

## Sexual Assault of Women : An Invisible War

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### Abstract

*This article examines the level of awareness of women towards sexual abuse and reasons for sexual assault. It is a form of sexual violence, which includes rape, child sexual abuse or the torture of the person in a sexual manner. Sexual violence is another means of oppressing women in a patriarchal society. Sexual abuse of women is global and widespread and is tolerated as a social phenomenon in institutions and customs and to some degree in law. It is not exclusively a new phenomenon because the behaviors it describes are centuries old. Sexual harassment, no doubt is a complex social problem but in the recent decades, it has achieved new dimensions and has brought within its teeth children, youth and women. Thus, this study makes us aware to comprehend the severity of such cases, the steps needed to be taken and the importance of lodging a complaint against such cases. This also help us to understand the opinions of a group of women by and large on sexual assault. This article surveys their challenges, fears and apprehensions towards sexual assault. It was an eye opener for many women who do not utter a word and speak up for their right. It suggests that women should raise their voice against such acts.*

**Key words:** Sexual Abuse, Sexual assault, Urban women.

### Introduction

In India, which is a developing nation, not all are well informed or informed at all about such acts. Since India has had a primitive culture since ages, bringing out such topics in public has always been looked down at. Considering it a taboo, many of the people avoid speaking about such topics. Reasons behind these are embarrassment, fear, shame to the family of the victim, etc. These kinds of reasons however, are not found only in the rural areas of India. It is a sad fact that even educated individuals think in such ways, thus leading the perpetrators to believe that they were successful and encouraging them to continue with such a crime. Sexual assault is any type of sexual activity or contact that happens without one's consent. Sexual assault is also called sexual violence or abuse, which can include non-contact activities, such as someone "flashing" or forcing one to look at sexual images. Some of the examples of sexual assault include:

- A sexual contact with a child
- Sexually touching the one's unwanted areas, above or under the clothes
- Forcing someone to pose in a sexual way

- Sending sexually explicit images to one
- Forcefully kissing or groping an individual

Therefore, through this one understands that sexual assault does not only include making a direct sexual contact with another individual. It also includes verbal, visual and non – contact activities.

### Objectives of the Study

The study was conducted with the following objectives,

1. To examine the level of awareness towards sexual assault of any type among urban women of Mumbai.
2. To identify the reasons for sexual assault .
3. To study the fear and challenges faced by women related to sexual abuse.

### Rationale for the study

The researcher living in a metro city of Mumbai found that no sector remains untouched by sexual harassment, nor unaffected by its impacts. Sexual abuse damages the lives, health, financial independence, and opportunities of countless victims. Sexual harassment is about the interplay of power and gender present in every sector of the economy at virtually every level. While the data clearly shows

that across all sectors, women of lower status are the most common targets of sexual harassment by perpetrators who are typically men of higher status, sexual harassment is by no means limited to this dynamic. A sexually harassing culture can become so normalized that no one recognizes it, or doesn't object to it for fear of being labelled a troublemaker and losing employment or status in the workplace. And harassment can come sideways, from co-workers, or from third parties like clients, customers, or patients. Therefore, taking into consideration all these factors, researcher felt it was important to take up this study on women sexual abuse or harassment. The researcher also felt that women keep such cases of sexual assault hidden and feel that it should not be spoken about.

### **Sample Size and Data Collection Tool**

This survey was conducted over a sample size of 50 women from urban areas. The data collection form had questions related to the sexual assault of women. There were 20 items in the survey to which the women had to share their views based on the rating scale that was as follows, Strongly agree-1, Agree-2, Neutral-3, Disagree-4 and Strongly Disagree-5.

### **Methodology of the Study**

The descriptive survey method was adopted in the present study.

### **Findings of the Study**

#### **Need for Awareness Of sexual assault**

94% of women strongly agree and 6% of women agree that formal school education should consist of programs to create awareness and deal with issues of sexual assault happening in the country.

#### **Sexual assault in college campus**

24% of women strongly agree that sexual assault on college campus is mostly a problem of miscommunication. 24% of women agree, whereas 16% of women choose to be neutral. 18% of women disagree and 18% of women strongly disagree with it.

#### **Prominence of workplace sexual abuse**

34% of women strongly agree that workplace sexual abuse is very prominent in our country. 42% of women agree, whereas 12% of women choose to be neutral. 12% of women disagree with it.

#### **Women should carry knife or any other tools for their safety**

40% of women strongly agree that women should carry knife or any other tool for their safety. 40% of women agree, whereas 14% of women choose to be neutral. 4% of women disagree and 2% of women strongly disagree with it.

#### **Important to teach the good touch and bad touch to girl child**

84% of women strongly agree that it important to teach the girl child, right from the start about good touch and bad touch while 16% of women agree with it.

#### **Dressing styles, late night parties are the prime cause of sexual assault**

4% of women strongly agree that dressing styles, late night parties are the prime cause of sexual assault. 8% of women agree whereas 18% of women choose to be neutral. 42% of women disagree and 28% of women strongly disagree with it.

#### **Girls with disabilities are most targeted**

6% of women strongly agree that girls and women with disabilities are the most targeted for sexual assault. 24% of women agree whereas 28% of women choose to be neutral. 32% of women disagree and 10% of women strongly disagree with it.

#### **fear and embarrassment in lodging a complaint**

68% of women strongly agree that women do not complain because of fear and embarrassment while 16% of women agree with it.

#### **Reporting the case**

70% of women strongly agree that it is necessary to report to the police while 30% of women agree with it.

#### **Fast track courts must take up sexual assault cases for quick justice**

72% of women strongly agree that sexual assault cases must be taken up by Fast track courts to deliver quick justice. 26% of women agree, whereas 2% of women choose to be neutral with it.

#### **Women must be aware of their rights and laws**

86% of women strongly agree that women must be aware of the rights and laws that can help them. 12% of women agree, whereas 2% of women choose to be neutral with it.

#### **Case should be kept confidential**

42% of women strongly agree that records of the case should be maintained and kept confidential. 44% of women agree, whereas 8% of women choose to be neutral and 2% of women disagree with it.

**Women should take the help of NGOs**

40% of women strongly agree that women should take the help of NGOs that work for these purposes. 34% of women agree, whereas 24% of women choose to be neutral and 2% of women disagree with it.

**Immediate action to be taken**

66% of women strongly agree that there needs to be more stringent laws formed and immediate action to be taken to provide some sort of relief to the victims of the assault. 20% of women agree, whereas 8% of women choose to be neutral and 6% of women disagree with it.

**Compensation, the only remedy by court**

6% of women strongly agree that compensation is the only remedy that should be provided by court to the victim of the assault. 8% of women agree, whereas 6% of women choose to be neutral. 42% of women disagree and 38% of women strongly disagree with it.

**Compensation heal the trauma caused**

4% of women strongly agree that the mental and emotional trauma caused to the victim of the assault heal by the compensation provided. 6% of women agree, whereas 4% of women choose to be neutral. 38% of women disagree and 48% of women strongly disagree with it.

**Conclusion**

This research study on the issue of sexual assault of women indeed proved to be helpful and was instrumental in sensitizing the respondents as well as the surveyor regarding the issues of sexual assault. Through this research it was possible to understand the opinions of various women. Therefore, one can conclude that the cases of sexual assault must not be kept hidden. Rather, such cases must be complained immediately to the police, in order to provide immediate justice to the victim. Many a times women and their families refrain from complaining because of fear and embarrassment. However, it is extremely important for such women and their families to know that it is not the victim's fault and it is their right to receive justice. Fasttrack courts must also take up such cases and provide justice to the victims of these cases. Even after decades of attention, legal action, and advocacy, this analysis of data, research, and experience shows that sexual abuse remains a serious

and pervasive problem across all industry sectors and workplaces. With the advancement of industrialization and urbanization, this evil is gradually rearing its ugly head all over the world. It has touched new heights and dimensions in the numbers and operational patterns use of violence that even fatal attacks have become more common than they were sometimes ago.

A murder or robbery is given more importance than a sexual assault case. However, women do have lives even though, unfortunately they have been considered inferior since ages. Women need to be empowered and this is possible only through awareness of their rights and the laws made to protect them for their safety. Even the judicials must understand that compensation will never help a woman come out of the trauma that the sexual assault has put her into. There must be more help and remedies that must be provided to victims of sexual assault. To conclude it can be said that cases of sexual assault must not be taken lightly and immediate relief must be provided to the victim and their family members.

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