

Crime against the women in India

Abstract

The Indian National Crime Record Bureau report has 213,585 criminal incidents against the women throughout the country in 2010, increasing from 164,765 in 2006, a rise of 29.63% over 4 years. In 2010 there were 22,172 rapes, 29,795 kidnapping abductions, 8,391 dowry deaths, 5,182, dowry prohibitions, 94,041 tortures, 40,613 molestations, 9,961 sexual harassments, 36 importation of girls, 2,499 immoral traffic cases, and 895 indecent representation of women cases. Every hour 18 violent crimes are committed against a woman, while two women are raped every hour. The two goals are to examine how these violent crimes impact the vulnerability and increasing fear of violent crime among the women and how the violent crime rate and different types of violent crime impact women. In India fear of violent crime against women is an emerging social problem among the women in Indian perspective.

Keywords: fear of crime, women, vulnerability, violent crime rates

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Avanish Bhai Patel

Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Roorkee, India

Correspondence: Avanish Bhai Patel, Research Scholar, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Roorkee, Roorkee, India, Email stymptl@gmail.com

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Introduction

In the era of capitalism and consumerism, human beings are aspiring to augment their social status and material wealth. To achieve this, many of us have resorted to the path of crime as an instant way to accomplish the goal. It is a strong reason instrumental in alarming speed at which crime rate is increasing in Indian society. It has certainly affected the way of life and sense of well being of the individuals. As a result, fear of crime is being recognised as an emerging social problem affecting the various vulnerable groups. These vulnerable groups include children, women, the incapacitated, and the elderly. Recent events in the international media have highlighted the impact of violent crime on women in India. Today, there is a perception that no one is safe anywhere, whether it is at home, school, work, or the office. The cases of crime against the women are increasing fast within India. Today women face harassment, rape, teasing, kidnapping, dowry homicide, and murder impacting life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, thus depriving females of a dignified life due to violence.¹⁻⁴ A study has found that India is one of the fastest growing economies in the world. Economic growth has brought to India to issues inherent to rapid urbanisation and modernisation. These challenges include uncontrolled population growth, migration from rural to urban areas, high levels of poverty, and inner city neighbourhoods. As a result prior victimisation, region and neighbourhood effects are associated with predicting of fear of crime.⁵ Similarly, in the International Crime Victim Survey (ICVS) (1992) criminal victimization and fear of crime was presented in various developing countries.

In India, Mumbai city was selected and a low level of fear of crime was discovered. Violent and nonviolent offenses were presented. Many violent crimes are committed within the victim's own house (ICVS, 1995). Due to the international attention that media and social media have brought to violent crime against women in India, there has been more attention to this new dimension within the context of gender studies. As a result, a number of studies have been accomplished to understand the response of women to violent crime, namely the fear of crime among women. Although women may be victims of any of the general crimes such as murder, robbery and cheating. Only the offenses which are directed especially against the women are known as crimes against the women. Various new laws and amendments

to existing laws have been passed to handle crimes against women. These are broadly classified into two categories, namely, crimes under the Indian Penal Code, and crimes under the Special and Local Laws. National Crime Record Bureau report collects cases of crimes under these laws throughout the country every year. According to National Crime Record Bureau report crimes against the women have been reported. These increased 29.63% over 4 years from 2006 to 2010, with 1,64,765 cases in 2006, 1,85,312 cases in 2007, 1,95,856 cases in 2008, 2,03,804 cases in 2009 and 2,13,585 cases in 2010. In 2010 the breakdown of the different types of offenses included rape (22,172), kidnapping-abduction (29,795), dowry deaths (8,391), dowry prohibition (5,182), torture cases (94,041), molestations (40,613), sexual harassments (9,961), importation of girls' cases (36), immoral trafficking (2,499) and indecent representation of women (895). According to National Crime Record Bureau report every hour 18 offenses are committed against a woman. Two Indian women are raped every hour.¹

Objective of study

The two goals are to examine how these violent crimes impact the vulnerability and increasing fear of violent crime among the women and how the violent crime rate and different types of violent crime impact women. In India fear of violent crime against women is an emerging social problem among the women in Indian perspective.

Definition of concept

Ferraro⁶ operationally defined fear of crime as "an emotional response of dread or anxiety to crime that a person associates with crime".⁶ Fear is an encompassing term with a confusing variety of feelings, perspectives and risk estimations. Fear of crime may be seen in public feelings, thought, personal risk and criminal victimisation. Similarly, Marie B et al.,⁷ defined it as "fear of criminal victimization, a feeling expressed by avoidance or protection behaviours, an abstract fear when being in perceived threatening environment or a concrete evaluation of the risk of being a victim of a personal or personal-property attack." Ward defined it as "a lack of a sense of security and feeling of vulnerability." In summary then fear of crime is determined by residential location, previous victimization

experience, vulnerability, defensibility, and the crime rate of an area. The crime rate of an area depends upon the population density, whether urban or rural with urbanites more fearful of crime because of its prevalence.⁸ Previous experience of violent offense increases fear of crime according to Liesbeth DD et al.⁹ Another most common determinant of fear of crime are the characteristics of the locale, the unusual conditions and events which are active in neighborhood and the breaches social order and control of the neighbourhood.¹⁰ There are two types of incivilities, social and physical incivility. Social incivility is the loiterers, inconsiderate neighbours, loose dogs, unruly teenagers, gangs, beggars and public drinking.

Physical incivility is abandoned cars, vandalized property, vacant houses and deteriorated homes.¹¹ It is claimed through vulnerability that there are many defects in living environments that are perceived as threatening by the people. Defects in the living environment refer that the weakness is in a particular physical setting which give an opportunity for the criminals to commit a crime. Besides it, the history of crime, income levels and known villains living in the community also are involved in vulnerability among the people.¹² Similarly, defensibility is the level of protection provided by the living environment which helps to minimize the fear of criminal victimisation among the people. Defensibility includes devices such as closed circuit televisions, window grills and locks and social security such as police and security guards.¹² Furthermore, social support network, involvement in neighbourhood activities, and migration are also determinants of fear of crime. Thus, the crime rate of an area, vulnerability, inner city neighborhood, sexual harassment, teasing, tortures, cases of rape, kidnapping and abduction and migration are major causes of fear of crime among the women.

Criminological approach and crime against the women

Crime against the women has been studied through criminological approach. There are three principles of criminology, namely, sociology of law, criminal etiology, and penology.¹³ Crime against the women is a criminal event in the contemporary society. Sociology of law is the study of crime as a social phenomenon; it is the scientific analysis of social conditions which are responsible for the criminal behaviour. Criminal behavior violates human rights and breaks criminal law. No matter what the degree of immorality and indecency of an act, any criminal or abusive activity is not a crime unless it is prohibited by the law. Criminal etiology involves those conditions which lead to committing of crimes. Phonology is the study of the penal code and crime control and explores remedies which may help in the protection of victims.^{13,14}

Methodology

This study was based on both primary data and secondary data. Primary data were from Roorkee Town (Uttarakhand). According to census 2001, women made up 51,038 of the total population of 115,278. There was a non-random biased survey taken in March 2012 that included 100 women who ranged in age from 20 to 35 years using purposive sampling useful for situations where you need to reach a targeted sample quickly and where sampling for proportionality is not the main concern.¹⁵ National Crime Record Bureau presented data consistent with a high crime rate among those women aged 20 to 35years which is why this age range was selected. Moreover, women were easily available in this age group because they were working. Secondary data were collected from the National Crime Record Bureau. The National Crime Record Bureau collected data on

crimes against women through State Crime record Bureaus and Union Territories giving national rates of crime within the country.

Vulnerability model of fear of crime

The vulnerability may be considered as a strong predictor of fear of crime among the women. Studies have identified four groups who face more problems due to their vulnerability, namely, women, old, poor and ethnic minorities.¹⁶ It is claimed through vulnerability that there are many defects in living environments that are perceived as threatening by the people. Defects in the living environment refer that the weakness is in a particular physical setting which give an opportunity for the criminals to commit a crime.¹² The concept of vulnerability has been divided in two categories, namely, physical vulnerability and social vulnerability. Physical vulnerability embraces the perception of increased risk to physical assault such as murder, rape, sexual harassment. Accordingly, women feel that they are not more capable of physically protecting themselves and biological differences in strength and muscular capacity compared with males.^{11,17} Gordon & Riger have claimed that "testing the effect of physical vulnerability on fear as it relates to women is warranted because the sexual vulnerability of women and the documented threat of sexual victimisation increase fear".¹⁷ Social vulnerability embraces the impact of one's social network which reports the level of fear of crime and history of crime, income levels and known villains living in the community, inner city neighbourhood also decide social vulnerability among the women.¹² Thus we can claim that vulnerability plays a major role in the increasing of fear of crime among women due to their physical setting as well as a social setting.

Results

It has been tried to explore the respondents (women) view about the impact of crime rate and crimes against the women on their way of life and sense of well being. Therefore, 100 women (age group 20-35years) have been selected from Roorkee Town to know the impact of fear of crime through their vulnerability, crime rate and types of crime. Seven items have been selected for this job. Four items are related to vulnerability and two items are related to the crime rate. 53women agree that they do not go out that much because they afraid to be teased and attacked, while 47women disagree that they are not afraid to be teased and attacked. 57women agree that they are extra careful on the streets during the evening as compared 43women are not extra careful full. Similarly, 55 women have reported that they go anywhere with their friends during the evening, while 45 have reported that they do not go anywhere with their friends during the evening. 60women agree that most of crimes against the women are committed by the strangers, while 40women agree that most of crimes against the women are committed by family members, relatives and neighbours. It is apparent from these data that fear of crime is prevailing among the women due to their vulnerability. It has been also found in National Crime Record Bureau report¹ that many crimes are committed against the women by their family members, relatives and neighbours. Thus, these data support for National Crime Record Bureau data which are related to women. So for now, we have discussed about the impact of vulnerability in the increasing of fear of crime. Now, we will move to explore the impact of crime rate in the increasing of fear of crime among the women. 60 women have reported that now a days it is unsafe to walk on the streets during the evening as compared 40 women have reported that now a days it is not unsafe to walk on the streets during the evening. Moreover, 77

women have claimed that the streets have become more unsafe for the women last five years, while 23 women disagree. It is apparent from these data that as the crime rate is increasing fast as fear of crime is

prevailing among the women last five years. It has been also found in National Crime Record Bureau report that the crime rate is high last five years (Table 1).

Table 1 Deciding factors of fear of crime among the women

| Vulnerability | | |
|---|-----------|------------|
| Women do not go out that much because they afraid to be teased and attacked | | |
| | Frequency | Percentage |
| Agree | 53 | 53 |
| Disagree | 47 | 47 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |
| Extra careful on the streets during evening | | |
| | Frequency | Percentage |
| Agree | 57 | 57 |
| Disagree | 43 | 43 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |
| To go anywhere with their friend during evening | | |
| | Frequency | Percentage |
| Agree | 55 | 55 |
| Disagree | 45 | 45 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |
| Most of crimes against the women are committed | | |
| | Frequency | Percentage |
| Strangers | 60 | 60 |
| Family members | 40 | 40 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |
| Crime rate of an area | | |
| Unsafe to walk on the streets during evening | | |
| | Frequency | Percentage |
| Agree | 60 | 60 |
| Disagree | 40 | 40 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |
| Streets have become more unsafe for the women last five years | | |
| | Frequency | Percentage |
| Agree | 77 | 77 |
| Disagree | 23 | 23 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |

Crime rate of an area

The most common determinant of fear of crime is the crime rate of an area. The crime rate of an area reveals an anxiety about crime and it is also seemed that the crime rate is higher in urban areas and urbanities are more fearful than rural areas.⁸ A total of 24,335 cases of crimes against the women have been reported during 2010 from 35

mega cities as compared to 23,983 cases reported during 2009. The crime rate of these mega cities at 22.6% is comparatively higher as compared to the national crime rate 18.0%. Among 35 mega cities, Delhi (3,886) has accounted for 16.0% of total crime followed by Hyderabad (1,964 or 8.1%). The crime rate is significantly higher in Vijayawada (113.7%), Jaypur (50.9%), Faridabad (47.0%), Lucknow

(46.4%), Vishakhapatnam (45.6%) and Agra (45.3%) respectively as compared to an average of megacities at 22.6%. Thus we can claim on the behalf of crime rate of mega cities that the crime rate of an area is the strongest predictor of fear of crime among the women because seeing this high crime rate of an area, they feel unsafe themselves.

Types of crime against the women

Table 2 is showing that incidents of different types of crimes have been committed against the women during 2010. In these data women have affected from many crimes such as rape, kidnapping, torture, dowry death, murder, sexual harassment, molestation.

Table 2 Crime head- wise incidents of crime against the women during 2006-2010

| Sl. No. | Crime head | Year | | | | |
|---------|------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| | | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 |
| 1 | Rape | 19,348 | 20,737 | 21,467 | 21,396 | 22,172 |
| 2 | Kidnapping & abduction | 17,414 | 20,416 | 22,939 | 25,741 | 29,795 |
| 3 | Dowry death | 7,618 | 8,093 | 8,172 | 8,383 | 8,391 |
| 4 | Torture | 63,128 | 75,930 | 81,344 | 89,546 | 94,041 |
| 5 | Molestation | 36,617 | 38,734 | 40,413 | 38,711 | 40,613 |
| 6 | Sexual harassment | 9,966 | 10,950 | 12,214 | 11,009 | 9,961 |
| 7 | Importation of girls | 67 | 61 | 67 | 48 | 36 |

Rape

A total of 22,172 incidents of crimes relating to rape have been reported in the country during 2010 as compared 21,397 incidents of crimes relating to rape reported during 2009. 22,057 cases of rape victims have been reported out of 22,172 cases of rape. A total of 1,975 cases of rape victims are related girls under 14 years of age, while 3,570 cases of rape victims are related to teenage girls (14-18 years). A total 12,749 cases of rape victims are related women in the age- group of 18-30 years. A total of 3,763 cases of rape victims are related to age group of 30-50 years, while 136 cases are related to age-group of 50 years above. Moreover, criminals are known persons in the number of cases of rape. Parents and closed family members are involved in 288 cases of rape, relatives are involved in 1,344 cases of rape and neighbours are involved in 7,816 cases of rape.

Kidnapping, dowry death and torture

A total of 29,795 incidents of crimes relating to kidnapping and abduction have been reported in the country during 2010 as compared 25,741 incidents of crimes relating to kidnapping and abduction reported during 2009. A total of 8,391 incidents of crimes relating to dowry death have been reported in the country during 2010 as compared 8,383 incidents of crimes relating to dowry death reported during 2009. A total of 94,041 incidents of crimes relating to torture (cruelty by husband and relatives) have been reported in the country during 2010 as compared 89,546 incidents of crimes relating to torture reported during 2009.

Molestation and sexual harassment

A total of 40,613 incidents of crimes relating to molestation have been reported in the country during 2010 as compared 38,711 incidents of crimes relating to molestation reported during 2009. A total of 9,961 incidents of crimes relating to sexual harassment have been reported as decreased in the country during 2010 as compared 11,009 incidents of crimes relating to sexual harassment reported during 2009.

State response to protection and welfare of the women

India is a welfare State which determines social, economic and political justice for its citizens without any discrimination. So, India

has established legal provisions and police accountability for the protection and welfare as well as maintenance of the dignity of its citizens.

Legal provisions

Various legislations have been implemented by the Government of India for the protection and dignity of the women time and time. These legislations are broadly classified under two categories, namely, provisions of Indian Penal Code and Special and Local Laws. IPC section 376 related to rape, IPC section 363-373 is related to kidnapping and abduction of women, IPC section 302 and 304-B are related homicide for dowry, dowry deaths or their attempts. Similarly, IPC section 498-A is related torture- both mental and physical, IPC section 354 is related to molestation, IPC section 509 is related to sexual harassment and IPC section 366-B is related to importation of girls. Moreover, some special laws have been implemented for the protection and welfare of the women such as Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956, Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961, Indecent Representation of women (Prohibition) Act, 1986, Prostitution (Prevention) Act, 1986, Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987 and Protection of women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005.

Conclusion

The paper implies that fear of crime is an alarming issue among the women which is increasing fast across the country today. The paper explores such megacities where incidents of crime related to women commit more which decide the impact of fear of crime. These data indicate that in these area possibilities of fear of crime may be more as compared other area. On the behalf of criminological approaches, fear of crime has been tried to identify as an emerging problem among the women and causes which are responsible for fear of crime. Further, paper attempts to explore the impact of vulnerability in the increasing of fear of crime which decides physical setting related fear and social setting related fear. Different types of crime have been reported such as rape, kidnapping and abduction, molestation, torture, dowry death and sexual harassment which have been committed against the women during 2010. It is also exploring that crimes against the women have been committed by parents and close family members, relatives and neighbours. Finally, the paper also suggests about the State

responsibilities for the protection and welfare as well as the dignity of the women. The government should establish legal provisions and police accountability for the safety and security of the women.

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None.

Conflicts of interest

The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest.

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