

Are Women Safe in Public Places in India? To Study and Analyze Women's Fear and Perception of Men

Gouripriya V

Computer Network Engineering
BMS College of Engineering (BMSCE)
Bengaluru, India

Nithish Paul

Computer Network Engineering
BMS College of Engineering (BMSCE)
Bengaluru, India

Ashok Kumar R

Information Science and Engineering
BMS College of Engineering (BMSCE)
Bengaluru, India

Abstract— In India, we unveil men and women's perspectives on women's safety in public spaces, since several cases have been reported in the country and requires much attention. We used survey data to examine the responses of both men and women, as well as the factors that influence their perceptions of safety, both positively and negatively. Our findings reveal that women's safety can be classified into several categories, including personal, public, and social, all of which must be aligned in order for their safety to be safeguarded.

Keywords—Women safety; public places; India; perception; public transport.

I. INTRODUCTION

Women's safety is a major concern in India. Every now and then, an incident involving their safety occurs. Each and every citizen in the country is quite aware about it, but do not come forward to help. A woman's safety is paramount in all aspects of her life, including her home, public places, and workplace.

“Public spaces are all places publicly owned or of public use, accessible and enjoyable by all for free” [3].

Public places are being the most dangerous space in the society. India is youngest economy in the world [2]. Women in India are extensively contributing towards its booming economy and development. “Negotiating public spaces to reach their destinations is an everyday struggle for women in India” [3].

Women are susceptible to physical assault, sexual harassment, and other forms of unpleasant behavior on public transportation. According to research, women on public transportation encounter concerns such as catcalling, eve teasing, stalking, and other harassment.

“Emerging as one of the fastest developing countries in terms of infrastructure and economy, data show crime against women on the rise in India.” [8]. “Aftermath of the December 2012 horrific gang-rape and subsequent murder of the 23-year-old woman in a moving bus in New Delhi served as a wake-up call for the Government of India (GOI)” [4].

As a result, we'll look at how men and women in India perceive women's safety in public places in order to better understand the issue.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A research study based on “Women's safety in public places: Perception, Experience, incidence and Impact of Sexual harassment in public places in Patna – the state capital of Bihar” by Vineetha Chettri. The focus of this study is on women's perceptions of their safety in public areas. Also, the study's main focus is on the sexual harassment that women confront in public areas, the effects and solutions for reducing sexual harassment in public places, and how to eliminate sexual harassment and raise public awareness about it. This study also analyzed the age groups that are vulnerable to lack of safety.

A study on “Women Safety in public transport” in Indore by Mayank Chowdary, Sudhanshu Dube and Rakesh Verma. This research focuses on women's safety on public transportation and at bus stops. The authors have created a survey, and have used factor analysis for their analysis. “Factor analysis is most important method which is used to reduce numerous variables into factors” [2].

A study on “Safe in the City? Negotiating safety, public space and the male gaze in Kolkata, India” [3]. This study mainly focused to understand the people action in public places and how women take some measures to avoid such actions in public places.

An article based on “Street Violence against Women in India: Mapping Prevention Strategies” by Rituparna Bhattacharya. This article was created about female street violence in North-East India. Agartala, Kohima, Imphal, Shillong, and Guwahati were among the places where attention was concentrated. This article aims to inform the prevention strategies to increase women safety in India and in North-east India (Focused area).

The above-mentioned literature survey focuses mostly on women's safety in various parts of India and women's safety in public transportation in various parts of India. There is very little research conducted on women safety in overall India

based on the perception of men and women. Women's safety is an important issue in India. All of India's states have distinct cultures, histories, and administrative structures. Both men and women are represented in these many cultures, origins, and administrations. As a result, the goal of our research is to "examine both men and women's perceptions of women's safety in public places in India."

Research questions

Following our review of a number of research papers and articles, we must address the following questions:

1. Are women safe in public places in India?
2. Which public place do women feel unsafe the most and for what reason?
3. Which public transport do women feel unsafe to commute and for what reason?
4. Why do women feel unsafe the most during nights?
5. What do men feel about women safety in public places in India?

III. METHODOLOGY

The following sources were used to compile data for this study:

- Review of scholarly studies, professional reports, and newspaper articles about women's fears and concerns about public safety, public transportation, and nighttime travel.
- Survey which includes 14 different questions regarding the specific research.

The information gathered from research papers and newspaper stories is all relevant to this study.

Questions related to the research topic were used to design the survey form.

These questions will aid the authors in carrying out the research questions-based analysis.

IV. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The Questionnaire collected for the purpose of data collection will be used to do the question-based analysis for this research.

1. Are women safe in public places in India?

This section examines whether Indian women are truly safe in public spaces. Further questions about why India is not safe for women have been posed based on the yes or no replies.

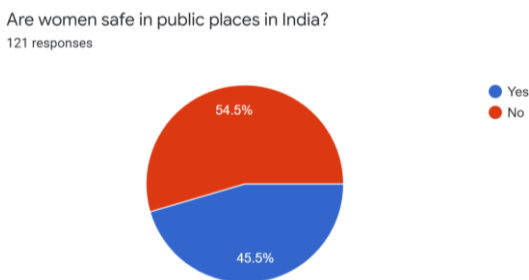


Fig-1 Are women safe in India?

According to the poll responses, this question obtained the biggest number of "NO" replies (54.5%) and the lowest number of "YES" responses (45.5%), indicating that "women are not safe in public places in India."

The sections that follow will explain why women are not safe in public places.

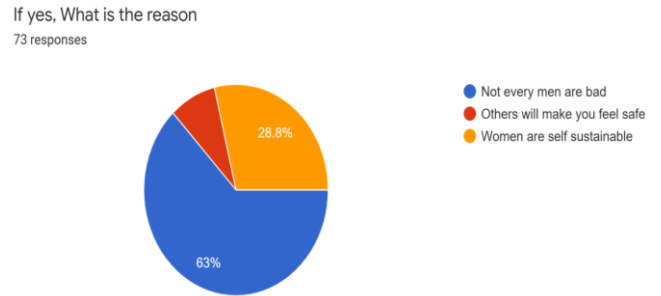


Fig-1a If yes, what is the reason?

For the answer "YES," we can see from the following figure that "not all men are bad (63%)."

But the important point here is why India's public spaces are unsafe. The cause is shown in the figure below.

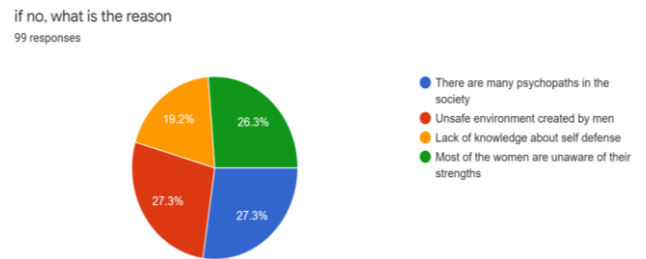


Fig-1b If no, what is the reason?

For the answer "NO" the responses are collective having answers such as 'There are many psychopaths in the society (27.3%)', 'unsafe environment created by men (27.3%)', 'lack of knowledge about self-defense (19.2%)' and 'most women are unaware about their strengths (26.3%)'.

There are many psychopaths in society (27.3%), and the unsafe environment created by men (27.3%) is what makes women feel insecure from the responses, and most women are unaware of their strengths (26.3%), according to men's perceptions.

2. Which public place do women feel unsafe the most and for what reason?

This section will address the authors second research topic, which is the most dangerous public places for women, from both men and women point of view, and what are the concerns do women face when in a public place.

Respondents were asked to specify the location of each occurrence of sexual harassment or assault they had encountered.

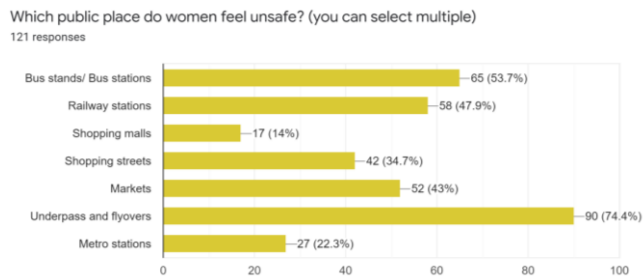


Fig-2 Which public place do women feel unsafe?

Here, different spots of public space have been included such as bus stands, railway stations, shopping malls, markets, underpass, flyovers and their safety concern in figures has been noted. The top three most selected locations are at underpass and flyovers with 74.4% of the people feeling unsafe, bus stands/ bus stations with 53.7% and railway stations with 47.9%.

Fig-2 depicts the complete graph of respondents who believe these specific locations are unsafe for women.

Due to crowded spaces or, alternatively, isolated areas where no one is accessible to act and help in an emergency, railway stations and trains are vulnerable spaces for women.

Women are particularly vulnerable in these public locations because of the fears they have. The section below illustrates some of the concerns that women have when they are out in public.

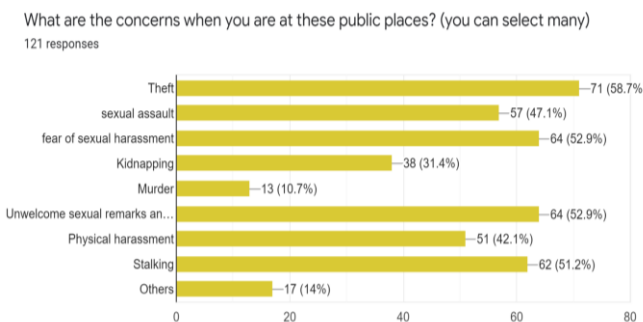


Fig-2a What are the concerns when you are at these public places?

The graph points out what women fear when they step into public places such as theft, sexual assault, unwelcomed sexual remarks, murder and kidnapping. Theft had the highest response (58.7%), followed by fear of sexual harassment and unwelcoming sexual statements and gestures (52.9%), stalking (51.2%), and murder being the least (10.7%).

All these mentioned concerns faced by women were observed by men which is shown in fig-2b.

if you are man, have you ever seen women facing these above concerns?
53 responses

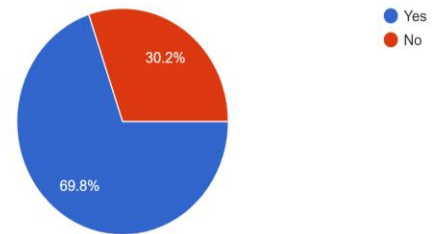


Fig-2b If you are a man, have you ever seen a woman facing these concerns?
68.9% of men said yes, implying that 69.8% of men had witnessed women dealing with these issues in public places.

3. Which public transport do women feel unsafe to commute and for what reason?

This section answers the authors third research question, which public transport do women feel unsafe and for what reason.

Which mode of public transport is unsafe for women? (select 2)
121 responses

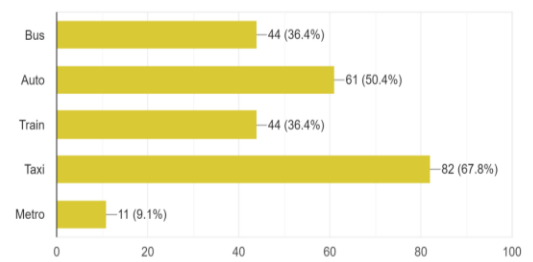


Fig - 3 Which mode of public transport is unsafe for women?

Recently taxis have turned out to be the most common unsafe public transport service (67.8%) as there have been several incidents reported. "Incident of Uber driver raping women that had called for the cab" [1].

"Public transport, particularly buses, were the places where women experienced the maximum sexual harassment" [6]. "While women waited at bus stops for their buses, followed by harassment once they actually got onto the bus" [6].

On trains, sexual assault, molestation, and even rape have been reported in rising numbers.

Fig-3 shows a graph which depicts the percentage of public transportation that is unsafe for women.

How often do you travel in public transport?
121 responses



Fig - 3a How often do you travel in public transport?

The majority of individuals use public transportation to get about every day.

43.8% of the citizens use public transport occasionally. 19% use public transport for other purpose. 37.2% use public transport for commuting to schools, college and offices.

Even if people use only public transport system occasionally, some citizens utilize it to commute to schools, universities, and other locations, as well as travel via public transportation numerous times a day for various purposes. Every day, 56.2% of individuals use public transportation.

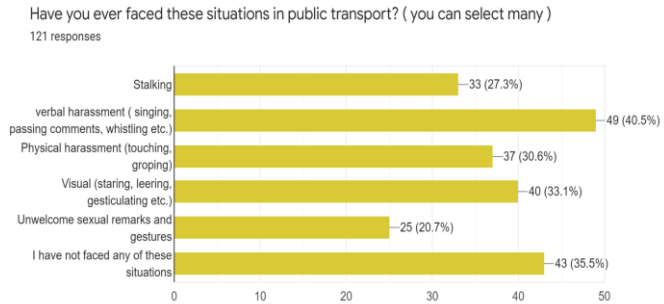


Fig- 3c Have you ever faced these situations in public transport?

The kind of issues that women face while they travel using public transport is shown in the fig-3c, such as verbal harassment, groping and starrng. Out of which Verbal harassment such as cat calling, whistling and passing out lewd comments, has been with the highest response is shown in the above graph.

The graph shows verbal harassment (40.5%) being the highest and visual harassment (33.1%) being the next highest. Because there were men in the study, they stated, "I have not faced any of these situations (35.5%)." Overall, 34.6% of men responded to the survey.

"School and college students faced the highest incidence of verbal harassment as well as visual harassment (flashing, for instance)" [6].

if you are a man, have you seen a woman facing these above situations?

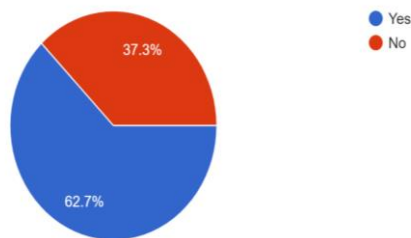


Fig-3d If you are a man, have you ever seen women facing these situations?

62.7% of men had witnessed women in these situations.

4. Why do women feel unsafe the most during nights?

This section answers the authors fourth research question; why do women feel unsafe the most during nights.

At what times do women feel unsafe?
121 responses

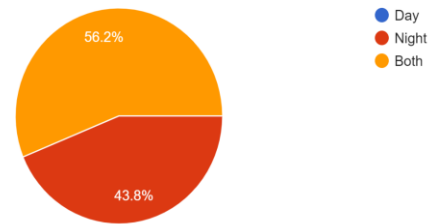


Fig-4 At what times do women feel unsafe?

This response makes it perfectly clear that women in India are not safe in public spaces at any time of day or night. However, they are not safe the majority of the time at night because both includes nighttime. 71.9% of the women feel unsafe during nights.

Which of these make women feel unsafe? (Select 3 which you feel is unsafe)
121 responses

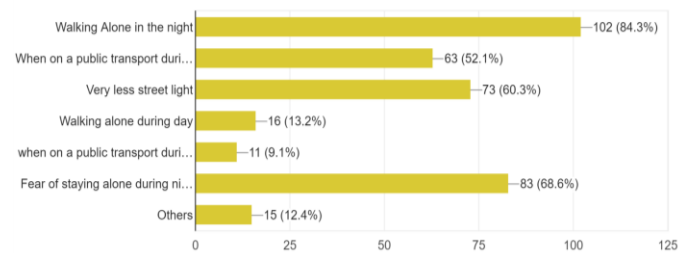


Fig – 4a Which of these make women feel unsafe?

Women feel unsafe while travelling at night, because of travelling through a public transport, walking alone, and also due to poor street lighting as well. The most common response is walking alone at night (84.3%). The fear of being alone at night (68.6%) is the next most common fear of women.

5. What do men feel about women safety in public places in India?

According to the authors' prior four study questions, men have observed women having difficulty in public areas and have witnessed various harassments in public transportation.

According to Fig-2b, 69.8% of men have witnessed women being victimized by theft, sexual assault, fear of sexual harassment, unwelcoming sexual statements and gestures, physical harassment, and stalking.

As shown in Fig-3d, 62.7% of men had witnessed a woman being subjected to stalking, verbal harassment, physical harassment, and visual harassment.

The poll responses on how women feel uncomfortable in public places and public transports in India clearly show men's opinions.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We are grateful to Mr. R Ashok Kumar for providing us with the chance to conduct this research.

We are grateful to our relatives and friends who supported us in filling out the survey form so that we could continue our research.

We'd like to express our gratitude to our friend Manjunath V Gowda for assisting us with our survey questionnaire.

CONCLUSION

As this is a major issue in our country which requires attention at utmost priority to be controlled and bring about a change so women find it easier to move without the sense of fear. But the actual and true change can be brought about in people's mindset. Until and unless the mindset doesn't change this will extend, but if there is a change in the people's mindset gradually there will be a drastic and immense change in the society and women will feel safe at all times.

REFERENCES

- [1] Vineetha Chettri "Women's safety in public places: Perception, Experience, incidence and Impact of Sexual harassment in public places in Patna – the state capital of Bihar" February 2015.
- [2] Mayank Choudhary, Sudhanshu Dube, Rakesh Verma, "Women Safety in public transport" October 2018
- [3] Sanghamithra Roy, Ajay Bailey, "Safe in city? Negotiating safety, public space and the male gaze in Kolkata, India" June 2021
- [4] Rituparna Bhattacharya "Street violence against women in India: Mapping Prevention Strategies" July 2016
- [5] Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris, Amanda Bornstein, "How to ease women's fear of transportation environments: case studies and best practices" October 2009
- [6] Kalpna Sharma, "Fear in the city" August 2010
- [7] Holly Kearn, Nicole E. Johns, and Dr. Anita Raj, "Measuring #MeToo: A National Study on Sexual Harassment and Assault" April 2019
- [8] Dr. Geetha Sinha "Women's safety from sexual assault at public spaces in national capital region" February 2017