Study of Women Safety in Suryanagar, Ghaziabad

Ms. Riddhi Shrivastava

M.A. Public Administration, Panjab University, Chandigarh

Abstract:

In 2018, India was named as the most dangerous country for women in the world, ranking first in sexual violence, human trafficking, and cultural, tribal and religious practices that endanger women. Violence against women in India manifests through behaviours, such as intimate partner violence and sexual assault, as well as through regional practices such as female child mortality due to son preference, child marriage, and honour killing. According to National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) report, women in Uttar Pradesh faced the maximum number of crimes in the country in 2021 where Ghaziabad stood at 13th spot out of 48 districts in U.P. with a total of 1082 registered crimes against women. Also, it should be noted that while the issue of safety of women in public places has been studied in India, these studies have looked at either the metros or rural areas. There is very little literature apart from newspaper reports that discuss safety in public places in Tier II cities like Ghaziabad. Keeping this in mind the present study was undertaken in the Suryanagar ward of Ghaziabad district in Uttar Pradesh to assess the level of safety, gather data about the experiences and perceptions about women safety in public places, and use the key findings of the study to raise awareness and advocate greater safety for women.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this study were to:

- Determine what kinds of spaces are perceived as unsafe for women;
- Establish factors that play a role in contributing to greater safety and inclusion for women;
- Assess how they access support services, for redressal; and
- Use key findings of the study to raise awareness and advocate greater safety for women

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY FRAMEWORK

Research Design – Descriptive and Empirical

Sources of Information – Primary and Secondary

Tools used for Data Collection – Perception audit and observation survey of public space and workplace using NCW app, Focus group discussion

Sample size – 180

Thus, the methodology adopted for this study comprises a two-pronged approach of reviewing relevant literature and primary data collection. A combination of quantitative and qualitative primary data has been collected for this study. While, the quantitative data has been collected for this study using the NCW application through structured survey questionnaires administered with female respondents, qualitative data was collected through focus group discussions. The surveys focused on understanding women's perception of safety in public spaces and workplaces of the Surya Nagar area of Ghaziabad.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

There were certain limitations in undertaking this research work. As it is understood that the limitations are a part of the project, they have been overshadowed by the benefits of the study.

- The survey conducted may not be considered as comprehensive as only limited respondents could be contacted because of the time constraint.
- Objectives and the purpose of study had to be explained to the respondents. Thus, their responses may be biased.
- Some of the respondents were reluctant to give their responses.
- Only limited sample size had been considered for the study and therefore, the conclusions drawn based on this may not be a reflection of the entire population.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Claiming Spaces for Women in Public Transport: Advocacy Brief by Azad Foundation; 2022

Azad Foundation in 2022 conducted a qualitative study to analyse factors that affect women's recruitment and retention in public transport as bus drivers within Delhi's public bus transportation system. The methodology used to collect the data was both primary as well as secondary. The study reported that 61% of women faced difficult situations in public transport. The study also highlighted that 95% women and 76% men would want to travel in buses driven by women. The study revealed that lack of information about where these jobs are advertised, financial constraints and lack of sustained institutional mechanisms that provide support to building women's aspirations for being a driver and accessing skill training were some of the reasons for women's low participation in the transport sector. Moreover, unfavourable labour conditions, harassment, bullying, violence, and incompatibility of work and family life were identified as the main factors affecting women's retention in transport. The report also included some policy recommendations categorized into short-term, medium-term and long-term interventions such as informing women about the opportunities in the transport sector, revising the standards for recruitment, reserving 25% jobs in public transport for women drivers, regularizing training on workplace safety and ensuring gender sensitive infrastructure.

Women's Safety Audit Report by HUMSAFAR (Support Centre for Women, Youth and Queer) Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh; 2021

Humsafar, a Lucknow based Support Centre for Women, youth and queer community in Uttar Pradesh undertook a safety audit in 2021 illustrating that women face many kinds of harassments every day that these occurance have been normalized to an extent that it became difficult for women to identify their own experiences of violence and sexual harassments. The research was carried out with the help of various participatory tools such as focus group discussions, case stories, safety audit walks and safety audit surveys with 100 participants. The findings of the study highlighted that due to the unavailability of cheaper and safer public transport, women and girls were exposed to high risk of harassment and violence. The level of trust in the police by the girls and women was also very low and some of them also shared their incidents of being assaulted or harassed by the police. There was a lack of basic infrastructure in the city like clean and safe public toilets, well-lit streets as well as no signage in the isolated spaces. The plan of action thus included to raise community awareness through creative mediums like puppet shows, street plays, and storytelling. Besides, it advocated for the requisite infrastructure like street lights, safe and accessible public toilets, cheaper and safer public transport, gender sensitization and government partnerships with the NGOs.

Gender-Sensitive Reforms in Public Transport: A Case of Kerala; 2021

A study was conducted by the Kerala State Transport Department in 2021 with the objective of improving women's safety in public transport and increasing women's ridership with the support of the Indo-German Cooperation project 'Integrated Sustainable Urban Transport Systems for Smart Cities' funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. Qualitative and quantitative data was collected through various tools such as assessment of the initiatives taken by the state government, stakeholder's consultation, focus group discussions, perception surveys and transport infrastructure assessment. The findings of the survey revealed that less than 20% of the respondents felt safe at night while traveling to and from the bus stop, waiting at the bus stop and traveling in the vehicle at night, and that 68% of the respondents faced harassment in public transport vehicles. Furthermore, absence of facilities such as a passenger information system, CCTV cameras, comfortable seating, low floor height buses, adequate lighting, crowd control, low women presence, etc. made women feel insecure and vulnerable. The key recommendations mentioned in the report included the Metropolitan Transport Authorities to act as nodal

agencies for gender mainstreaming in the transport sector, gender disaggregated data collection, women inclusion in the transport sector, developing gender-responsive infrastructure and gender sensitization through training and awareness programmes.

Creation and Data Analysis of Women Safety Index of Delhi and Its Neighbouring Cities; 2019

Ms. Pranika Kaur (scholar, New Delhi Institute of Management), Professor Rinku Dixit (Department of Business Analytics, New Delhi Institute of Management), and Professor Shailee Choudhary (Department of Business Analytics, New Delhi Institute of Management) India, in 2019 conducted a study to create a women safety index for measuring

the safety of women in pilot cities and use this for the comparative assessment of five cities i.e., Delhi, Gurgaon, Faridabad, Jaipur and Ghaziabad in terms of the safety for women to travel in public places. Various statistical techniques were used to analyse different parameters such as transport, security and infrastructure to provide a standardized, quantitative and transparent measure for ranking all cities. The result based on analysis indicated that Delhi performed best on all parameters while Ghaziabad was the least ranking city. Moreover, cities like Jaipur, Faridabad and Gurgaon did poorly on some dimensions but very well on others. In addition, results from simple linear regression showed that police strength had a significant impact on reducing crime rate in Delhi. Thus, Women Safety Index is a pilot project which could assist the change agents, policy makers, NGOs, Urban local bodies, Municipalities, Public Works Department (PWD), State Transport Authorities, Police and Emergency Response Officials in the improvement of women safety in the cities.

DATA ANALYSIS

Perception Audit of Public Places in Suryanagar, Ghaziabad

A total of 180 perception surveys were conducted at public places of Suryanagar, Ghaziabad (ward no. 94) using the NCW women safety survey app.

Result and Findings

1. Social and Demographic

Age

Less than 25 years	23.50%
26-35	47%

36-45	18%
46-55	7.10%
More than 55 years	4.40%

The table depicts the age group of respondents in which we can see that 23.5% of the total respondents are in the age group of less than 25 years, 46% fall under the age group of 26-35 years, 18% are in the bracket of 36-45 years, 7.1% in 46-55 years, and 4.4% of the respondents are more than 55 years of age.

Educational Qualification

Primary	**12%**
Secondary	**24.6%**
Graduate and above	**49.7%**
Any other	**3.3%**

The figure depicts the educational qualification of the respondents. Here we can see that 49.7% of the respondents are graduates and above, 24.6% have completed their secondary education, 12% have primary educational qualification, and 3.3% fall in 'any other' category.
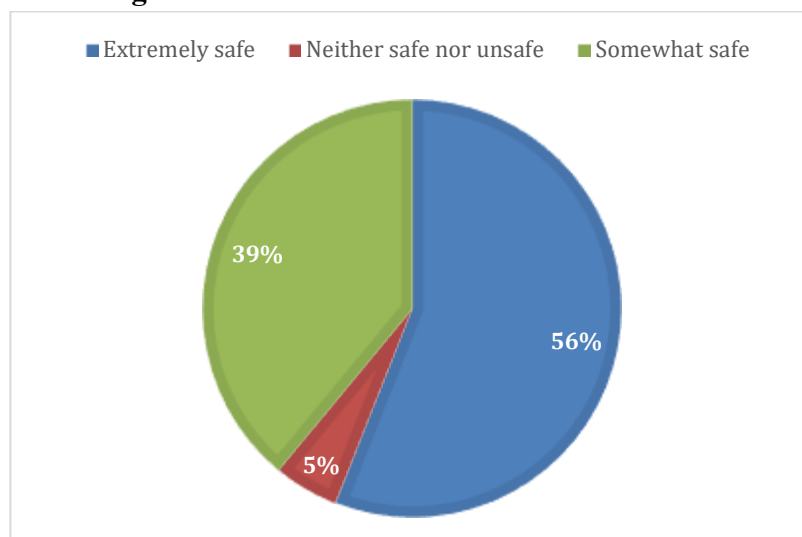
Employment Status

Self Employed	2.20%
Unemployed	36.60%
Employed	61.20%

The table represents the employment status of the respondents where 61.2% fall under the employed category, 36.6% in the unemployed bracket and 2.2% are self-employed.
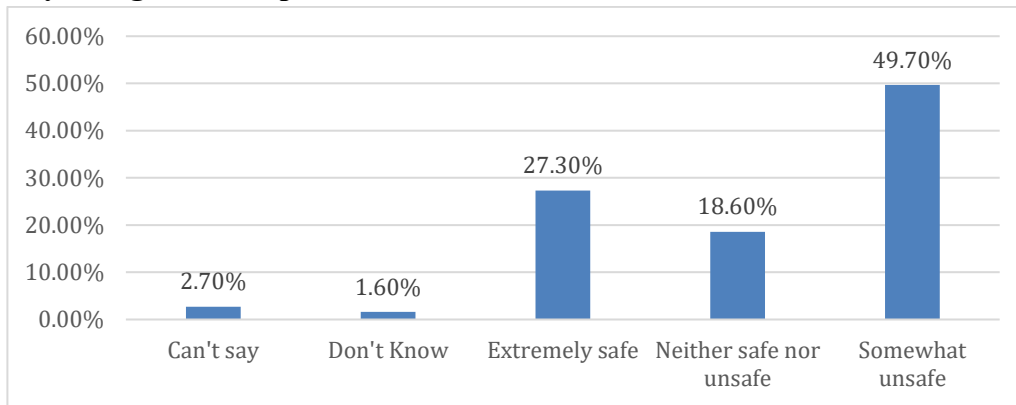
2. Perception
**Extent of Safety while visiting the area**

The graph depicts to what extent the respondents feel safe in the area of Suryanagar when they visit any public place. 56% of the respondents feel extremely safe, 39% feel somewhat safe, and 5% of the respondents feel neither safe nor unsafe while visiting the area

Extent of safety at night after 8 pm

The graph depicts to what extent people feel safe in the area at night after 8.00 pm. 49.7% of the respondents feel somewhat unsafe in the area after 8.00 pm, 27.3% feel extremely safe, 18.6% feel neither safe nor unsafe, 2.7% of the participants have responded with 'can't say' and 1.6% have mentioned with don't know.

**Satisfaction with the lighting/visibility infrastructure**
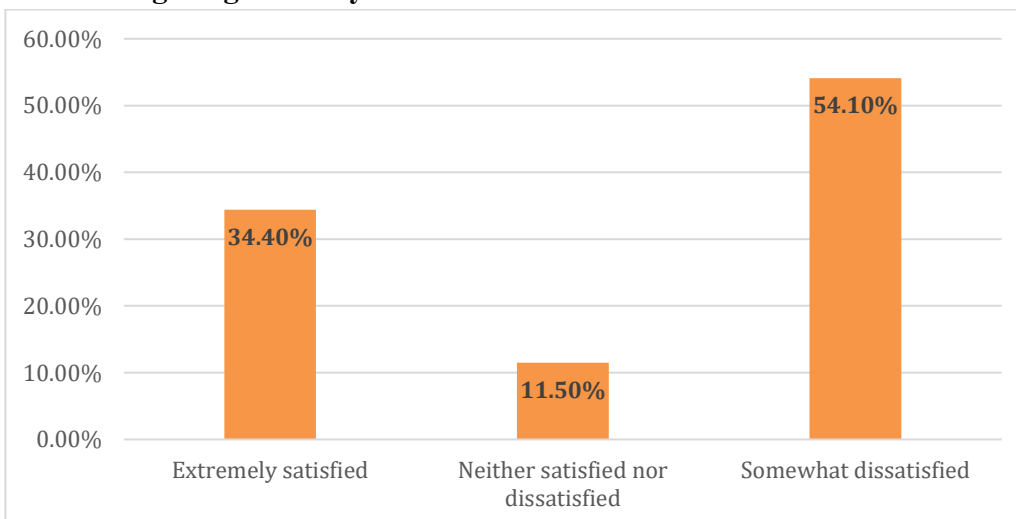
The graph depicts the level of satisfaction with the lighting/visibility infrastructure facilities in the public place/area. In this, 34.4% of the participants have responded that they are extremely satisfied, 11.5% are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, while 54.1% are somewhat dissatisfied with the lighting infrastructure in the area.

Satisfaction with CCTV infrastructure facilities
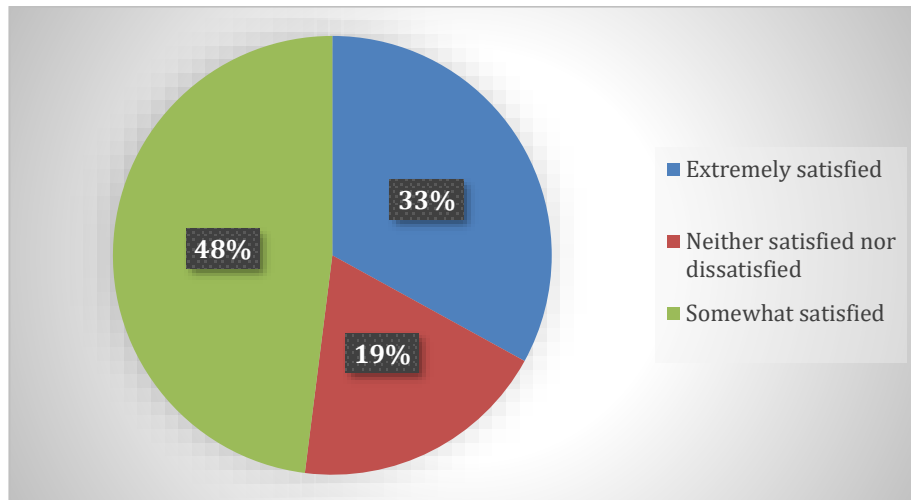
The graph represents the degree of satisfaction with the CCTV infrastructure facilities in the public space. Here, we can see that 33% of the respondents are extremely satisfied, 48% are somewhat satisfied, and 19% are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the CCTV infrastructure in the area.

Satisfaction with the availability/accessibility of public transport
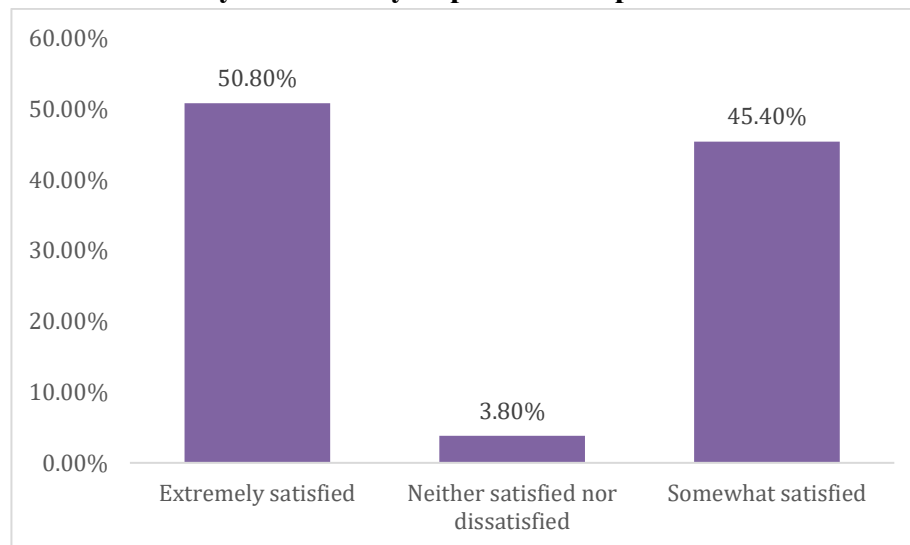
The chart depicts the level of satisfaction of participants with the availability/accessibility of transport infrastructure facilities in the area. 50.8% respondents are extremely satisfied, 45.4% are somewhat satisfied, and 3.8% are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the availability/accessibility of public transport facilities in the area.

Satisfaction with the presence of police infrastructure facilities

Extremely satisfied	32.8%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	16.4%
Somewhat dissatisfied	50.8%

The table represents the degree of satisfaction of people with the PCR/Presence of police infrastructure facilities in the area. 50.8% respondents are somewhat dissatisfied, 16.4% are neither satisfied nor

dissatisfied, and 32.8% are extremely satisfied with the presence of police infrastructure facilities in the area.

Satisfaction with public toilet infrastructure facilities

Extremely dissatisfied	31.7%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	33.3%
Somewhat dissatisfied	35%

The graph depicts the degree of satisfaction of people with the public toilet infrastructure facilities in the area. 31.7% of the respondents said they are extremely dissatisfied, 35% are somewhat dissatisfied and 33.3% are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the public toilet infrastructure in the area.

Unwanted incident during last 1 year	Response (in percentage)
No	66.7%
Flashing	1.6%
Non-verbal (staring at a person or her body parts, blackmail, threats, intimidation through gestures, or any other manners for sexual favours).	7.7%
Physical (unwelcome touching, pinching, feeling up, etc).	4.4%
Snatching	3.8%
Stalking	3.8%
Verbal (offensive comments, whistling, sexually suggestive remarks, etc.)	7.7%
Visual (displaying, recording, sending, or sharing offensive pictures, posters, videos, etc.)	4.4%

The table depicts the unwanted incidents faced by the respondents in the area during the last one year or whether they know someone else among friends/family that has faced any such incident. 66.7% respondents said that they haven't faced any such kind of incident. 7.7% respondents faced both verbal and non-verbal incidents, while 4.4% participants faced physical and visual harassment. 3.8% of them faced the incidents of snatching and stalking. 1.6% of respondents faced the incident of flashing.
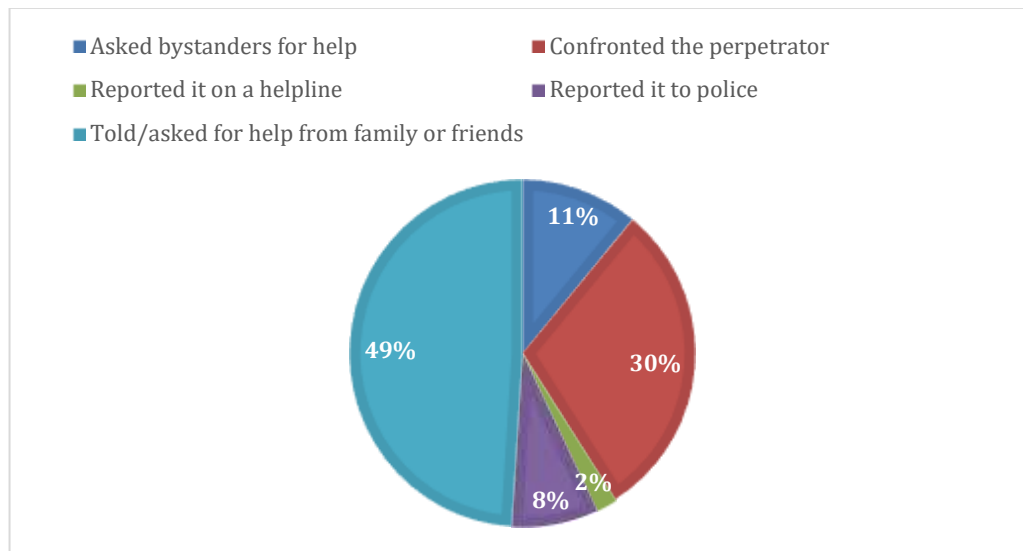
Time of occurance
The table depicts the time of the day these unwanted incidents mostly happen. 47% participants responded this question as not applicable, 20.8% said it mostly occurs at late these incidents mostly occurs in the morning.

Steps taken after the incident

Morning	3.3%
Afternoon	10.9%
Evening	7.1%

Night	10.9%
Late night	20.8%
Not applicable	47%

The chart represents the responses of the participants that what steps they took after the incident. 49% of the respondents said that they did nothing, 30% of them confronted the perpetrator, 11% asked the bystanders for help, 8% reported it to police and 2% told/asked for help from family and friends.

If reported the incident to the police, what was their response

Not applicable	44.3%
They blamed me for the incident	10.4%
They did not do anything	21.9%
They investigated the incident	19.7%
They minimized/trivialized it	2.7%
They recorded the incident	1.1%

The table represents the response of the police after reporting the incident. 44.3% responses are considered to be not applicable, 21.9% respondents said that the police did not do anything, 19.7% said they investigated the incident, 10.4% said that the police blamed them for the incident, 2.7% said that they minimized it and 1.1% said that they recorded the incident.

3. Precaution

Is any one of the following true for you? **Avoid certain public spaces Completely**	Response (in percentage) 13.1%
Avoid going out alone at all times	76.5%
Avoid using public transport	3.3%
Avoid wearing certain clothes	7.1%

The table shows the responses given by the participants when asked if any of the following were true for them. 76.5% of the respondents said that they avoid going out alone at all times, 13.1% said that they avoid certain spaces completely, 7.1% said that they avoid wearing certain clothes, and 3.3% of them said that they avoid using public transport.

Precautions taken to feel safe in the area	Response (in percentage)
Carry bag to act as a barrier	4.9%
Do not make eye contact	2.7%
Ensure clothes are appropriate or wear a layer/dupatta on top	9.8%
Keep phone handy to dial emergency number	36.1%
Prefer visiting during day time	7.1%
Keeping small weapon such as pepper spray	16.4%
Trained/knowledge of self defence	16.4%
Travelling in group	6.6%

The table depicts the responses of the participants when asked about the kind of precautions they take to feel safe in the area. 36.1% respondents said that they keep their phone handy with them to dial emergency numbers, 16.4% said that they keep small weapons such as pepper spray with them and are trained/have knowledge. 9.8% respondents said that they ensure that their clothes are appropriate, 7.1% said that they prefer to visit during day time, 6.6% said that they travel in groups, 4.9% keep a carry bag with them to act as a barrier, and 2.7% said that they do not make eye contact.

Features of public places to feel concerned about with regard to one's safety	Response (in percentage)
Areas without lights	47%
Black allies	2.7%
Bushes	3.8%
Isolated areas	32.8%
Near Pubs/Thekas/Pan Smoking Joints	4.9%
Place with high walls	7.1%
Side roads	1.6%

The table depicts the responses of the participants when asked about the features of public places which make them feel concerned for their safety. 47% of the respondents said that the areas without lights, 32.8% as isolated areas, 7.1% as places with high walls, 4.9% as near pubs/thekas/pan smoking joints, 3.8% as

bushes, 2.7% as black allies and 1.6% as side roads are the features of public places in Surya Nagar for which the respondents are concerned for their safety.

Main Findings

- Lighting in public spaces emerged as a major problem in many parts of the area. In the perception of most respondents, poorly lit areas, whether main roads, inner streets, sections of markets, public toilets, and car parks pose a threat to safety.
- Most of the respondents felt unsafe going into public spaces alone or after dark unless they were in groups.
- In most of the public place areas, there was no presence of the police personnel adding to women's feeling of insecurity.
- There was high level of dissatisfaction among the respondents with respect to the public toilet infrastructure in the area because those that existed were dark and dirty, with broken doors and no attendants.
- Unwanted incidents faced by the respondents in the area were common mostly at night which included non-verbal (staring at a person or her body parts, blackmail, threats, intimidation through gestures, etc), verbal (offensive comments, whistling), and physical (unwelcome touching, pinching) incidents
- Majority of the respondents said that they didn't do anything after encountering with such unwanted incidents (misbehaviour, sexual harassment) in public place. While those who reported the incident to the police didn't see any action taken by them. Instead, the police blamed them for the incident.
- As a precaution, the majority of the participants responded that they avoid going out alone at all times as well as avoid certain public spaces completely to ensure their safety.
- Features of public places to feel concerned about one's safety emerged to be areas having poor lighting, isolated areas, places with high walls, near pubs and smoking joints, black allies, bushes and side roads.

Observation of Public Places

1. The audited streets in Surya Nagar at some places had poor lighting.
2. Most of the streets in the area were open and anyone on those streets could see ahead and around.
3. It was observed that there was no presence of police personnel in the area.
4. None of the roads had a fine walk path. The majority of them were in poor condition.
5. Transport facilities such as shared autos, e-rickshaws and metro were easily available as well as accessible.
6. At night, it was observed that there was very less gender diversity on the roads and public spaces.
7. The condition of the public toilets present in the area was worse. Lack of cleanliness and safety posed a great threat to women's safety and health.
8. The presence of shops, vendors and informal commercial activity (such as weekly markets) increases the feeling of security of women in public places.

Focussed Group Discussion

In the context of the study, 4 FGDs were undertaken, with different groups of women to understand similarities and differences in their perception and experience on women's safety and sexual harassment in public places.

Main Findings of the FGDs

- Interestingly, the FGD participants pointed out that they felt unsafe both in deserted and in crowded spaces. In deserted spaces, they said that there was greater fear of sexual assault and in crowded spaces; men often take advantage of the crowd to sexually harass women.

- It was found that almost all of the girls and their friends have faced some or the other kind of harassments in the streets; be it verbal comments or whistling, physical touching, pinching, staring, and stalking.

- Although women said that unwanted incidents could happen at any place, they found they were more vulnerable in public spaces such as parks, outside paan shops, educational institutes and within public transport such as buses and metros. For them, the perception of threat and fear increases in spaces where men/boys gather in groups, either to spend time, or play cards, or consume alcohol/drugs.

- Older women, in the discussions, emphasized that they have been increasingly been feeling fearful for their daughter's safety. They stated that they have to be constantly vigilant as their daughters may not be so mindful and be able to defend themselves against potential harassers.

- The common response was that most often young women/girls suffer harassment in silence, and do not report to anyone. There is a general sense of fear and shame and that they would be scolded by their parents and others in the community and blamed for the same.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Recommendations:

- <u>Repair and maintain lighting</u> - As described, streetlights are non-functional or covered with trees in many parts of Suryanagar. Local authorities must repair existing dysfunctional lighting throughout Suryanagar, illuminate the area, and ensure in the future that all neighbourhood lighting is maintained.

- <u>Ensure that streets are open and walkable</u> - Sidewalks must be widened. The ramps on the bus stops and pavements must be fixed. Hawker Zones should be created such that the pedestrian movement is not hindered.

- <u>Ensure that public toilets for women are maintained and properly illuminated</u> - The public toilets should be free for use, properly maintained with designated guards (preferably women guards) outside the toilet to ensure the safety of women. Basic facilities must be properly maintained (provision for water, etc.).

- <u>Designate police officers for regular patrolling of Suryanagar</u> - The safety audits revealed that there was virtually no presence of security officials in most of the areas. It is important that the Ghaziabad Police maintains a clear public presence in the community, in order to improve perceptions of safety.

- <u>Training and community awareness</u> - Frequent advertisements, pamphlets distribution, and raising awareness to challenge violence in public spaces are critical interventions.. It is important to incorporate discussions around gender, patriarchy, choice, consent and sexuality.

Conclusion

Both societal norms for behaviour and the built environment affect a woman's safety in public spaces. Knowledge of women's issues might begin to make a shift in the way women are treated and respected in society. While retaliation and rejecting the notion that it is okay to be inappropriately treated in public is perhaps a beginning, the journey is much longer.

A crucial step is to generate more awareness about women's safety issues in public spaces. The behaviour

and attitudes of the society cannot be transformed overnight, but the built environment can be controlled and can be used as a medium for change. No change can be achieved without creating a dialogue between the users and the designers of the space. Active participation is the only way to bring about a revolution in the way cities and spaces are conceived and created for residents.

Bibliography

1. राष्ट्रीय अपराध रिकॉर्डब्यूरो. (n.d.).
2. Akshara. (2015). (rep.). Highlights of Women Commuter's Survey, Safety Audits and Recommendations. Mumbai.
3. Asija, N. K. (2018). (rep.). Panchkula: A Safety Analysis Report. Panchkula, Haryana.
4. Factors responsible: Crimes against women in India. Legal Service India – Law, Lawyers and Legal Resources. (n.d.).
5. Gokhale, V. A. (2017). (publication). A Participatory Approach to Women's Safety: Case of Pune India (8th ed., Vol. 3). Pune, Maharashtra: IJSRSET.
6. Gupta, A., Gupta, D., & amp; Dhar, S. (2022). (issue brief). Claiming Spaces for Women in Public Transport. Azad Foundation.
7. Home. Indian National Bar Association. (n.d.).
8. Humsafar, Support Centre for women, youth and queer. (2021). (rep.). Understanding Girls, Women and Queer's Safety in the city of Lucknow (pp. 3–12). Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh.
9. Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). (2021). (publication). Gender-Sensitive Reforms in Public Transport: A Case of Kerala.
10. Jagori. (2020). (rep.). Is This Our City? Mapping Safety for Women in Delhi (pp. 5–8). New Delhi.
11. Kapoor, A. (2019). (rep.). Women and Mobility: A Case Study of Bhopal, Gwalior and Jodhpur.
12. Kartik, P., Jose, S., & amp; Krishna, G. (2017). (rep.). Safetipin: A Mobile Application Towards Women Safety (Vol. 9). Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala.
13. Kaur, P., Dixit, R., &amp; Choudhary , S. (2019). (publication). Creation and Data Analysis of Women Safety Index of Delhi and its Neighboring Cities (6th ed., Vol. 7). IJRTE.
14. Mahadevia, D., Mishra, A., Hazarika, A., Joseph, Y., &amp; Borah, T. (2016). (working paper). Safe Mobility for Women: Case of Guwahati. Guwahati, Assam.
15. Nadimpalli, S. (2011). (tech.). Urban Safety and Gender in Hyderabad (p. 6). Secunderabad.
16. Parichiti. (2012). (rep.). A Report on the Safety Audits Conducted in Dhakuria, Bagha Jatin and Ballygunge Stations, Kolkata.
17. Shabdita, S. (2020). (rep.). Safety Audits at Higher Education Institutions Across India. New Delhi: WISCOMP (Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace).