Sexual Harassment and Safety Awareness among Women in Delhi-NCR: An Analytical Study of Age Vulnerability and Defence Mechanisms

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ABSTRACT

In the present era, we live in a society where many people think that men and women should be given equal opportunities and rights but at the same time, women are the one who face different kinds of harassment in their daily lives. Every time a woman is harassed, it leads to the violation of the fundamental right, i.e., right to equality which has been provided under Article 14 of Indian Constitution. The intention of this research is to find the age group among women wherein sexual harassment is more prevalent and to highlight the importance of safety measure for women at public places. The statistical analysis among 298 women participants from Delhi-NCR region reveals that young women in the age group of 18-25 years are more prone to sexual harassment with less awareness and maturity.

Keywords: Sexual Harassment, Women**,** Delhi-NCR, Safety Apps and Helpline Numbers, Defence Mechanism.

1. INTRODUCTION

Women harassment is a very serious and alarming issue around the whole world. The most common type of harassment experienced by women is sexual harassment, but there are other types as well. These include psychological harassment, sexual harassment, cyber harassment and workplace harassment. Harassment is an act which is against the law and can happen anywhere, at any time, can be written, verbal or physical, can happen online or in person. The harasser can be a co-worker, supervisor, relative, friend and any person. Women across all ages including a new born baby girl can equally be a victim which is quite disheartening. Many such cases can be referred where the harassment has been done in a very severe manner leading to even death of the victim. Various studies have pointed out existence of harassment of all forms in different walks of life specifically for women and girls. Burrell [3] concentrated on the variety of mechanisms to eradicate harassment cases in organizations and the awareness of their existence. *Pain [11]* discovered that elderly women were least concerned about violent crimes than younger women. *Hille [7]* found that women who have experienced harassment, abuse and lewd behaviour have produced a gender space from which they have excluded themselves. *Brackenridge et al. [1]* tried to identify the risk factors influencing harassment in the field of sports and analysed the prevention policies to be implemented to reduce these risks. *Kumar et al. [9]* focused at the relationship of violence with poor mental health. *Fineran and Gruber [5]* discussed that secondary school girls experienced more tormenting and lewder behaviour than younger girls. *Waugh [14]* provided a result of his analysis in which women reported that their harassment experiences affected their physical and psychological health. *Houle et al. [8]* found prominent evidence that sexual harassment; early in the career has long-term effects on depressive symptoms in adulthood. *Gupta et al. [6]* showed that the most common sexual abuses women faced are forced intercourse and other forms of sexual coercion. *Spector et al. [13]* provided a quantitative review that estimates exposure rates by type of violence, setting, source, and world region. *Cortina and Holland [4]* redefined sexual harassment legally and scientifically and its impacts on the lives of working women both in US and other nations. *Burn [2]* described how sexual harassment is varied in its forms, targets, and origins. *Poonia [12]* concluded that it is important to enhance the awareness of employers and employees on the existence of forms of sexual harassment at the workplace, preventive measures and legal framework on preventing and addressing it. *Nayeri and Kahsay [10]* aimed to determine the prevalence of sexual harassment against female nurses, the types, perpetrators, and health consequences of the harassment.As evident from work done previously, a lot of studies have been performed on workplace harassment, sexual harassment and domestic violence. But none of the discussions focused on awareness among the women and how they can protect themselves from the harassment. It is well known that there are many government initiatives to reduce the instances of sexual harassment among girls and women. Such initiatives include Helpline Numbers, different Safety Apps, defence training etc. Therefore, the present study was conducted to find the level of awareness among women of different age groups in the Delhi-NCR region regarding different ways and mechanism to deal with harassment. The paper will also discuss the defence-mechanisms used by women in order to stay safe from different forms of harassment and crimes against women.

2. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the research study are:

- To find the most vulnerable age group of girls and women facing harassment in the Delhi-NCR region.
- To study the awareness regarding safety apps and safety helpline numbers among harassed and non-harassed girls and women in Delhi-NCR region.
- To find the most preferred defence mechanism by women of different age groups and analyse whether the women who are aware feel safe in public places or not.
- To analyse whether the women who use any safety measure feel safe at public places or not.

3. METHODOLOGY

The present study is based on the data collected primarily and randomly from the respondents via Google form. We got the sample of 298 women in the Delhi-NCR region belonging to different age groups and occupations. Complete data has been collected anonymously and kept confidential to avoid any misuse of it. In order to analyse the data, it was first cleaned and manipulated using MS Excel. Further analysis took place with the help of research tool, SPSS (Statistical Packages for Social Sciences) and visualization tool, Tableau Public for creating interactive graphs and charts to represent the data.

Table 1: Description of the Data

	Frequency	% age
Total Number of Respondents	**298**	**100**
No. of Females in Different Age Groups		
Below 18 Years	31	10.40
18-25 Years	141	47.32
25-40 Years	58	19.46
Above 40 Years	68	22.82
Number of Females Belonging to Different Occupation		
Working	111	37.25
Students	154	51.68
Housewives	33	11.07
Number of Females Who Faced Harassment	**143**	**47.99**
Number of Females Who Know:		
Either Safety App or Helpline Number	101	33.89
Both of Them	36	12.08
None of Them	161	54.03

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Most Vulnerable Age Groups

With the objective of finding the most frequent type of harassment and the most vulnerable age group of females, the respondents were asked the type of harassment they have faced, if any and at which age.

From the analysis, it was found that the frequency of physical harassment is actually the highest and that too with the girls who were below 18 years, followed by the girls in age group of 18 – 25 years. A survey by the charity Action Aid UK unveiled that on an average four out of five women have faced public harassment in India. Approximately 41% of women (i.e., more than four in 10) in India experience harassment or violence before the age of 19. The reasons of young women facing harassments might be lack of maturity and awareness.

Since, it was found that younger females are more prone to facing harassment, the study tried to analyse their feeling of safety at public places. With the objective of checking for any association between the age of women and how they feel themselves at public places, chi-square test was performed.

The hypothesis defined for this purpose is: -

H_0: There is no association between the age of females and their feelings at public places.

H_1: There is association between the age of females and their feelings at public places.

Following output was obtained on performing chi-square test: -

Table 2: Testing hypothesis for age of females and their feelings at public places

Pearson's Chi Square	Value	17.179
	Degree of Freedom (Df)	06
	Asymp. Significance (Two Sided)	0.009
Cramer's V	Value	0.170
	Approx Significance	0.009

The output obtained suggests that there exists an association between the age of women and how they feel at public places. Due to the existence of association between these two, the Cramer's V was computed in order to know the strength of association. The strength of association between the age and feeling safe at public places is found to be 0.170 indicating a weak relationship between them.

4.2 Awareness Regarding Safety Apps and Helpline Numbers

Since women safety is one of the prime issues in many countries including India. A number of safety apps and women helpline numbers are active in India, to ensure the safety of women at public places. Some of the most popular safety apps are Himmat App, Life 360, Durga Shakti, My Safetipin, 112 India etc. Similarly, there exists some women helpline numbers such as 1091, 1090, 181, 112 etc. which are available for women in distress. Therefore, in order to analyse the awareness among females about these apps and helpline numbers, the women were questioned whether they know any safety app or helpline numbers and if yes, which app or helpline number.
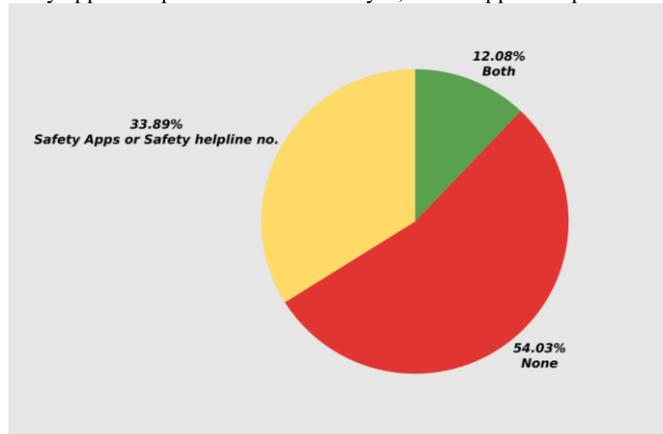

Graph 1: Awareness among women regarding safety apps or helpline number

The collected response showed that there is lack of awareness among females about apps and helpline numbers which is evident from the pie chart wherein more than 54% of women do not know any of these, 33.89% know either safety app or helpline number and only 12.08% of them know both. Some studies and report indicate that although the users are using these apps and helpline numbers, they are not very satisfied with their implementation. So, steps must be taken to improve the functionality and the responses to deal with harassment. In this era of technology, these apps can prove to be of great importance, if implemented properly for ensuring women safety in public places.
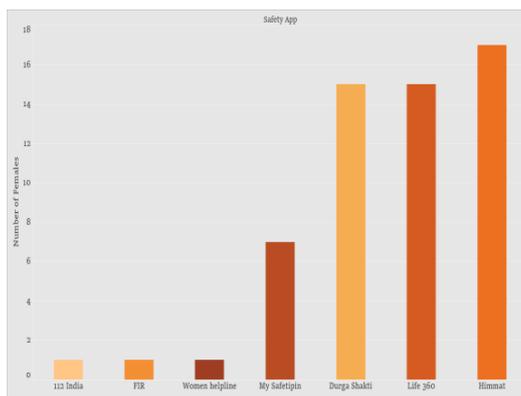

Graph 2: Most popular safety app
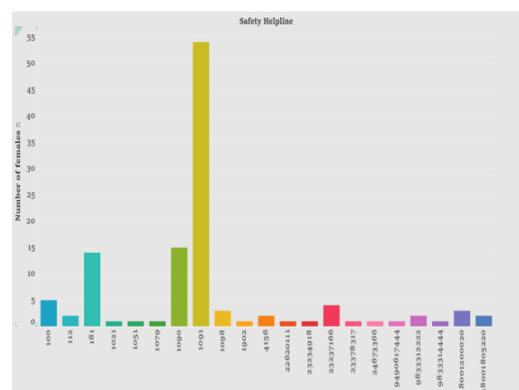
Graph 3: Most popular helpline number

Further, Graph 2 and Graph 3 display the most popular safety app and women helpline numbers. Among the respondents who know about safety apps, most popular app is Himmat App followed by Life 360 and My Safetipin. Also, the most known helpline number is 1091 as this helpline has been there in existence for long.

4.3 Awareness among women who faced harassment and who did not
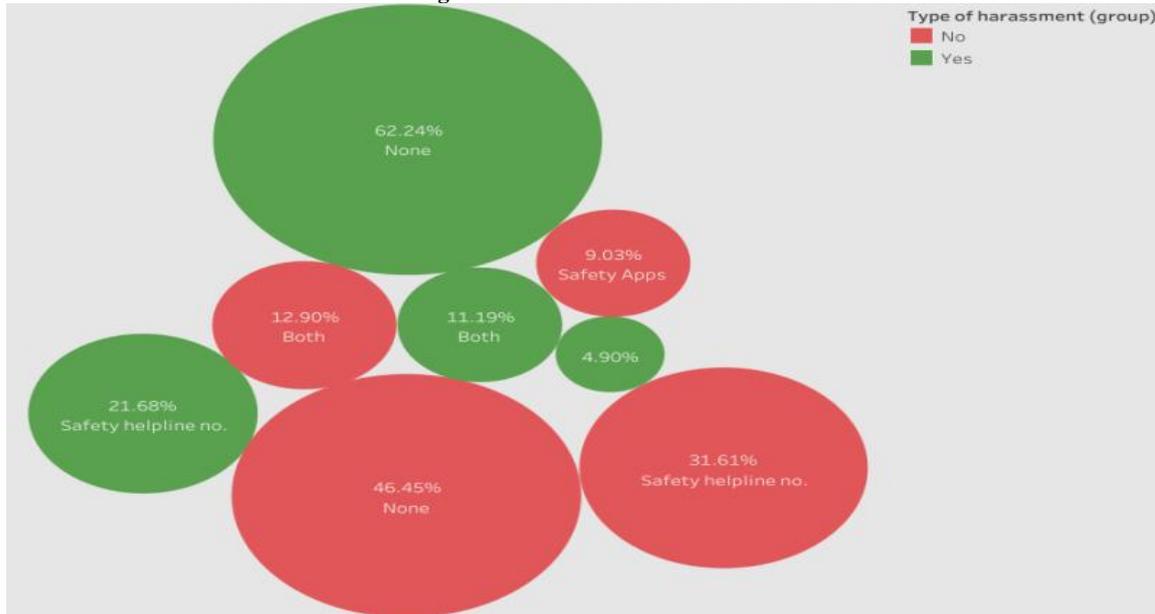
Graph 4: Awareness among women who faced harassment and who did not

The analysis highlights that there is a lack of awareness among women for their own safety, so it is high time that women become more aware and start thinking for their betterment and their safety. Due to this, a question was asked to see whether the women who faced harassment are concerned for their safety and are aware about these apps and numbers or not. So, for this, a bubble chart was created which shows the no. of respondents who faced any type of harassment in their life and those who know about these apps and numbers. The analysis showed that women who did not face harassment are more likely to use safety apps or helpline number than the women who faced some type of harassment. More than **50% of women** who never faced any type of harassment are aware **either about safety app or helpline number** and **12.90% women know both.** On the other hand, **62.24% of women** who faced harassment are still **not** much aware about these apps or helpline numbers which is really a concerning issue and only **4.90% women know about safety apps**. To support this visualization, a statistical test of difference between proportion of harassed and non-harassed women who are not aware of any safety app or women helpline has been performed.

Table 3: Frequency of Women: Harassed and Non-harassed

	Harassed	Non harassed
Total Number of Women	143	155
Number of Non-aware Women	89	72

H_0: $P_1 = P_2$, i.e., there is no significant difference between the harassed and non-harassed women who are not aware.
H_1: $P_1 > P_2$, i.e., proportion of harassed women is greater than proportion of non-harassed women.
Test Statistic is:

$$Z = \frac{0.6224 - 0.4645}{\sqrt{0.5463 \times 0.4597 \times \left(\frac{1}{143} + \frac{1}{155}\right)}} = 2.7318$$

From the analysis it is found that we will reject the null hypothesis and conclude that proportion of harassed women who are not aware of any app or helpline number is greater than those who never faced any type of harassment.

4.4 Use of Defence Mechanism by Women

From the previous analysis on women safety apps and helpline numbers, it was found that still a number of women are not aware about these for their own safety. Due to this, we further tried to analyse the different preferences of women regarding use of any other defence mechanism. To fulfil this objective the respondents were asked to select the different defence mechanisms that they would like to prefer.

Table 4: Responses About Defence Mechanism

Avoid Going Out	19
No Preference	76
Pepper Spray and Shockers	91
Self Defence Classes	100
Swiss Knife	12

From the data collected, it was found that most of the women prefer self-defence classes (i.e., 100) followed by 91 women who chose pepper spray & shockers, both of which are actually good options to ensure personal safety. Also, it was found that very few females avoid going out to deal with such situations which cannot be a solution in this modern world but 76 females do not prefer any defence mechanism which is quite disappointing. Furthermore, an analysis was done to find which self-defence mechanism is more preferred among women of different age groups and the number of women who do not have any preference from those surveyed.
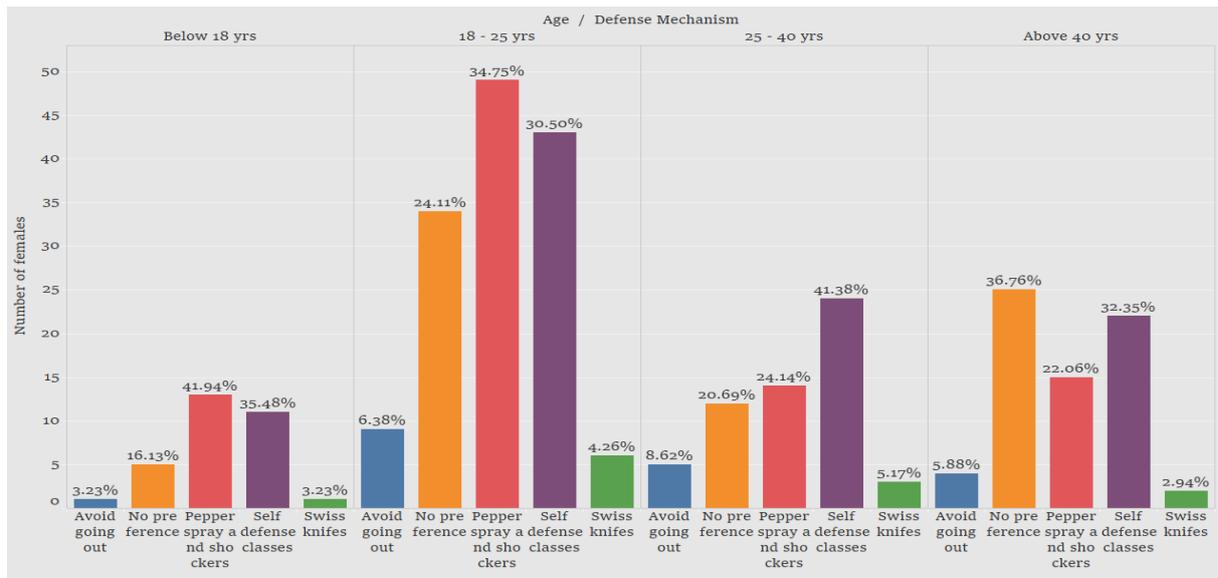
Graph 5: Preferred self-defense mechanism among women of different age groups

This analysis shows that females below 25 years mostly prefer pepper spray and shockers which might be because it is readily available to be used in situation of distress, whereas females above the age of 25 years highly prefer self-defence classes. This shows that the most preferred defence mechanisms are pepper spray and shockers and self-defence classes irrespective of age. In order to support the results of the visualization obtained from the data, a statistical test was also conducted for independence and the hypotheses of the interest are: -

H_0: There is no association between age and the preference of defence mechanism.
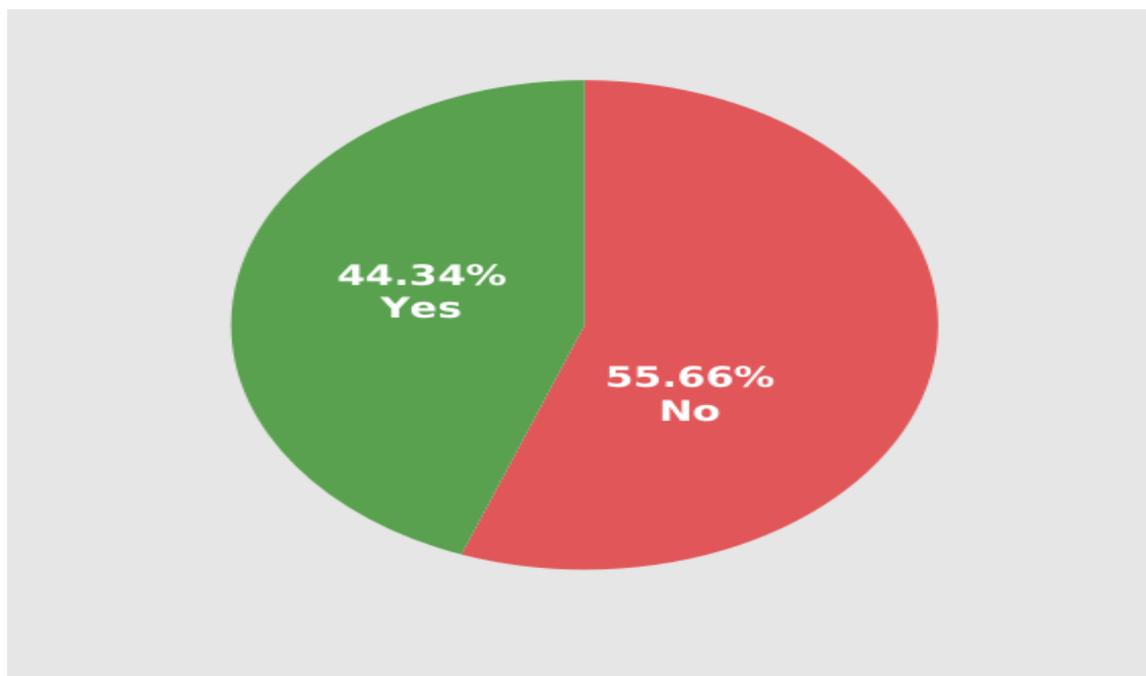H_1: There is association between age and the preference of defence mechanism.
We obtained the following results:

Table 5 Chi Square Test

Chi Square Test	Value	Df	Asymp. Significance (Two Sided)
Pearson Chi Square	12.538	12	0.403
N of Valid Classes	298		

On the basis of chi-square test, the findings fail to reject the null hypothesis and thus it can be concluded that there is no association between the age and the preference of defence mechanism. In other words, there is no particular choice of defence mechanism among women of particular age group.

Next, to analyse whether the women who faced any type of harassment during their lives, use any of the defence mechanisms or not, a pie chart was created based on those females who either do not have any preference for defence mechanism or they avoid going out to tackle these issues.


Graph 6: Preference for defence mechanism among women who faced harassment

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This indicates that **55.66%** of females who faced harassment still do not have any preference for defence mechanism or avoid going out. In present time, when the number of crimes against women are continuously rising, it becomes important for women to think and use any defence tool which they feel as the most convenient and be self-sufficient to protect themselves. This will help in reducing the cases of harassment.

5. WHETHER THE FEMALES WHO USE ANY SAFETY MEASURES FEEL SAFE OR NOT?

For this objective, a new parameter was created to record the count of women who use either safety apps or helpline or any defence mechanism for their safety. Here, the aim of this particular question was to find if there is any relation between the females using some kind of safety measures for themselves and whether they feel public places to be safe or not.
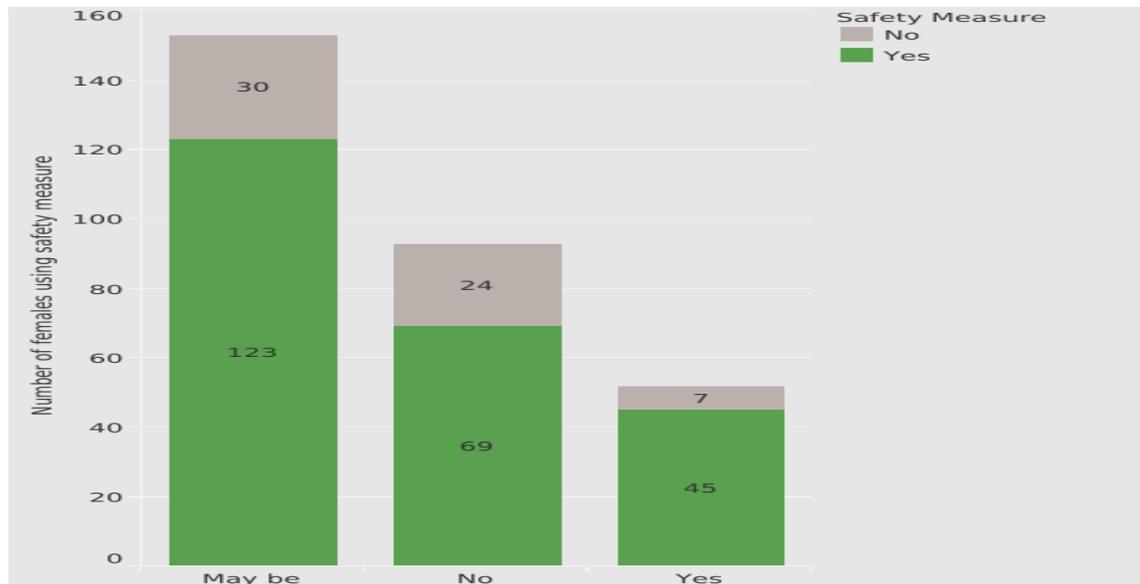
Graph 7: Women using safety measures vs. Feeling safe in public place

From analysis, it was found that among women who use any safety measure **45** feel safe at public places, whereas **69** females do not feel safe at public places and **123** females are not assured about the safety level.

This finding does not indicate any kind of relationship between the two variables: - use of safety measures by females and how they feel at public places i.e., we can say that these two variables are independent of each other. Moreover, in order to find out that whether there exists any association between women who feel safe at public places and the females who use safety apps, safety helpline numbers or both, chi-square test of independence was conducted.

The hypothesis of interests are as follows: -
H_{01}: There is no association between the feeling of safety at public places and the use of safety apps or helpline numbers.
H_{11}: There is an association between the feeling of safety at public places and the use of safety apps or helpline numbers.
The output so obtained is given below: -

Table 6: Women using safety apps or helpline numbers vs. Feeling Safe at public places

	Safety Apps or Helpline Number	**defence Mechanisms**
Chi-Square	2.102	5.918
Df	4	8
Asymp. Significance (Two Sided)	0.717	0.656

On applying the test, the findings fail to reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is no relationship between women who use safety apps or helpline numbers and feeling safe at public places. This suggests that even women who use safety apps or helpline may or may not feel safe at public places.

Along with this, the association between safety at public places and use of any defence mechanism was also tested. The hypothesis so defined is: -
H_{02}: There is no association between the feeling of safeness at public places and the use of defence mechanisms.
H_{12}: There is association between the feeling of safeness at public places and the use of defence mechanisms.

After obtaining the results, the findings failed to reject this null hypothesis. Therefore, there is no association between the females feeling safe at public places and use of defence mechanism by them. Both the tests conducted for women feeling safe at public places with safety apps or helpline and use of defence mechanism support the visualization stating independence of safety and any kind of safety measure used by females. So, it can be concluded that safety measures do not make women feel safe at public places but it is more preferable to use any of the safety measures so that they can protect themselves in any difficult situation.

6. SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is unfortunate but many attackers consider women as easy targets which makes it essential for them to be prepared with a defence mechanism at all times. So, the study suggests some recommendations that can be followed by women to protect themselves:

- While travelling to any unknown or unsafe place, always keep your trusted family members or friends updated, so that they can inform the authorities in case of any mishappening.
- Never share any personal information with an unknown or strange person and never trust a stranger based on their appearances.
- Girls and women should take self-defence training.
- Keep yourself equipped with some safety mechanism such as pepper spray, swiss knife, shockers, etc. as they are handy and may prove to be effective.

The society as a whole, plays an important role in women's life. So, society should also contribute towards women's safety. Here are some suggestions for concerned authorities, government, relatives and bystanders:

- Girls must be taught about good or bad touch from the childhood itself, as it will help them in knowing about harassment. Also, they should be encouraged to speak up when something bad happens.
- Awareness campaigns along with seminars, and workshops should be organized at various levels to spread awareness among women to keep them educated about the laws and their rights.
- Every school, college, institution and organisation must provide a safe and secure environment to girls and women. There should be an internal complaint committee to address and resolve the complaints of women as soon as possible.

7. CONCLUSION

There is an extreme need to ensure the safety and security of women, who are the crucial part of any society, as crime rates against women are increasing spontaneously around the globe. The present study lays down the vital fact that the younger girls are more exposed to sexual harassment, mainly, physical harassment. When the responses among women were analysed, it was found that there is a lack of awareness when it comes to safety apps and helpline numbers, especially, among those who have faced harassment already. Although there is no dependency between the use of safety measures and feeling safe at public places. Therefore, women must take some safety measures which can help them in case of any misfortune. The study reveals that most of the women are comfortable informing their family when faced with any situation of distress, but it is advisable to seek legal assistance to discourage the culprit for committing same thing again with another woman. In other words, involving police or NGOs working for women will help in saving many other lives. Summing up briefly, it might be argued that sexual abuse of women has become a societal blight that must be addressed on a priority basis along with spreading awareness among women.

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