silent punishment for simply existing.

II. Why Must We Wait for Darkness?

Why do we need to wait for the sun to set before we step out? Why does daylight belong only to boys? We ask ourselves these questions silently because asking them aloud invites criticism. Should our bodies and movements be so threatening that we must only exist in the shadows?

III. One Rule for Us, Another for Them

Boys play outside in broad daylight. They walk, run, laugh, and explore — without permission or fear. But girls? We must watch the clock, check the clothes, think of who might see us, and most importantly — seek approval. The same society that tells us we are equal, turns around and builds cages with invisible bars.

IV. More Than Just the Terrace

This control is not limited to rooftops. It's in how we're told to sit, dress, speak, and smile. Don't laugh loudly. Don't sit with legs apart. Don't wear that. Don't go there. Every movement, every choice is filtered through the question — "What will others say?" We are not born with these restrictions. They are taught, enforced, and normalized.

V. Why Should We Beg for Rights?

We are not demanding something extraordinary. We're asking for the right to be seen without being judged. The right to move without being followed. The right to exist without being told to shrink ourselves. These are not privileges — they are basic human rights. And yet, we are made to feel as if we must earn them, justify them, plead for them.

VI. We Are Not the Problem

Let's be clear: if someone chooses to stare at a girl for simply existing, the problem lies with them — not with her. Our bodies are not distractions. Our freedom is not a threat. We should not have to modify our lives for the sake of someone else's lack of discipline or respect.

VII. Our Promise

We promise to walk without fear. To stand in the sunlight and not just the shadows. To speak, move, and live with the pride we deserve. We will break the silence around these everyday injustices and make space for every girl to breathe freely. We are not the problem. We are the change.

Author's Note:

This article reflects both my academic interest and personal concern regarding the subtle yet pervasive restrictions imposed on women's public mobility. Through this work, I am to raise awareness, question societal norms, and advocate for a more inclusive and equitable environment for all genders.

