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Street harassment: A sociological study on working women in Tumkur city

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Abstract

Street harassment has long been a problem faced by women globally. Street harassment is a sexual harassment that involves unwanted comments, staring, whistling and strangers walking with women in public areas. This kind of behaviour is disrespectful to women and is a disturbing act against women. To construct this paper interviewed 116 working women in Tumkur city and gathered information on street harassment. Findings of this study revealed that, some have shared that they faced street harassment when they commute to their work places. Some of them have been responded in the face of harassment, others have been silent and they had to deal with harassment and afraid to share it with their family members. They faced harassment while waiting for buses at bus stops in the evenings and sharing autos. If there is a desire for police surveillance in less crowded areas meanwhile if the offender is punished severely, it can be reduced.

Keywords: Street harassment, discrimination, patriarchy, public transport, gender stereotypes

Introduction

“The fear of harassment and violence has a crippling effect on women’s abilities and potential, and in itself it is an attack on women’s rights.”

Sexual harassment of women at streets refers to giving indecent treatment to women in public places by violating all the norms of modesty. Many women workers have harassed while commuting their workplaces. This street harassment by men includes, staring at women, dirty jokes, offers to drop them home, unwanted comments about dressings, making accidental touches and dashes etc. sexual harassment of women is a complex as well as a common issue found in almost all the modern civilized societies. It is a shameless and a very serious issue, because, many times, it assumes indecent and ugly forms which cannot be tolerated. India is no exception, it is a worldwide problem. Our cities have been in the news for such incidents; the most noted being the Nirbhaya case in Delhi and young veterinarian doctor case in (Hyderabad) Telangana state, which brought to light the risks of after-dark travel for most women. Sometimes the bus drivers and helpers on the bus treated them condescendingly and harassed sexually (Huda, 2011). Some women resign their work immediately after first few atrocious attacks and try to become self-dependent. Their survival becomes difficult and painful when they have to work hard for earning two meals a day.

The specific objectives of the present research study are

- To know the nature of Street harassment
- To examine the Street Harassment of Working Women in Tumkur.

Methodology

The design structure for this study is descriptive, which include the facts and figures area obtained from primary as well as secondary sources. The primary information collected through interviewing the 116 working women both organized and unorganized sector. The secondary information collected from various books, journals, research articles etc. The study describes the street harassment of working women both organized and unorganized sector in Tumkur of Karnataka. Primary data was collected through convenience sampling and snowball sampling methods. Structured questionnaire prepared to collect the data from the respondents.

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Standardization of Data

The formula that has been used to standardize the data for Street harassment of working women is given as:

$$x_{\text{new}} = (x_{ij} - x_{\text{max}}) / (x_{\text{max}} - x_{\text{min}}),$$

where x_{ij} = street harassment of working women, x_{max} is the maximum rate of street harassment of working women in Tumkur, and x_{min} is minimum rate of street harassment of working women.

Definition of Street harassment

- “Unwelcome comments or contact of a sexual nature directed at a person by a stranger in a public place”.
- “Gender-based street harassment is unwanted comments, gestures, and an action forced on a stranger in a public place without their consent and is directed at them because of their actual or perceived sex, gender, gender expression, or sexual orientation”.
- “Street harassment includes unwanted whistling, leering, sexist, homophobic slurs, persistent requests for someone’s name, number or destination after they’ve said no, sexual names, comments and demands, following, flashing, public masturbation, groping, sexual assault, and rape”.

Men usually make street harassment for fun; of course, unknown women of different backgrounds are targeted for

abuse in public places. Women are bullied for reasons of religion, nationality or race. It is a violation of human rights that hinders women’s ability to speak up for public interests. Violence against women is more in bus stops, streets and public transport. This kind of behaviour leads to the women suffers from depression and insecurity. Street harassment is considered as a serious problem in gender based violence. Constitution of India ensured the principle of gender equality in India. Although women are encompasses some gender specific problems like dowry, honor killing, women trafficking, domestic violence, murder, harassment at workplace, street harassment etc. these issues can prevent women from attaining education, working in industrial sectors and even utilising their political freedom. The above listed problems may hinder on their self esteem, personal, professional, marital and economical livelihood. Patriarchal social mindset, ethnic myths and gender expectations of the people is the main cause behind all these prejudices. According to the annual National Crime Record Bureau in 2019, there were 4, 05,861 cases of crimes reported against women in India. Women who are unaware of their constitutional rights are still they do not rise voice against the harassment. Lack of public support against street harassment is fuelling to increase the cases. According to the constitution; women deserves the life free of violence as a human rights. The following table gives a comparison of crime against women between the states of India during 2017, 2018 and 2019:

Sl. No.	State	2017	2018	2019	Total
1	Andhra Pradesh	17909	16438	17746	52093
2	Arunachal Pradesh	337	368	317	1022
3	Assam	23082	27687	30025	80794
4	Bihar	14711	16920	18587	50218
5	Chhattisgarh	7996	8587	7689	24272
6	Goa	369	362	329	1060
7	Gujarat	8133	8329	8799	25261
8	Haryana	11370	14326	14683	40379
9	Himachal Pradesh	1246	1633	1636	4515
10	Jammu & Kashmir	3129	3437	3069	9635
11	Jharkhand	5911	7083	8760	21754
12	Karnataka	14078	13514	13828	41420
13	Kerala	11057	10461	11462	32980
14	Madhya Pradesh	29778	28942	13828	72548
15	Maharashtra	31979	35497	37144	104620
16	Manipur	236	271	266	773
17	Meghalaya	567	571	558	1696
18	Mizoram	301	249	170	720
19	Nagaland	79	75	43	197
20	Odisha	20098	20274	23183	63555
21	Punjab	4620	5302	5886	15808
22	Rajasthan	25993	27866	41550	95409
23	Sikkim	163	172	125	460
24	Tamil Nadu	5397	5822	5934	17153
25	Telangana	17521	16027	18394	51942
26	Tripura	972	907	1070	2949
27	Uttar Pradesh	56011	59445	59853	175309
28	Uttarakhand	1944	2817	2541	7302
29	West Bengal	30992	30394	30394	91780

The table indicates that the violence against women in India. Through the ancient times women are facing different social problems in Women in India, since ancient times facing the different types of social problems. Now in this modern era, through the orthodox practices of their family members women are not even safe in their home, so called domestic

violence rates are increasing day by day. It shows the coercive nature of men directly or indirectly hinders the opportunities of women. Exploitation included physical, sexual, psychological abuses against women at home or in the society. Crime against women is increasing in the following states like Uttar Pradesh reported 1,75,309

(highest) cases in three years followed by 1,04,620 cases in Maharashtra, 95,409 in Rajasthan during 2017, 2018 and 2019. Karnataka reported 41,420 cases in three years and cases are decreasing year by year. Violence against women in India is going side by side to the technological improvement in modern world in the country.

People are harassed women because of the following reasons like their caste, nationality, religion, disability, race, or class etc. Some people are harassed for multiple reasons within a single harassment incident. Harassment is about power and control and it is often a manifestation of societal discrimination like sexism, homophobia, classism, and racism. The subject street harassment has not been as extensively studied as other forms of violence against women. However, there are a so many of formal and informal surveys and studies on the prevalence and nature of street harassment. Many organizations that work on issues of street harassment collect first-hand accounts of street harassment from victims themselves. These evidences give an insight into the various forms street harassment takes and its effect on women's daily lives.

During workplace related travel as well as some not so broadly known experiences of women in organized and unorganized sectors are not safe at the workplace and commute to work place. While women may be subject to violence at any point of time, those who work at night have the additional challenge of having to find a safe mode of transport to reach safely. Public transport is minimal and other transport is dubious at best. Now a days, violence and harassment of women in public spaces such as transport has gained increasing attention. Women are using of public transport to commute their workplace. Employees in sectors like road transport and manufacturing plant work and retail, that need performing on a late shift or nightshift, additionally report violence and harassment once travel to commute workplace. An attempt was made here to understand the street harassment on working women who were residing in Tumkur city of Karnataka State.

There are therefore several reasons for paying due attention to street harassment. It needs to be acknowledged that street harassment is on the rise, women's lives are deeply affected by it. It is striking that while more urban Indian women than ever before are taking up higher studies and careers are dating and pursuing social lives, and thus stepping into public spaces, these spaces are becoming increasingly dangerous for women. The positive strides being made by women are not translating into increased access to public spaces (Phadke, 2010) [14]. Several across causes could make a case for the redoubled dangers posed by public areas to women, significantly the threat of street harassment. Sociologists attribute the increase in street harassment to urban migration, explosive upward quality of sure caste teams, and new wealth.

Feminists determine that the street harassment as a condition of nullified the women's development. Male dominated societies are measure seen to share a discourse that daunts women from exploit the non-public sphere, that is that the supposed web site of patriarchal protection, whereas public place is felt like most dangerous (Fregoso, 2003) [5]. When men are asked why they supposed to harass the women, a number of the explanations given embrace re-experiencing dissatisfaction, amusing their male friends, and since it is fun (Benard & Schlaffer, 1996) [2]. The explanations provided by men connect clearly to the impulse to

incarnation the women. The outcome for women of being viewed by others in sexually projecting ways may produce a tendency of internalizing the harasser's perspective, resulting in increased self-personification (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997) [4].

This association was partially supported during a study by Lord (2009) [10], women reported that they were experiencing fear and anger during the harassment. They felt lower esteem and a lot of negativity, it found that a lot of harassment women faced, they were reported that fear and anger during. Violence against women and girls (VAW) is both a cause and a consequence of gender inequality. The issue of gender-based violence is at the heart of human rights. It is in fact in many ways a determining factor as to whether we can ever have a just society which is free of gender based discrimination and violence (UNDP, 2018). Goffman (cited in Gardner, 1995) [7] delineated "civil inattention" because the approach strangers' behaviours towards one another publicly, that primarily suggest that ignoring one another, apart from concisely meeting every other's eyes. Women and girls face far greater levels of vulnerability, marginalization and resulting violence, especially for those who experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, like widows, elderly people, as well as women whose sexual orientation someone decides are not acceptable.

Findings and Discussion

Table 1: Age of the Respondents

Sl. No.	Age	Frequency	Percentage
1	20-30 yrs	59	50.86%
2	31-40 yrs	37	31.90%
3	41-50 yrs	12	10.34%
4	51 and above	8	6.90%
	Total	116	100%

The present study focused on 'Sexual Harassment on women at Workplace'. For quantitative analysis only those women were included in the sample, who working in the private sector. It was assumed that in private sector the legislative enforcement is less and job insecurity is more, therefore, chances of harassment are likely to be more. Age plays a very important role in find the status of any individual. It is necessary to ascertain the age groups of the respondents. Since, the study followed random sampling method; age of the women was grouped into four different categories. 82.76 per cent of the respondents were of 20-40 years of age, which are the most productive years in a person's life, and only 6.90% women were of 51 years of age and above.

Table 2: Marital status of the Respondents

Sl. No.	Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage
1	Married	69	59.49%
2	Unmarried	47	40.51%
	Total	116	100%

In Indian society marriage is considered to be very important institution. In this study tried to know the marital status of the working women. Some women start working before their marriage and many continue to work even after marriage. Dual earner couple is an emergent phenomenon. Similarly for widows, separated and divorced women

economic necessity forces them to work outside home to make their living.

Results indicate that majority of the respondents in the study were married. Table 2 shows that 59.49 percent of the respondents were married and 40.51 percent respondents were unmarried. Such responses shows that majority of women are belongs to middle class background; both husband and wife should work to meet their life expenses. Those who are working outside the home; she is not only get a social and economic status meanwhile which is increasing the pressure to coordinate the role conflicts and responsibilities of both home and the work place.

Table 3: Field of the employment of the respondents

Sl. No.	Region	Frequency	Percentage
1	Government	74	63.79%
2	Private	42	36.21%
	Total	116	100%

Occupation is a variable which influences style of living as well as decision-making of an individual. Different occupations are associated with different economic returns, prestige and authority. Table 3 highlights that majority of the respondents were in government service, i.e. 63.79 per cent followed by 36.21 percent in the private sector. To collect the information interviewed 116 working women of organized and unorganized sector of Tumkur city. The majority of the women were concentrated in Government

Table 5: Distribution of the respondents on comfortable public transport

Sl. No.	Comfortable of the public transport	Frequency	Percentage
1	Yes	67	57.75%
2	No	35	30.19%
3.	Own a vehicle	14	12.06%
	Total	116	100%

Table 5 highlights on comfortable in public transport system. The study analysis reveals that 57.75 per cent respondents stated that they are comfortable in public transportation. 30.19 per cent of respondents mentioned they are not comfortable with public transportation. 12.06 per cent of them are having their own vehicles to reach their workplace. Numbers of city buses are available in Tumkur to reach their places till late night. Rather than the auto rickshaws buses are safety.

Women are not safe while travelling to reach their work places; it is their every day challenge to reach home safely.

Table 6: Distribution of the respondents on harassed by men while travelling

Sl. No.	Harassed by men while travelling	Frequency	Percentage
1	Yes	22	18.97%
2	No	61	52.58%
3	Can't say	33	28.45%
	Total	116	100%

Table 6 shows that 18.97 per cent of the respondents reported that they faced harassment from the male passengers while being travel. 52.58 per cent of the respondents did not face harassment by male while travelling because they travelled by their own vehicles and some reaches their workplace every day by walk. The study shows buses and autos sometimes not at all safe for the working women. Gender based harassment in public spaces called as street harassment, it is the term most commonly

used by academics and activists, but there is no universally used name or term for it like there is for sexual assault or sexual harassment at work. Many of working women faced street harassment problems while commute to their workplace where there was facility of safe transportation facilities in the cities, so there has been increasing the cases of street harassment in the country. Need the good conductivity and supportiveness of bus drivers and conductors and helpers of the public transportation towards

Table 4: Distribution of the respondents on commute to the work place

Sl. No.	How do you commute to the work place	Frequency	Percentage
1	Bus	38	32.78%
2	Bike/Scooter	25	21.55%
3	Auto	26	22.41%
4	Walk	23	19.82%
5	Other	04	3.44%
	Total	116	100%

Table 4 shows that 32.78 per cent of the respondents are depending upon public transport system like buses. 22.41 per cent of them are depending on autos which are really uncomfortable to travel every day. Some of them do not have bus facility for some places, to their destiny everyday they must depending on autos. Hiring Separate autos are much expensive to travel everyday so they opt for shared autos. Few of them shared their irritable experiences while travelling in shared autos. Public transport vehicles routinely travel highly crowded and sometimes above their legal limit of passengers. Women routinely experience discomfort and harassment while travelling on them.

While women may be subjected to abuse at any point of time and any point of reason, those who work at night or late night have the additional challenge of having to find a safe mode of transport. Public transport is minimal and sometimes irregular and other transport is suspicion at best. In the absence of better, safer and affordable source of public transport facilities, sometimes working women find themselves forced to depend up on, risk the available private transport options. Factories act, 1948, prohibited women from working late. Employer should cater appropriate safe transport arrangements for nightshift employees.

violence against women while travelling. Sometimes, employees of public transportation themselves abuse or give their support to the mischievous behaviour. (Huda, 2011).

Table 7: Distribution of the respondents on who faced harassment while travelling

Sl. No.	Who harassed you	Frequency	Percentage
1	Known	03	13.05%
2	Unknown	20	86.95%
	Total	23	100%

Table 7 indicates that on the whole 86.95 per cent of the respondents harassed by unknown person and only 13.05 per cent of them are harassed by known person while travelling. Women faced harassment while travelling in public transport and during the time of waiting for buses in bus stands. The commitment to reach their workplaces everyday rather than they faced harassment by public also. To reduce the risk of harassment on public transport vehicles, staff working for public transport agencies, as well as drivers and conductors on all public transport routes should be trained on sexual harassment both on the standards of behaviour expected from them and on how to manage passenger on passenger particularly harassment on women.

Table 8: Harassment done by group or individual

Sl. No.	Harassment done by	Frequency	Percentage
1	Group	13	56.53%
2	Individual	10	43.47%
	Total	23	100%

The table 8 indicates that 56.53 per cent of the respondents harassed by group. Only 43.47 of them are harassed by individual. Educational and cultural backgrounds of the people are very much matters of their behaviour and treating the women outside the home. In this study harassment done by group because group strength will motivate to do the crime or abuse naturally. Individuals or group of men targeted the woman who is alone waiting for buses, autos or sometimes walking to reach their home or office. Most of the abuses in this study happened in the evening. Several working women confirmed that the accused was habitual of passing comments and staring, respectively. Crowded public transport facilities are often a space where women face harassment while travelling, because the crowd offers anonymity.

Table 9: Reaction of the respondents on harassment

Sl. No.	Reaction of the respondents	Frequency	Percentage
1	Verbal	11	47.82%
2	Physical	02	8.70%
3	No Reaction	10	43.48%
	Total	23	100%

Table 9 throws light on reaction of the respondents on harassment, 47.82 per cent verbally reacted, whereas, 43.48 per cent of respondents are scared to react. Only 8.70 per cent of women responded physically, who knows self-defence to protect themselves. Women stay quiet for much mischievous behaviour faced by the strangers. Sometimes to protect themselves they kick back with words of intolerance and anger towards the men who is targeted her in this abuse. Street harassment is unwanted sexual behaviour that

includes physical, verbal and visual harassment. With the increasing the rate of urbanisation, the phenomenon of sexual violence against women in cities has become a serious issue. Lack of safety measures and police security in public spaces and public transport affects women's human rights and their ability to participate equally in the city.

The study strongly recommend the importance of targeted behaviour change campaigns for building a positive, violence free environment for women – however these will take time to bear fruit. In the interim, improvements to infrastructure using a gender lens and gendered mobility indicators can yield results. These include safe and reliable public transport with last mile connectivity, increasing bus stops, routes, frequency, capacity, and ensuring safety within transport can be considered immediately, improved infrastructure for walking and cycling and promoting women's employment in the transport sector to push for reversing gender stereotypes all of these measures can go a long way to improve the way women and girls experience public spaces and make 'real' choices in life.

Conclusion

Laws and policies need to achieve enhancements in work environments just as transport offices for women. It is as an essential right of women. Women from lower socio-economic backgrounds, illiterate and innocent always targeted more to abuse in public places. Both the law and the strategies need to achieve upgrades to work spaces just as transport to make them ok for women, not on the grounds that more women work late, but since to regard women as equivalents, their requirements should likewise be thought about. Giving safe transportation is pivotal to women's admittance to good work; it is likewise fundamentally imperative to diminish brutality and badgering against women, especially as women are bound to rely upon public transport system than men and face more serious problems when they need to travel late around evening time. At the point when public transport is unsafe, this compromises women's wellbeing and safety in getting to and from work.

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