

# **EVE TEASING & WOMEN'S ACCESS TO PUBLIC SPACES**

*A thesis submitted in the partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of*

**MASTER OF ARTS IN PSYCHOLOGY**

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**CERTIFICATE**

This is to certify that the thesis entitled, “**Eve Teasing & Women’s Access to Public Spaces**” being submitted in partial fulfilment of requirements for the award of degree of **Master of Arts in Psychology**, submitted in the **School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Thapar Institute of Engineering and Technology, Patiala** is a bona fide work carried out under the supervision of Dr. Ipshita Chowdhury<sup>ast</sup>, Professor, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Thapar Institute of Engineering and Technology, Patiala and that no part of this project has been submitted for the award of any other degree.

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**CANDIDATE'S DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that the work presented in this thesis entitled, "**Eve Teasing & Women's Access to Public Spaces**" in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of the degree of **Master of Arts in Psychology**, submitted in the **School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Thapar Institute of Engineering and Technology, Patiala**, is an authentic record of my own work carried out under the supervision and guidance of Dr. Ipshta Chowdhury, <sup>asst</sup> Professor, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Thapar Institute of Engineering and Technology, Patiala and refers other researcher's work which are duly listed in the reference section.

The matter embodied in this thesis has not formed the basis for the award of any other degree of this or any other university.

Date: June 2020

Place: Patiala

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“Feminism: how we survive the consequences of what we come up against by offering new ways of understanding what we come up against.”

- Sara Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life*

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**ABSTRACT**

This study attempts to extend previous work on harassment by establishing eve teasing as identical to gender-based public harassment. The purpose of this qualitative research is to highlight women's eve teasing experiences, their reactions to such incidents, perceived causes, and the consequences that follow. The sample consisted of twenty-eight women categorized into four age groups: (18-25), (26-32), (33-40), and (40-60). In-depth semi-structured interviews were collected, thematic analysis resulted in the formation of six broad themes. Results indicate that eve teasing causes fear and restricts women's access to public spaces such that they are forced to adopt a number of self-protection strategies in order to safely navigate public spaces, such as altering their attire when stepping out, accessing public spaces with a male companion, modifying their behavior in public, sharing live location, etc.

**Keywords:** Eve teasing, Gender-based public harassment, Public spaces, Thematic analysis, Fear.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Eve teasing

Eve teasing is an Indian English term which is used to refer to sexual harassment of women by strange men in public spaces like streets, public parks, beaches, public transportation, bus stops, market areas, cinema halls, etc. (Dhillon & Bakaya, 2014). It includes verbal as well as non-verbal assaults such as catcalling, singing sexually suggestive songs, passing an insulting or threatening comment, making vulgar gestures, winking, whistling, deliberately honking, incessant staring, stalking, following, and physical assaults like deliberately pushing or brushing by, pinching, inappropriate touching, groping and rubbing against women in any type of public space (Agrawal, 2020; Talboys et al., 2017). The harassment is mostly sexual in nature, but can also be non-sexual in nature.

Sociologist Pratiksha Baxi defines Eve teasing as different forms of harassment women experience in public spaces that are considered insignificant and a part of their daily life, thereby, normalizing street harassment by situating the very presence of women in public as ‘provocative’. It is then perceived as a practice which is culturally approved, demarcating and continually redefining the public and the private sphere as gendered realms. By perceiving women in public spaces as ‘tempting’ men, the way this discourse takes shape is then based on differentiating between the ‘good’ and ‘bad’ women, or the ‘Madonna’ and the ‘Whore’ dichotomy, which solely ensures ‘for the cognitive category of eve teasing to derive meaning’ (Baxi, n.d.).

Eve teasing functions as a mechanism to exert control over women by policing behaviour and movement in public. It usually adds to the trauma of sexual assault or harassment experienced

in other arenas, such as work places or at homes, legitimizing the experience of male violence as an everyday occurrence. This normalization might result in women internalizing the idea that gender-based harassment is often harmless and justifiable. (Baxi, n.d.)

Several women's rights organizations and collectives too have presented arguments against the semantic roots of the term, highlighting that the euphemistic nature of the expression trivializes the severity of the offence. (Gangoli, 2020). To present state of the art understanding of eve teasing and determine if eve teasing and gender-based public harassment are identical to one another, it is important to consider what is meant by public/street/stranger harassment.

## **1.2 Public Sexual Harassment or Street Harassment**

Plan International UK (2021) defines public sexual harassment as 'unwanted sexual behaviour, actions or gestures, which could be verbal, non-verbal or physical, in public spaces. This means it occurs in spaces that are accessible to the public, such as the streets, parks, gyms, university campuses, public transport and shopping centres.'

In one of the earliest definitions provided by Bowman (1993), street harassment is defined as 'the harassment of women in public places by men who are strangers to them' (p. 519). It mainly occurs in public spaces such as, public squares, sidewalks, streets, parks, lanes, and also includes semi-public places like cinema halls, cafes, malls.

Gardner (1995) specifically defines public harassment as 'that group of abuses, harrying, and annoyances characteristic of public places and uniquely facilitated by communication in public. Public harassment includes pinching, shouting, hitting, shouted remarks, vulgarity, insults, sly innuendo, ogling, and stalking' (p. 4). This type of harassment which is experienced by women in open or closed public spaces usually has sexual undertones, and if verbal in nature, it is insulting, objectifying, and potentially threatening (Bowman, 1993; Gardner, 1995).

Fairchild and Rudman (2008) have noted that public sexual harassment or street harassment shares a number of features with sexual harassment that takes place in other contexts like educational institutes or in the domestic sphere, particularly the element of unwanted sexual attention. Nevertheless, public harassment shares two characteristics which mark it different from other kinds of sexual harassment; it takes place in public domain and is perpetrated by strangers.

The above-mentioned definitions of public sexual harassment or street harassment illustrate that eve teasing is in fact identical to the former and that this Indian English expression encapsulates a range of inappropriate behaviors that count as gender-based public sexual harassment in India. The term 'eve teasing' has been used in the current study because of the colloquial nature of the expression, although, alternate terms such as public sexual harassment and street/stranger harassment have also been used throughout the study.

### **1.3 Legal Provisions**

While legal definitions cover offences that seem to outrage the modesty of women, in many Indian states the term eve teasing finds general usage. There are a number of laws that may be evoked when a woman is sexually harassed in public. Sections 294, 354, and 509 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) specifically deal with assault and public sexual harassment. However, the term eve teasing is not a legal category. These three inter-related laws are drafted as crimes that comprise of 'obscenity' in public or behaviors that are perceived to 'insult the modesty of a woman'.<sup>1</sup> While section 294 IPC applies to both men and women, sections 354 and 509 IPC are particularly directed towards women.

Tamil Nadu was the first state in India to formulate an ordinance addressing this issue, titled the Tamil Nadu Prohibition of Eve Teasing Ordinance, 1998, which later became an Act, called

the Tamil Nadu Prohibition of Eve Teasing Act, 1998 (the phrase was replaced in 2002 by 'Harassment of Women'). This act defines public harassment as 'any indecent conduct or act by a man which causes or is likely to cause intimidation, fear, shame, or embarrassment, including abusing or causing hurt or nuisance or assault or use of force'.<sup>2</sup> Perpetrator may be penalized with imprisonment which can extend up to three years and a minimum fine of ten thousand rupees.

Laws related to sexual harassment have been strongly criticized by women's rights activists in India for long (Kapur & Khanna, 1996). Several women's rights groups and collectives have time and again suggested that section 354 and 509 of the IPC be repealed and to get the offences listed in an extensive bill on sexual assault. Specific expressions such as 'insulting the modesty' lead to moralistic suppositions which instead of upholding women's rights, tend to control women's behaviors. (Baxi, n.d.)

The Crimes in India (1994) report listed section 354 IPC as molestation and section 509 IPC as eve teasing. This classification resulted in eve teasing being recognized as a pervasive form of gender-based public sexual harassment, but the common perception that it is less serious than molestation underlined the differences between molestation and eve teasing. The latter was then distinguished from other forms of assault by drawing distinctions between physical and verbal or non-verbal forms of harassment. It thereby endorsed the notion that eve teasing is not assault and is less severe than molestation. (Baxi, n.d.)

#### **1.4 Violence Against Women**

The Feminist movement has endeavoured to broaden the legal definition of what constitutes violence against women. Of the many challenges, one of them includes expanding the traditional definition beyond acts of physical and material aggression to incorporate subtler

forms of violence comprising of mental as well as emotional violence. Eve teasing refers to this form of violence which structures everyday lives of women and goes way beyond acts of physical violence. This kind of violence serves the purpose of restricting women's movement outside the house and controlling their behaviour in public through instilling a sense of fear.

Contemporary statistics and data gathered from the Indian subcontinent portray an extremely distressing image of the state of women in the country. Violence against women and girls in public may include street harassment, exhibitionism, acid attacks, rape, and even gender-based killings. A report by the National Crimes Records Bureau (NCRB) shows that a total of 3,71,503 cases of crime against women were registered during 2020, out of which 86,745 cases were reported under section 354 IPC and 7,250 cases were reported under section 509 IPC in the year 2020 alone.<sup>3</sup>

Although, it must be noted that the actual number of crimes committed against women might be much greater than what these government statistics reveal. A lot many crimes, specifically those that constitute of sexual violence remain largely underreported due to a number of reasons such as stigma associated with the offence, shame, fear of vengeance, apathy on the part of the police, lengthy and cumbersome legal procedures, poor conviction rates, and an all-embracing culture of immunity from penalty or punishment.

### **1.5 The Pandemic of Public Sexual Harassment**

The defining characteristic of eve teasing or gender based public harassment is its dehumanizing and pervasive nature. While there are other crimes against women that are comparatively ghastlier, it is the everyday nature of violence and its normalization that marks eve teasing. When we begin to dismantle this concept of everyday violence, we are compelled

to notice the myriad ways in which women's mobility and experiences outside the domestic sphere are shaped and controlled.

A number of surveys conducted by various organizations suggest that fear of harassment or molestation in public spaces mark women's mobility and access. A survey conducted by NIPPCID for Delhi police depicted that approximately 45% of the reported cases of harassment were in public buses whereas 25% were at the roadside. In a study conducted by AID, a secular charity organization based in the US, out of 200 women surveyed in Delhi, 175 reported that they had experienced sexual harassment in public, specifically on public transport and on the roadside.<sup>4</sup>

A study conducted in 1996 found that 91.7% of women hostelers studying in University of Delhi reported experiencing harassment within campus every day (Mirsky, 2003). The findings of a survey carried out by 'Jagori' (2011), list significant facts about street harassment experienced by women in the national capital's public spaces. The report highlighted that 70% of the women surveyed by Jagori had faced some form of street harassment.

There have been plenty of reports of women getting brutally injured while trying to escape their harassers or women being attacked on confronting the latter on their own. In 2013, on International Women's day, a group of five boys smashed a beer bottle on the head of a woman at a popular restaurant in Khan market when she protested against crude comments being passed by them (Shekhar, 2013).

In another incident, a 13-year old girl died and her mother suffered grave injuries by jumping off a moving bus in Punjab in order to escape being sexually assaulted by the conductor's assistant.<sup>5</sup> During the first coronavirus lockdown in India, a 17-year old girl hanged herself in Rajasthan over distress caused due to eve teasing by a neighbouring youth.<sup>6</sup>

Retaliation from harassers may take the form of acid attacks on the woman or girl they target. A couple of media reports point out that acid attacks on women in India have been escalating in recent years and several of them have caused the death of the victims (Dhar, 2013; Kumar, 2014). The everyday nature of the violence associated with eve teasing is depicted in the narratives of women runners of Gurgaon. Despite having a solid running community, women runners often experience harassment when out for runs. To avoid experiencing such incidents, they are forced to change their running routes, avoid abandoned stretches, and strictly follow routes around well-lit societies within the city (Mathur, 2021). These astonishing events and the traumatic experiences they portray, underline the problem of eve teasing as one of the biggest hinderances to women's mobility and use of public space.

## **1.6 Fear**

The APA defines fear as 'a basic, intense emotion aroused by the detection of imminent threat, involving an immediate alarm reaction'.<sup>7</sup> and a number of physiological changes might follow such as increased rate of heartbeat, redirection of blood flow, muscle tension, and an overall mobilization of the organism to take action.

Fear is defined as a normal reaction in response to actual or imagined danger to self and is understood as a significant and adaptive aspect of development (King et al., 1988; Morris & Kratochwill, 1983). 'Normal' and adaptive fears have been distinguished from clinical terminology of fears or phobias based on several aspects, such as whether or not the expressed fear is specific to age, is constant over a lengthened period of time, and/or severely disrupts daily functioning (Miller et al., 1974). This distinction is of particular relevance for the present discussion, as the former definition is employed to conceptualise fear in this study.

Sexual harassment in public spaces can be seen as a social incivility, one which is closely related to gender, that represents the presence of potential harassers in specific social settings. Furthermore, due to the uniquely sexual and derogatory make-up of eve teasing, it could invoke feelings of sexual vulnerability, marking specific environments as dangerous or threatening, thereby, resulting in the development of fear.

### **1.7 The Definition of Public Space**

A concrete definition of public space is necessary to determine transgressions or obstacles to access and enjoyment. One of the most practical definitions of public space is offered by the UN Habitat which defines it as “all places publicly owned or of public use. It is accessible and enjoyable by all for free and without profit motive” (UN Habitat, 2016, Pg.6). This includes public spaces such as parks, streets and other public facilities. This study particularly refers to ‘public open spaces’ while defining public space.

A public open space is defined as ‘the sum of the areas of the built-up areas of cities devoted to streets and boulevards and the areas devoted to public parks, squares, recreational green areas, public playgrounds and open areas of public facilities’ (UN Habitat, 2015, pg. 2). This is generally considered as a narrower definition of public space. UN Habitat also offers a negative description of public open space. Public open space does not comprise of areas dedicated to public facilities such as schools, military areas, or state hospitals that are not open to the general public nor does it include spaces that are privately owned or unoccupied lands in private ownership. The ‘space of the public’ is thus described as common public spaces, comprising of physical places and the social norms people follow when participating in society. The city itself makes for public space, meaning that the city exists for the public and is a demonstration of a space for all those who inhabit it (UN Habitat, 2015).

It becomes necessary to distinguish between ‘public space’ and ‘public open space’ when there is a need to demarcate public space that is open and available to all at any point and public space that is open but might be closed like a public facility such as a government school. The latter also includes closed public spaces that might be privately owned such as restaurants or malls which offer public interaction but cannot be assessed equally by all the citizens. This study, while adhering to the definition provided by UN Habitat, specifically refers to physical places such as public parks, streets, open market areas, public parking areas, and public transportation facility areas such as bus terminals, tempo stands, etc. to define ‘public spaces’. As the study was conducted in Patiala, the definition of public space is heavily influenced by the architecture of the city and the kind of public spaces that the city harbors.

Certain characteristics of public space may enhance or limit women’s access. With regards to the definition of public space which has been adopted for this study a few characteristics can be drawn: (1) space built for public use; (2) accessible and fun for all; (3) available to access for free; and (4) not built for profit motive (depending on the specificities of a space there are likely to be other variables that might affect accessibility). When public spaces are not free to access, this might act as a monetary barrier, restricting certain social groups and limit the multiplicity of the gathering of individuals in those spaces. It needs to be mentioned that some social spaces are generally bracketed as public spaces even if they are not for free, for example; public transport systems charge tickets from users, sports stadiums, historical monuments, etc. that charge entrance fees. Charging an entrance fee from users might exclude women who cannot afford to pay and therefore those women might not be able to access those public spaces. Hence, this study focuses on public spaces in Patiala which are free for all to access and enjoy. Factors such as gender, religion, age, caste, and socio-economic status influence an individual’s access to public spaces. UNESCO underlines that ample public spaces are required to avoid

spatial segregation and defines a public space as ‘an area or place that is open and accessible to all peoples, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, age or socio-economic level. These are public gathering spaces such as plazas, squares and parks. Connecting spaces, such as sidewalks and streets, are also public spaces.’<sup>8</sup> This definition recognises gender as one of the significant identifiers in relation to equal access to public space.

The right to public space doesn’t exist on its own but is invoked through other fundamental rights that the Indian constitution guarantees each one of its citizens such as the right to equality, the right to freedom of movement, assembly, and association, the right to freedom of religion.<sup>9</sup>

In India, a number of national laws regulate activities conducted in public spaces, for example; smoking, drinking, street vending, etc. The Street Vendors Act of 2014 offers a definition of public space by implication when describing ‘street vendor’. Under this law, street vendor refers to an individual involved in selling small items, goods, dishes, articles of daily use or providing services to the public in a pavement, street, roadside, footpath, public park or any other public or private facility which is open to all.<sup>10</sup> Hence, we can infer that under the Act, what is meant by public space is quite similar to the definition provided by UN Habitat.

### **1.8 Academic Definitions of Public Space**

An academic definition of public space is vital to comprehend the contextual meanings associated with it. Academics working in this field have outlined three approaches to describe public space; architecture, urban planning, and political philosophy (Collins, 2017).

From an architectural perspective, public space is considered as construction by state agencies with the purpose of marking power (Kanes, 2019). From the perspective of urban planning, public space is a physical place where citizens ‘come together to interact, join forces, and governing agencies are designed to evoke power.’ (Collins, 2017). From the perspective of

political philosophy, public space is where people gather and discuss public matters. This definition is based on democratic principles of public participation, inclusivity, and the relationship between space and politics (Mitchell, 1995).

Academics have also tried to define what constitutes as a public space by highlighting characteristics of a space depending on ownership, usage, access, and control. There is a common agreement around what features mark any physical area as a public space; these include opportunities to interact and socialize, ability to participate in public activities, accessible to all, and convenient to use (Karaçor, 2016).

### **1.9 Women and Public Spaces**

Cities and built urban spaces act as artefactual environments where gendered expressions take place and are reproduced. These constructed spaces not only offer individuals experiences but also replicate as well as influence social relations and established norms. Previous literature on cities and public spaces suggests that cities have been regarded essentially as catering to cis able-bodied men in which women and other marginalized social groups have been managing somehow to survive.

Different cultures across the globe infuse gendered meanings into public spaces, expressed through varying ways and mediums. This leads to the emergence of gendered spaces which are purposively used to characterize identity and produce imbalanced gender dynamics based on power and authority (Raju & Paul, 2016). For instance, women are generally associated with the inside or the domestic sphere as opposed to the outside which is perceived as a man's domain.

The spatial and social structure of a city is built through demarcating 'public' and 'private' space, and through the creation of urban experience in the figure of the male flaneur or wandered (Massey, 1994). However, for women public spaces function differently and are

treated as mere transitways to access other closed areas, not places which serve an end in themselves. (Gardner, 1990).

Many factors impact women's accessibility to public spaces such as safety, design of the place, infrastructural features, economic factors, etc. Women can enhance their access to public spaces by demonstrating a sense of purpose for being there and they manufacture purpose by 'by walking in goal-oriented ways and by waiting in appropriate spaces where their presence cannot be misread' (Phadke et al, 2011, p.34). To access public spaces women are then expected to comply to certain regulations or codes enforced at different levels by their families, community members, or the state which ultimately leads to their subordination within public spaces and implicitly limits their access (Gardener, 1990; Phadke, et al, 2011).

There are certain types of public places where women feel they are the most unguarded; large open spaces such as parks, wastelands, canals, etc. and closed public spaces with restricted exits where perpetrators may hide and attack women without being visible to others like subways and parking lots (Valentine, 1989).

Women's physical mobility and access to public spaces is modulated according to the time, as their presence is limited during the evening and night, especially if they are out alone. (Patel, 2010). Considering earlier legislations with regards to women's employment, such as the Indian Factories Act, 1911 and the Bombay Maternity Benefit Act, lead to restricting the scope of women's participation in the labour market in the name of protection and ultimately validated the social construct of the night time as a male preserve (Patel, 2010).

Women who face intersecting systems of categorisation may experience public spaces in immensely different ways. Hence, it is necessary to acknowledge how diverse classifications or multiple identities that women embody, can affect a woman's access to public spaces. A woman's experience can be affected by her age, class position, caste, religion, race, nationality,

physical abilities, indigenous identity, sexual orientation, gender expression, motherhood, to name a few. For example, for Muslim women based in Mumbai, their access to public spaces is influenced by their gender as well as religious identity. Their relegation to the domestic space springs from both the Muslim population's spatial segregation within the city and the removal of women within the Muslim community from public space (Khan, 2007).

### **1.10 Equal access to Public Spaces**

Women may be debarred from public spaces due to their sartorial choices or behavioural patterns in public. The gendered understanding of public and private space is one of the biggest impediments to equal access to any kind of public space. Such distinctions between the public and private domains legitimizes 'the exclusion of women from particular spaces, it justifies inequalities in economic and political power and allows for moral judgements about the behavior of men and women in public space' (Bonnin, 2000, pg. 303). Gender-based segregation of public spaces promotes the traditional notion that women aren't entitled to use public space in the same manner as men, reinforcing the adage 'a woman's place is in the home'.

The 2012 Report of the Special Rapporteur offers examples of restriction on women's mobility through socially erected gender norms. These restrictions may be legal in nature or simply stem from social constructs. These include denial of membership to religious institutions, educational institutions, social organizations, and political parties, fear of moral policing and victim blaming, dearth of public facilities for women such as public toilets, and legal restrictions such as bans on women stepping out without male companions.<sup>11</sup>

### **1.11 Culture, Politics, and Public Spaces**

It is important examine access and comfort in public spaces through a gender lens because women make use of such spaces for a greater variety of purposes compared to their male

counterparts. The culture and architecture of a city have an influence on how the citizens experience and enjoy public spaces. The design of any built environment also facilitates and impacts cultural expression and diversity. Kaner (2019) examines access to public spaces as an important aspect of cultural rights, elucidating how public spaces can act as ways to access culture as well as help in building or contributing to a community's culture. Public spaces facilitate citizens' participation in culture, acting as sites that promote access to cultural life, for example when a public square is used as a site of a parade or a protest (Kaner, 2019).

Public spaces not only facilitate cultural expression but also act as sites of political struggle, opening up opportunities for women and other marginalised social groups to organize and politicize. Historically too, reclamation of public spaces has been associated with powerful socio-political movements such as the Delhi Queer Pride Parade which is organised every year in November since 2008 and usually runs from Barakhamba Road to Jantar Mantar in New Delhi.<sup>12</sup> It transformed into a strong movement that principally addressed Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, which was repealed in 2018 by the Supreme Court.<sup>13</sup>

Considering recent history, Shaheen Bagh, a poorly planned middle-class Muslim settlement in Delhi was transformed into an epicentre of mass agitation where the women of Shaheen Bagh protested in order to assert their citizenship rights and challenge the 2019 Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) (Kazim, 2020).

2020-2021 Indian Farmer's protest is another example where farmer unions began a movement named *Dilli Chalo* (Let's go to Delhi) and marched towards the nation's capital in order to protest against the Farm Bills.<sup>13</sup> (Gettleman et al., 2021). In all the above-mentioned examples public spaces become sites of cultural expression and political agitation where various kinds of social groups gather and protest.

### **1.12 Reclamation of Public spaces by Women**

The question of unsafe public spaces became the center of attention in the country when in New Delhi five men ruthlessly raped a young student inside a bus and beat up her male friend before throwing them off the vehicle in 2012. Thousands of people protested against it in Delhi and other cities demanding better infrastructure, stricter laws, and more organized policing. However, Phadke (2013) attempts to question this conventional discourse on women's mobility where the sole emphasis is laid on women's safety in public spaces rather than any concern with women's right to access public space.

Women are familiar with the fear they have to confront every time they find themselves alone in an isolated place after dark. But recent history shows that women in India are increasingly refusing to let that fear restrict them from stepping out of the house and are willing to fight to reclaim their right to public spaces. The first *Besharmi Morcha* (the Indian equivalent of *SlutWalk*) was organized in Bhopal in 2011, followed by Delhi and Lucknow in the same year.<sup>15,16,17</sup> Such marches were organized to address women's right to walk down the streets and confront victim blaming attitudes prevalent in the society.

'I Will Go Out' was a nationwide march was carried on 17<sup>th</sup> January' 2017, to demand fair and equitable access to public spaces by women and other marginalized social groups.<sup>18</sup> It began as a social media campaign to encourage women and other marginalized communities across the country to march together after sunset in order to reclaim the night. What ignited the campaign was mass molestation incident reported by women across Bengaluru on New Years' Eve in 2016 followed by victim blaming responses made by certain politicians.<sup>19</sup>

*Blank Noise* is a Bangalore-based collective which focuses on fighting sexual harassment and gender-based violence. They have executed multiple interventions and campaigns specifically addressing women's right to mobility and accessibility. They organized projects including 'Being Idle', 'Walk Alone', and 'Night Action Plan', all three focusing on addressing women's

fear with regards to accessing public spaces and highlighting incidents of street harassment (Shah, 2018). Other campaigns and collectives focusing on street harassment and women's reclamation of public spaces include *A Woman Was Harassed Here (AWWHH)*, *Pinjra Tod*, and *Why Loiter*. Such initiatives are forms of public protests and demonstrations aimed at calling attention to the harassment or exclusion of women in public space. Protests in public spaces have been a significant tool for women's rights movements for years, offering women's right activists a platform to oppose different forms of gender-based discrimination.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Street Harassment/ Public Sexual Harassment

Swim et al. (2001) categorized 'everyday sexism' into three groups: misogyny and conventional gender-role stereotyping; insulting or derogatory remarks and behaviors; and sexual objectification. Diary study was employed as a research method and according to the results, women reported experiencing or witnessing everyday sexism at least once a week. Almost half of these experiences included demeaning or misogynistic comments directed at women in general or sexual objectification of women. The rest of the experiences involved study participants facing all of these events first hand, or witnessing another woman, or a mix of the three targets. Some of the incidents listed comprised of public harassment. Seventy five percent of respondents reported experiencing anger as a response. Overall, it was found that such incidents influenced women's psychological well-being, decreasing their self-esteem, and escalating feelings of anger and depression.

Nielsen (2000) conducted a survey with a mixed-gender sample (n=100). The majority of women (61%) surveyed revealed experiencing public sexual harassment in the form of sexually suggestive comments nearly every day or often. On the other hand, men (86%) recounted they almost never or rarely heard such derogatory comments. The study also found that approximately a quarter of women of colour experienced this kind of public harassment on a daily basis, whereas, only 14% of white women experienced the same.

Lenton et al. (1999) interviewed 1,990 Canadian women by employing random digit dialling. Nearly 81% of the respondents reported being ogled at in a manner that made them uncomfortable and 22% had faced other kinds of public harassment such as insulting remarks and voyeurs. Seventy-seven percent of the respondents had experienced more than one form of public harassment, with 30% experiencing harassment of a greater magnitude such as inappropriate touching or groping. Respondents reported feeling anger or fear as a response. Nearly 20% reported that the fear they felt after the incident was long-lasting, even in cases where the harassment might have occurred years ago. Almost 10% attempted to report the harassment to the police, but self-regulation or behavioural changes were more frequent than reporting the incidents. Nearly 50% of the respondents admitted that they started relying on a companion or dog when going out in public; they began avoiding specific places or men; staying more alert when out; being more conscious of their surroundings; or taking certain precautionary actions like checking their vehicles before getting in.

In *Passing By: Gender and Public Harassment*, Gardner (1995) offers an empirical understanding of public harassment, highlighting the different contexts in which it occurs, the perpetrators and victims of public harassment, the behaviours that are classified as public harassment, how people perceive it, and the strategies adopted by individuals to escape it. The data was collected in the form of interviews with 293 women and 213 men. Qualitative analysis foregrounded that public harassment perpetrated by strangers is greatly similar to sexual harassment regarding the aspect of unwanted sexual attention. The study was concluded that gender-based public harassment acts as a strong tool to control women's behaviour in public and affects their feelings of comfort and security in the communities they inhabit.

Till date, MacMillan et al. (2000) offer one of the only studies to report differences between unwanted sexual attention from familiar people and strangers. Using the data gathered in 1993

from a national survey on Violence Against Women with a sample of 12,300 Canadian women who reported experiencing sexual assault or harassment (Johnson & Sacco, 1995), the study built on the data collected from eight specific items focusing on stranger and non-stranger harassment. The items listed in stranger harassment included obscene phone calls; unwanted attention such as catcalling, groping, whistling, ogling, inappropriate gestures; following or stalking; and vulgar exposure such as exhibitionism. The items measuring non-stranger sexual harassment included quid pro quo incidents as well as hostile work environment sexual harassment. the study found that 85% of Canadian women recounted facing stranger harassment, with the majority of incidents comprising of unwanted sexual attention in the form of catcalls and ogling. Out of the 85%, 66% had received obscene phone calls, 32% had experienced stalking, and 18% had encountered exhibitionists. By contrast, 51% had faced non-stranger harassment, out of which 5% of women reported facing quid pro quo sexual harassment.

MacMillan et al.'s (2000) study found out stranger harassment to be much more pervasive and profound than non-stranger harassment, with the former having a more persistent and significant effect on women's fear, noting that stranger harassment lessens feeling of security while walking alone after dark, using public transportation at night, and being home alone at night. This study illustrates why literature on sexual harassment experienced in the workplace or an educational institution is not relevant to study street harassment.

## **2.2 Coping with Sexual Harassment**

Research conducted on women's responses to sexual harassment indicates that most women who experience it are expected to fall back on passive or unassertive coping mechanisms. Gruber's (1989) review of literature highlights that only 20% of women who have faced sexual harassment employ assertive or functional coping strategies. Using factor analysis, Magley

(2002) conducted a study to identify how women cope with sexual harassment. Four clusters of coping behaviours surfaced, including behavioural engagement, behavioural disengagement, cognitive engagement, and cognitive disengagement. It was found that women usually respond to sexual harassment by actively choosing to ignore it or by attempting to avoid their harasser.

Another study by Fitzgerald (1990) found that there are very few chances of women coping with harassment by reporting it or confronting the perpetrator, but they are most likely to engage in self-blame or perceive the specific incident of harassment as amiable or directed as a compliment. While it is probable that a majority of coping mechanisms employed by women who are sexually harassed by someone known to them are similar to the strategies used by women who have experienced stranger or public harassment (for example, ignoring it), there may also be significant differences depending on factors like infrastructure and the legal provisions available to address public harassment.

### **2.3 Eve Teasing or Gender-Based Public Sexual Harassment in India**

Dhillon and Bakaya (2014) conducted a study to understand street harassment as experienced by young women living in Delhi. Qualitative research was conducted by collecting interviews with 20 women between the ages of 18 and 30 years. Findings indicated that harassment usually took place in crowded spaces and during the day. A number of factors responsible for street harassment were highlighted including existing attitudes toward women, poor implementation of laws, and apathy on the part of the police personnel. Participants reported a variety of reactions to the harassers consisting of both non-confrontational (for e.g., ignoring or choosing to move away from the harassers) and confrontational responses (such as hitting and shouting) depending on the familiarity of a place and the magnitude of harassment. Strategies adopted by the participants in order to reduce the amount of harassment included going out with a male

companion, altering their dressing styles in public, and modifying their behavior in public like avoiding eye contact with strangers.

Akhtar (2013) attempted to determine the magnitude of eve teasing in Kashmir and its relation to age, socio-economic and psychological factors, while examining women's responses to this type of harassment. Data collected from 300 structured interviews revealed that eve teasing is pervasive in Kashmir and occurs across all socio-economic groups. Analysis showed that eve teasing compels women to learn to avoid victimization by adopting certain responses such as ignoring verbal and non-verbal forms of teasing, retaliating or making instant efforts to escape the situation in response to physical eve teasing. Overall, women's reaction to eve teasing reflected endurance rather than resistance due to the fear of double victimization.

Laroiya & Arya (2017) examined how eve teasing deprives adolescent girls of basic human rights. Using a mixed methods approach, they studied the attitude of girls towards eve teasing and assessed the impact of eve teasing experiences on self-confidence and well-being of adolescent girls based in rural Haryana. Results indicated a significant relationship between self-confidence and attitude towards eve teasing. It was identified that experiencing episodes of eve teasing leads to a decline in adolescent's psychological well-being; promotes the development of negative attitudes towards male counterparts; decreases attention and concentration during lectures; causes persistent stress and anxiety, affecting academic performance.

Talboys (2015) explored the impact of eve teasing on mental health as well as social well-being using a mixed methods approach. The study characterized eve teasing in rural Punjab as well as developed a measurement tool to estimate its prevalence and association with common mental disorders (CMD) and suicide ideation (SI) among adolescent women. Eve teasing comprised of leering, following, passing indecent comments, and inappropriate touch. The

study discovered a number of consequences that follow eve teasing such as restricted mobility which leads to missing school, victim blaming and familial feuds. Eve teasing was found to be strongly associated with CMD and SI among participants who also reported facing harmful childhood events such as child sexual abuse. Hence, eve teasing was found to be negatively impacting mental health of adolescent women, predominantly victims of child abuse.

#### **2.4 Causes of Eve teasing and Public Harassment: Explanatory theories**

There are several theories that try to determine the causal factors of public harassment. Benard and Schlaffer (1996) propounded the ‘male-bonding theory’ of public harassment, stating that men who harass explain their own behavior as ‘fun’, gives them a feeling of comradeship with other men, and relieves boredom. Twenty percent of men who are interviewed reported that they would not engage in such acts if they were alone, which connotes that the proclivity for male-bonding at least moderately contributes to the reason men harass strange women in public. In accordance with this theory, Gardener (1995) found that seem to perceive harassment as jesting or as part of male bonding, and gay men sometimes harassed in order to fit in.

Lenton et al. (1999) classify three supplementary theories of public harassment, all three foregrounded in sociological factors. The first is the social-structural argument which examines sexual harassment within the larger framework of power, elucidating how men having access to comparatively more resources (physical, political, legal, and economic) results in unequal power relations between men and women. This renders women dependent on men. Men occupy a higher position in the social hierarchy and public harassment is a manifestation or symptom of this socially-structured inequality.

The sociocultural argument is concerned with the social construction of gender, how adhering to gender norms and expectations promotes male violence against women. Gender role prescriptions not only demarcate expected roles for men and women, but also specify what a

normative heterosexual relationship entails; a superior man and a subordinate woman. This argument also accounts for objectification of women, victim blaming, and toxic masculinity. According to this view, male aggression towards women is eroticized (Gardner, 1995)

The third perspective is the social control theory, which supports that harassment is a way to exert social control over women and their bodies that furthers and perpetuates the status quo of male supremacy (Fitzgerald, 1993; Goodman et al., 1994). Public harassment acts as a tool to keep women away from the public sphere, which men believe is their territory, and place them back into the domestic or private space of the home. The research conducted by Lenton et al. (1999) on public sexual harassment found that public harassment can most suitably be explained by the social control theory, with many women experiencing fear and limiting their mobility as a result of being harassed in public.

Similar to the social control argument, Sen (1984), underlines the various ways in which patriarchal setups control and channelize young women's sexuality. One of the ways is to exert control over public spaces and endorsing the idea that such spaces are male-only domains. Thereby, when women move out to lay their claim to public spaces, their presence is tolerated only if they adhere to strict codes of behavior and dress, and any form of 'transgressions' are usually follow severe penalty in the form of harassment.

All three perspectives illustrate the dominant position men hold in a patriarchy. They slightly differ in the arguments for the reason that power is exhibited. Though they are put forward as distinct theoretical viewpoints, it may be that all three theories are not only justifiable, but also interrelated.

## **2.5 Implications of Eve teasing/ Gender-Based Public Sexual Harassment**

In a study on socio-psychological implications of public harassment for women, Ahmad et al (2020) explore street harassment as a form of gender violence that renders female victims insecure in public spaces. The study was conducted in Islamabad, Pakistan and qualitative data analysis indicated that a majority of young women felt the need to be chaperoned by male family members when going out of their homes. The respondents admitted to being victimized anywhere irrespective of the time or the dress they were wearing. The research reports that street harassment, abuse, and objectification result in socio-psychological upheavals such as poor academic performance and psychological distress and impinges women's mobility by dissuading them from independently accessing public spaces.

DelGreco & Christensen (2019) examined street harassment as a public health issue similar to sexual harassment with regards to its negative effects. The report hypothesized anxiety and depression as mediators of the effects of street harassment on sleep quality. Mediation analysis was used to determine how anxiety and depression interposed the relationship between street harassment and sleep quality. Results revealed street harassment to be positively related to anxiety and depression, and negatively related to sleep quality.

Lord (2009) conducted a study to determine the prevalence of gender-based public harassment and whether it is related to body image, self-esteem, objectification, and avoidance behaviour. Women's experiences of street harassment were examined by using a self-report questionnaire divided into 2 subscales, specially designed for this study. Results indicate that harassment is significantly related to self-esteem, avoidance behaviour, and body image. It was found that emotional reactions that followed harassment are associated with avoidance behavior. Women were likely to avoid accessing public spaces alone depending on how negatively they felt about being harassed. Women who reported more negative feelings regarding such incidents also were likely to report poor self-esteem and issues regarding body image.

Fairchild & Rudman (2008) explained how stranger harassment in public negatively impacts women's well-being, specifically focusing on the aspect of self-objectification. Results indicate that women who face greater amounts of street harassment were more likely to self-objectify. This finding holds true for women who relied on passive coping strategies (such as self-blame or tend to perceive incidents of harassment as benign) as a coping mechanism for street harassment, as opposed to women who relied on active coping strategies (such as confronting the harasser). Experiences of stranger harassment and self-objectification were found to positively related to women's fear of and perceived risk of rape, concluding that women who feared rape were more likely to limit their mobility. This research was one of the first studies to depict the relationship between street harassment and self-objectification.

### ***2.5.1 Fear and Restricted Mobility***

Women's isolation within the private sphere is sometimes pathologized as Agoraphobia. However, McHugh (2000) categorizes Agoraphobia as a gendered construct, considering that the majority of individuals in the US who have been diagnosed with the same are women. McHugh (2000) links cultural factors to Agoraphobia such as women's limited mobility outside the private space of the home, restricted societal roles, and socialization (for example, they are socialized to express fear more than their male counterparts). The diagnosis of this condition involves experiencing fear which is baseless or illogical, but for women there might be valid reasons to fear stepping out into public.

Hickman & Muehlenhard (1997) conducted a research on the fear of rape among women. The results generated signify that street harassment contributes to increasing women's fear of rape, thereby affecting their mobility in public spaces. The study also found out that women tend to be more terrified rape committed by someone unknown to them as compared to acquaintance

rape, even though the respondents knew that the former was comparatively less prevalent than the latter.

Ferraro's (1996) 'shadow of sexual assault' hypothesis proposes that women are generally more fearful because the fear of rape infiltrates their fear of other victimizations such as public harassment. As rape, for women, is a prospective result of any material experience of victimization, it may be a principal root of worry. The research conducted by Ferraro (1996) found evidence furthering this hypothesis. Findings indicate that women's fear of rape anticipated their fear regarding other crimes such as harassment, or mugging. Fisher and Sloan (2003) reproduced Ferraro's (1996) study, finding evidence supporting the same hypothesis. When considered together, both the researches indicate that public harassment by strangers may increase women's fear of and perceived risk of rape.

On similar lines, Harris and Miller (2000) found out that compared with men, women are invariably more afraid of ambiguously threatening situations involving men. The authors posited that this fear may arise from everyday instances of relatively peripheral victimizations they are subjected to, which are possibly neglected because of their no-criminal nature such as stares, catcalls, whistles, and being interrupted when speaking. Such victimizations encountered on a daily basis causes women to be more fearful of any threat to themselves. Although this hypothesis was not tested.

One of the most thorough studies on the impact of sexual harassment on fear was led by Junger (1987). Results of a quantitative study with a sample of 127 women based in the Netherlands revealed that sexual harassment escalated perceived risks and the implementation of precautionary behavior among women.

MacMillan et al.(2000) noted that relational distance may offer some context with regards to the effects of harassment on fear, uncovering that potential of sexual harassment to induce fears of sexual attack may be much higher in contexts and exchanges where the perpetrator is a stranger. Meaning that public sexual harassment by strangers has more pervasive and notable effect on women's fear as opposed to non-stranger harassment. Thus, harassment by strangers should be distinctly damaging women's feelings of security. MacMillan et al. (2000) noted that 'Stranger harassment reduces feelings of safety while walking alone at night, using public transportation, walking alone in a parking garage, and while home alone at night' (p. 319).

Overall, literature in this realm indicates that women characteristically alter their behaviour in public by restricting how, when, and where they travel to defend themselves from rape, taking responsibility for their own safety (Hickman & Muehlenhard, 1997; Krahe, 2005; Warr, 1985). They do it by avoiding going out after dark or specific places such as parking lots (Hickman & Muehlenhard, 1997), thus, women purposely limit their freedom of movement. Similarly, Swim, Cohen, and Hyers (1998) recount that women's proclivity to avoid sites of sexual harassment restricts their mobility.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH GAP, OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH STATEMENT AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **3.1 Research Gap**

The literature focusing on eve teasing experiences of women in India, illustrating how they attempt to resist this kind of harassment while accessing public places is still expanding. Studies highlighting eve teasing experiences of women in India have mostly been conducted with sample consisting of adolescent and college going girls. The present study aims to fill this research gap as it caters to women between the ages of 18 and 60 years. Majority of studies on eve teasing have been conducted in metropolitan or Tier-1 cities such as Bangalore, New Delhi, Bombay, Kolkata, etc. whereas miniscule work has been done to document experiences of women inhabiting Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities. Limited research has been done to examine the fear eve teasing develops in accessing public spaces, the current study aims to fill this research gap.

#### **3.2 Research Statement**

This study attempts to extend previous work by presenting state of the art understanding of eve teasing and how the phenomenon is perceived by women who have faced such incidents. The purpose of this study is to highlight different types of eve teasing behaviors prevalent in Patiala, shedding light on women's experiences, their reactions to such incidents, and strategies adopted by them to manoeuvre through public spaces safely, while elucidating how eve teasing induces fear and limits their access to public places. The very pervasiveness of public harassment and the recognition of it being so by women is what makes it extremely important to study.

### **3.3 Objectives**

1. Present state of the art understanding of eve teasing and determine if eve teasing and gender-based public harassment are identical to one another.
2. To understand women's perception of men and society they inhabit post the eve teasing incident.
3. To understand the impact of eve teasing on women's accessibility to public places.
4. To determine strategies adopted by women to manoeuvre through public places.

### **3.4 Theoretical Framework**

Lenton et al. (1999) underlined three theories of public harassment; the social-structural view, the sociocultural view, and social control theory of public harassment. Although all three theories share the same base; highlighting the role of patriarchal set-ups in determining power relations between men and women and in influencing prescribed gender roles as well as cultural norms. This study specifically refers to the social control theory, which holds that harassment is a way to exert social control over women and their bodies that furthers and perpetuates the status quo of male supremacy (Fitzgerald, 1993; Goodman et al., 1994). Public harassment acts as a tool to keep women away from the public sphere, which men believe is their territory, and place them back into the domestic or private space of the home. According to this view, men harass to maintain their power as the dominant social group, as a result many women begin experiencing fear and limiting their activities in public.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **4.1 Sample**

The sample consists of **28** women, divided into 4 groups based on their age: (18-25), (26-32), (33-40), and (40-60).

#### **4.2 Sampling Criteria**

##### **Inclusion Criteria**

- Resident women of Patiala (who have been living in the city continually for the past 2 years or more)
- Women between the ages of 18 and 60 years.
- Women who have been eve teased in Patiala in the past one year.
- Women who are employed full-time.
- Women who are have enrolled in a regular course at a local university/college.

##### **Exclusion Criteria**

- Women who experienced eve teasing in Patiala more than a year ago.
- Women who have never experienced eve teasing in Patiala.
- Women who are visitors or tourists.

#### **4.3 Sampling technique**

For the data collection process, a combination of purposive and snowball methods have been employed. The sample required for this study is specific and depends on several factors such

as age, geographical location, employment status, etc. Thus, purposive sampling has been used to seek out participants and snowball sampling to find more participants that match the profile.

#### **4.4 Location of the Study**

The study will be conducted in Patiala with participants who belong to the city or have been living in Patiala for 2 years or more.

#### **4.5 Tools used**

Recording device/phone recorder, laptop, paper, pen, and Atlas.ti software for qualitative data analysis.

#### **4.6 Procedure**

After obtaining the consent of the participants, a demographic questionnaire was administered along with one additional question to ascertain whether a respondent has been eve teased in Patiala in the past one year. Based on the response to the questionnaire, semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants who fit the criteria. All the interviews were conducted face-to-face, recorded on a mobile device and manually transcribed and translated. For coding and data analysis, Atlas.ti was used.

Atlas.ti software was employed to execute thematic analysis and code the transcribed data. The software can be used to develop an initial broad coding strategy. The transcripts are first coded into tentative themes and subthemes. Later, each code can be reviewed and re-organized to fit a particular theme or more than one theme/subtheme. After repeated revisions of the data set, themes and subthemes are finalized depending on individual codes and the relationships between them. The software allows one to see connection between various themes and draw

comparison between participants by running queries. It also helps with the graphic and tabular representation of identified themes. A comprehensive analysis of the transcribed data characterizing the main themes and direct narratives from participants is presented in the Results section.

There are different ways to analyze qualitative data, but for the purpose of this research Thematic analysis was conducted following the guidelines listed by Victoria Clarke and Virginia Braun (V. Braun & Clarke, 2006). It is one of the most commonly used methods for qualitative research as it helps to identify patterned meaning from qualitative data such as interviews or audio files. Thematic analysis is a process that involves familiarizing with the data as the first step followed by coding of the data. After this process themes are generated from the data set so as to compile and interpret the data in a meaningful manner.

The social constructionist approach of thematic analysis was used as a theoretical framework to inform the present qualitative inquiry (V. Braun & Clarke, 2013). The constructionist approach focuses on how topics are constructed and how accounts construct the world. It examines the ways in which events, realities, meanings, experiences and so on are the effects of a variety of discourses operating within society (V. Braun & Clarke, 2006).

It serves as a useful framework for this qualitative study to reveal insights on women's subjective eve teasing experiences in Patiala, their understanding about the causes of eve teasing, the gradual development of fear in response to such incidents, and how such incidents restrict women's access to public spaces.

## CHAPTER 5

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 5.1 Socio-demographic characteristics

The study comprises of cis-women between the ages of 18 and 60. All the women are employed full-time, or studying full-time in a local University/college, belong to different socio-economic backgrounds, and reside in Patiala. The respondents were divided into 4 groups based on their age: (18-25), (25-32), (33-40), and (41-60). Details of all the respondents are presented in the table below according to the groups.

**TABLE 1: Group 1 (18-25) Socio demographic characteristics**

| RESPONDENT | AGE | OCCUPATION        | CASTE | EDUCATION | INCOME             |
|------------|-----|-------------------|-------|-----------|--------------------|
| R 1        | 23  | Architect         | GEN   | UG        | Above 20 lakh p.a. |
| R2         | 23  | Lawyer            | GEN   | UG        | Above 20 lakh p.a. |
| R3         | 23  | Software engineer | GEN   | UG        | 5 to 20 lakh p.a.  |
| R4         | 24  | Cook              | SC    | NIL       | 50k to 2 lakh p.a. |
| R5         | 19  | Student           | GEN   | UG        | 5 to 20 lakh p.a.  |
| R6         | 22  | Student           | GEN   | PG        | 5 to 20 lakh p.a.  |
| R7         | 22  | Student and baker | GEN   | PG        | Above 20 lakh p.a. |

**TABLE 2: Group 2 (25-32)**

| RESPONDENT | AGE | OCCUPATION                | CASTE | EDUCATION | INCOME             |
|------------|-----|---------------------------|-------|-----------|--------------------|
| R 8        | 26  | Student                   | GEN   | PG        | 5 to 20 lakh p.a.  |
| R 9        | 30  | Primary Teacher           | OBC   | PG        | 50k to 2 lakh p.a. |
| R 10       | 30  | School principal          | GEN   | PG        | Above 20 lakh p.a. |
| R 11       | 30  | Student                   | GEN   | PG        | Above 20 lakh p.a. |
| R 12       | 30  | Cook                      | OBC   | NIL       | 50k to 2 lakh p.a. |
| R 13       | 25  | Student/ part-time worker | GEN   | UG        | 2 to 5 lakh p.a.   |
| R 14       | 27  | Coach                     | GEN   | PG        | 2 to 5 lakh p.a.   |

**TABLE 3- Group 3 (33-40)**

| RESPONDENT | AGE | OCCUPATION          | CASTE         | EDUCATION        | INCOME             |
|------------|-----|---------------------|---------------|------------------|--------------------|
| R 15       | 33  | University lecturer | GEN           | PhD              | Above 20 lakh p.a. |
| R16        | 35  | Lecturer            | GEN           | PhD              | Above 20 lakh p.a. |
| R17        | 40  | Cook                | MUSLIM<br>OBC | NIL              | 50k to 2 lakh p.a. |
| R18        | 40  | Teacher             | SC            | PG               | 5 to 20 lakh p.a.  |
| R19        | 34  | Lecturer            | GEN           | PhD              | Above 20 lakh p.a. |
| R20        | 39  | Salon worker        | OBC           | 10 <sup>th</sup> | 50k to 2 lakh p.a. |
| R21        | 40  | Trip curator        | GEN           | MPhil            | 5 to 20 lakh p.a.  |

**TABLE 4- Group 4 (41-60)**

| RESPONDENT | AGE | OCCUPATION      | CASTE | EDUCATION              | INCOME             |
|------------|-----|-----------------|-------|------------------------|--------------------|
| R22        | 47  | Doctor          | GEN   | PG                     | Above 20 lakh p.a. |
| R23        | 42  | Housekeeping    | SC    | 3 <sup>rd</sup> class  | 50k to 2 lakh p.a. |
| R24        | 52  | Lecturer        | GEN   | PhD                    | 2 to 5 lakh p.a.   |
| R25        | 47  | Canteen manager | SC    | UG                     | 2 to 5 lakh p.a.   |
| R26        | 49  | Teacher         | GEN   | PG                     | 5 to 20 lakh p.a.  |
| R27        | 54  | Teacher         | GEN   | PG                     | Above 20 lakh p.a. |
| R28        | 52  | Salon worker    | OBC   | 12 <sup>TH</sup> class | 50k to 2 lakh p.a. |

**TABLE 6- Codebook (Atlas.ti)**

| Name  | Description  |
|---|--|
| Eve teasing                                       | Eve teasing is an Indian English euphemism, used to refer to gender-based public sexual harassment.  |
| 1. Types of eve teasing behaviours (based on ETQ) | <p>Different types of behaviors/acts that characterize eve teasing:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Catcalling/Verbal harassment- The act of shouting harassing and often sexually suggestive, threatening, or derisive comments at someone publicly, or singing sexually suggestive songs in public.</li> <li>2) Touching or Groping- Connotes unwelcome sexual touching, pinching, pushing or brushing by.</li> <li>3) Inappropriate gestures- May include honking, winking, vulgar gestures, whistling, flashing, etc.</li> <li>4) Stalking/following- A pattern of unwanted behavior that</li> </ol> |

| Name  | Description   |
|---|---|
|   | <p>involves monitoring, harassing, repeatedly contacting or following another person.</p> <p>5) Leering/Staring- To look fixedly and incessantly at someone in an unpleasant way, often making them feel uncomfortable.</p>   |
| <p>2. Personal Response</p>                                     | <p>The victim’s reaction to eve teasing experience:</p> <p>1) Active response- may include confronting the harasser, reporting to the authorities, asking for help, hitting back, etc.</p> <p>2) Passive Response- such as ignoring, or tendency to perceive incidents of harassment as benign.</p> |
| <p>3. Self-protection strategies</p>                            | <p>Refers to purposeful action taken by an individual to achieve a goal under conditions of uncertainty. Here, production of safety by taking p</p>   |
| <p>a. Male companion</p>  | <p>Increased dependency on male family members/friends for accompanying a woman to a public space.</p>  |
| <p>b. Modifying behaviour/<br/>dressing</p>                     | <p>Altering ones’ dressing style, changing one’s behavior in public, hiding one’s body to draw less attention to oneself, pretending to be busy on phone, etc.</p>  |
| <p>c. Timing</p>  | <p>Modulating time: For instance, avoid going out to a specific place at a specific time.</p>   |
| <p>d. Avoidance</p>   | <p>Keeping away from certain places, avoid accessing places where instances of Eve teasing have occurred or might occur.</p>  |
| <p>e. Changing route</p>  | <p>Switching one’s route if driving a vehicle in order to evade harassers/stalkers.</p>   |
| <p>f. Keeping someone<br/>informed and other<br/>strategies</p> | <p>Sharing live location, calling someone before leaving or after reaching a certain place, carrying pepper spray or other tools for defense, preferring to travel in a group or pairs, etc.</p>  |

| Name  | Description   |
|---|---|
| 4. Perceived Causes                         | Perceived causes of Eve teasing   |
| a. Executive, legislative & Infrastructural | Problems with executive forces like the police as well as legislative and infrastructural issues such as poor implementation of policies, lack of ample lighting on streets, etc. |
| b. Lack of sex education                    | Lack of sex education/improper sex education or awareness   |
| c. Socio-cultural                           | Causes that are related to the Indian society at large, patriarchy, problematic gender roles, etc.  |
| d. Media and internet                       | The role of social media and easy availability of pornography on internet   |
| e. Other causes                             | Peer pressure, inflow of migrants, drugs and alcohol abuse, male ego.   |
| 5. Effects of eve teasing                   |   |
| a. Fear                                     | An unpleasant emotion caused by the threat of danger, pain, or harm.  |
| b. Perception of men/society                | Development of negative perception of men or society in general post the incident of harassment   |
| c. Restricted mobility                      | Hampered mobility due to eve teasing which leads to not being able to access public spaces safely and freely.   |
| 6. Victim blaming                           | When the victim of a crime or any wrongful act such as harassment is held entirely or partially at fault for the harm that befell them.   |

Six major themes were identified through analyses of the 28 interviews associated with eve teasing and women's access to public spaces: (a) types of eve teasing; (b) personal reaction to eve teasing; (c) perceived causes of eve teasing; (d) self-protection strategies; (e) effects of eve teasing; (f) Victim blaming. The codebook generated from Atlas.ti, depicting all the themes and subthemes is illustrated in Table 3.

## 5.2 Theme 1- Types of Eve teasing

Types of eve teasing are categorised into 5 subthemes including verbal harassment in the form of catcalls, insulting or threatening comments, and sexually suggestive songs; groping, unwelcome touch, pinching, pushing or brushing by; inappropriate gestures such as winking, honking, flashing, and whistling; stalking; and leering.

**Table 7- Types of Eve teasing (Column-relative frequency)**

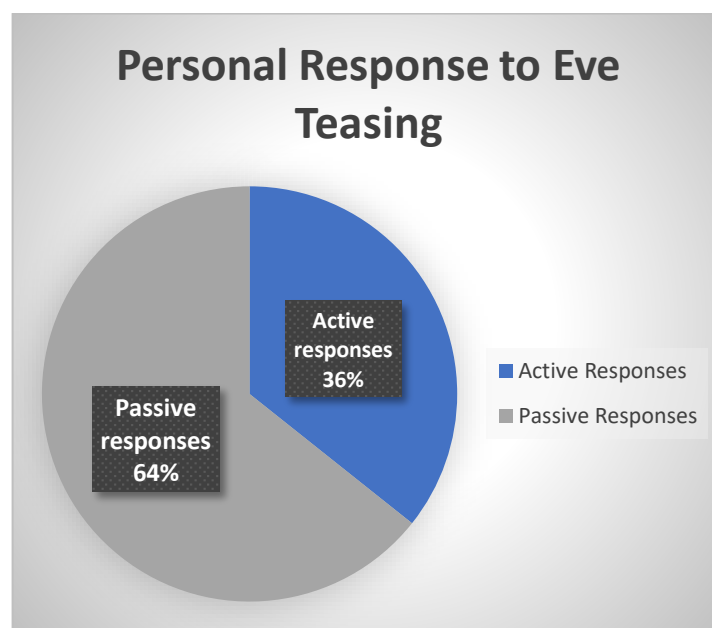
|                           | G 1 (18-25)          | G 2 (25-32)          | G 3 (33-40)          | G 4 (40-60)          | Totals                |
|---------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| ◇ catcalling/singing      | 9<br>24.32%          | 6<br>20.00%          | 10<br>24.39%         | 4<br>16.67%          | 29<br>21.97%          |
| ◇ leering                 | 7<br>18.92%          | 5<br>16.67%          | 12<br>29.27%         | 6<br>25.00%          | 30<br>22.73%          |
| ◇ stalking/following      | 10<br>27.03%         | 11<br>36.67%         | 9<br>21.95%          | 5<br>20.83%          | 35<br>26.52%          |
| ◇ touching/groping        | 2<br>5.41%           | 3<br>10.00%          | 3<br>7.32%           | 5<br>20.83%          | 13<br>9.85%           |
| ◇ vulgar/inappropriate... | 9<br>24.32%          | 5<br>16.67%          | 7<br>17.07%          | 4<br>16.67%          | 25<br>18.94%          |
| <b>Totals</b>             | <b>37</b><br>100.00% | <b>30</b><br>100.00% | <b>41</b><br>100.00% | <b>24</b><br>100.00% | <b>132</b><br>100.00% |

The table presented above indicates that leering and stalking/following are the two most commonly occurring types of harassment in Patiala, with a relative frequency of 22.73% and 26.52% respectively, signifying that out of all the different forms of eve teasing, leering and stalking comprise of nearly half of the incidents (49.25%). Verbal harassment such as catcalls or insulting comments, and harassment involving vulgar/inappropriate gestures comprise of 21.97% and 18.94% (resp.) of eve teasing incidents.

Whereas, incidents involving touching/groping comprise of only 9.85% of the total eve teasing incidents, making it the least prevalent. It is also indicated that stalking is the most common type of eve teasing experienced by women between the ages 18 and 32 (both group 1 and 2). The figures also demonstrate that incidents involving stalking tend to decrease with age, although they are still prevalent to some extent.

**Theme 2- Personal response/reaction to eve teasing**

This theme is divided into 2 subthemes: active response and passive response. Active responses may include confronting the harasser, reporting or complaining to the authorities/police, hitting back, or asking someone for help. Passive response may include ignoring, quietly removing oneself from the situation such as leaving the place where eve teasing is occurring, or perceiving incidents of harassment as benign.



**Figure 1: Pie chart demonstrating personal response to eve teasing**

When eve teasing occurs, the most common immediate reaction is to ignore such advances. 65% of the respondents (n=18) noted that they ignore eve teasing incidents, even though such experiences bother them and make them feel uncomfortable. Otherwise, the possibility of retaliation depends on a number of factors; whether they are alone or with a group, the time of the day, the place of occurrence, the presence of others known to them, and the magnitude of the incident. To choose an expressively active response at the instant, requires that a woman define what retaliatory action to take (such as reporting to the police, confronting the harasser)

as well as what implications that reaction will have or what the likely consequences will be (such as fearing the harasser might cause more harm or fear of 'making a scene' in public).

The rest 36% of the respondents (n=10) interviewed adopt active responses such as reporting to the police, confronting the harasser, hitting back, reprimanding the harasser, or asking someone for help. Interestingly, seven out of these ten respondents who choose active responses all belong to low income strata with income between Rs 20,000 to Rs 2 lakh p.a.) and belong to marginalised communities (Scheduled castes and Other backward castes).

Illustrative quotes:

*'I understand it is different to look at somebody in the passing but there are people who actually check you out. They make you uncomfortable. So that is something I feel has become so persistent, it does bother me but somehow, I'm like, at the back of my mind I know I have to ignore it but it does not make me feel comfortable, I don't really like it.'* R7

*'So if I am in a public space here, if someone is eve teasing or so, then onlookers will first make videos and react later. So it's better that you speak out only when necessary.'* R 10

*'But I have never reacted. It's not out of fear, it's just that I don't want to. I feel it's better to ignore. That ok let them do what they are doing. Let it be.'* R11

*'As far as the comment passing thing is gone it's most mostly no reaction I tend to ignore it, I don't I don't answer back I don't say anything I don't think I've ever done that, never answered back, never said anything never complaint, never even looked back to see who has said it. I just keep walking as if nothing had happened. I know it sounds it sounds like this would also encourage them but this is what I don't know this is what is normalised that you're not supposed to say anything or do anything just keep walking as if nothing's happened.'* R19

*'At that moment when I found the chits, I got to know that he is the one who left the chits there, I didn't say anything to him on the bus stand, I ignored it, totally.'* R24

*"Whenever somebody teases me like that in public or bothers me by following or commenting, I right away react and ask them what's your problem?"* R 4

*"if someone comments on the way when I'm out and walking, if someone comments on me, then I never ignore it. I don't know if he (eve teaser) will kill me or if I'll kill him, but if I get hold of the guy, I know I won't leave him. People sometimes say to me that an eve teaser could harm me more if I retaliate and then what will I do. I say I don't care but I won't tolerate this. If I get hold of the guy, I'm going to beat him."* R 12

*"It has happened that sometimes eve teasers are on a vehicle like car or bike. But I right away fetch a brick. If not that, then I use my phone's camera to click the eve teaser's photo and say that I'm going to give it to the police and report. Even if you don't do it, still it might instil fear in the person that this girl might do something if she has a photo. If we ignore it then they'll keep following us. That's why I never ignore."* R 12

*"...I go and confront the guy directly. My lord gives me a lot of strength at that time, I might beat the person or kill him, I don't care if I get punished for it or hanged for it or whatever but I am always ready to defend myself."* R 17

*"I felt that I should right away scold this person because I need to take that route every day. Rather than tolerating it every day and getting scared thinking of something worse, I feel it's better to get it over with the first time instead of waiting and thinking that the person might stop on his own."* R 28

Research conducted on women's responses to sexual harassment indicates that most women who experience it are expected to fall back on passive or unassertive coping mechanisms. Gruber's (1989) review of literature highlights that only 20% of women who have faced sexual harassment employ assertive or functional coping strategies. Using factor analysis, Magley (2002) conducted a study to identify how women cope with sexual harassment. Four clusters of coping behaviors surfaced, including behavioral engagement, behavioral disengagement, cognitive engagement, and cognitive disengagement. It was found that women usually respond to sexual harassment by actively choosing to ignore it.

Mitra-Sarkar and Partheeban (2011) found only 12% of women surveyed by them admitted to confronting the harassers. Another study by Fitzgerald (1990) found that there are very few chances of women coping with harassment by reporting it or confronting the perpetrator, but they are most likely to engage in self-blame or perceive the specific incident of harassment as amiable or directed as a compliment. Similar results were reported by Lenton et al. (1999) as the study found out that most women resorted to passive reaction in response to public harassment, with only 10% attempting to report the harassment to the police. Self-regulation or behavioral changes were more frequent than reporting the incidents.

### ***Theme 3- Perceived causes***

On being asked why they felt eve teasing was omnipresent, the respondents offered several causes. The participants connected the occurrence of eve teasing to lack of sex education, executive, legislative and infrastructural problems such as poor implementation of existing laws, lack of ample lighting on the streets, and larger socio-cultural issues such as gender discrimination, the existence patriarchal culture, sexual desperation due to limited permissible interactions with the opposite sex, the role of social media and internet, while acknowledging that all these causes are completely external to them and that eve teasing has nothing to do with

the characteristics of the victim. Over exposure to social media and pornographic content, drug and alcohol abuse, and peer pressure were also highlighted as potential causes.

**Table 8- Causes of Eve teasing (Column-relative frequency)**

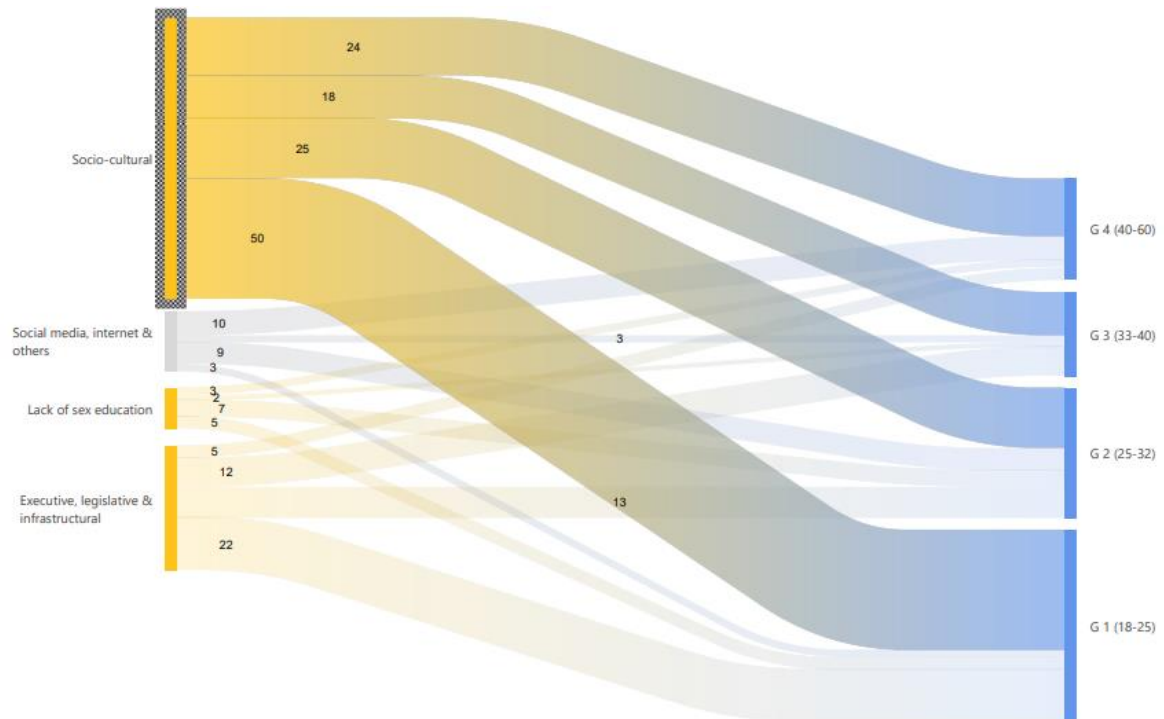
|                               | G 1 (18-25)   | G 2 (25-32)   | G 3 (33-40)   | G 4 (40-60)   | Totals         |
|-------------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|
| ● ◇ Executive, legislative... | 22<br>27.50%  | 13<br>24.07%  | 12<br>34.29%  | 5<br>11.90%   | 52<br>24.64%   |
| ● ◇ Lack of sex education     | 5<br>6.25%    | 7<br>12.96%   | 2<br>5.71%    | 3<br>7.14%    | 17<br>8.06%    |
| ◇ Social media, interne...    | 3<br>3.75%    | 9<br>16.67%   | 3<br>8.57%    | 10<br>23.81%  | 25<br>11.85%   |
| ● ◇ Socio-cultural            | 50<br>62.50%  | 25<br>46.30%  | 18<br>51.43%  | 24<br>57.14%  | 117<br>55.45%  |
| <b>Totals</b>                 | 80<br>100.00% | 54<br>100.00% | 35<br>100.00% | 42<br>100.00% | 211<br>100.00% |

The figures demonstrate that socio-cultural factors are considered to be one of the biggest causes of eve teasing with a relative frequency of 55.45%. Followed by executive, legislative, and infrastructural causes at 24.64%; social media, internet, & other causes at 11.85%; and lack of sex education at 8.06%.

**Table 9- Causes of Eve teasing (Row-relative frequency)**

|                               | G 1 (18-25) |        | G 2 (25-32) |        | G 3 (33-40) |        | G 4 (40-60) |        | Totals |         |
|-------------------------------|-------------|--------|-------------|--------|-------------|--------|-------------|--------|--------|---------|
| ● ◇ Executive, legislative... | 22          | 42.31% | 13          | 25.00% | 12          | 23.08% | 5           | 9.62%  | 52     | 100.00% |
| ● ◇ Lack of sex education     | 5           | 29.41% | 7           | 41.18% | 2           | 11.76% | 3           | 17.65% | 17     | 100.00% |
| ◇ Social media, interne...    | 3           | 12.00% | 9           | 36.00% | 3           | 12.00% | 10          | 40.00% | 25     | 100.00% |
| ● ◇ Socio-cultural            | 50          | 42.74% | 25          | 21.37% | 18          | 15.38% | 24          | 20.51% | 117    | 100.00% |
| <b>Totals</b>                 | 80          | 37.91% | 54          | 25.59% | 35          | 16.59% | 42          | 19.91% | 211    | 100.00% |

The second table illustrates row-relative frequency for causes, indicating that Group 1 (18-25) has highlighted the role of socio-cultural and executive, legislative, and infrastructural causes comparatively more than other groups. Whereas, the role of social media and internet has been covered the most by Group 4.



**Figure 2- Sankey Diagram demonstrating the weightage of socio-cultural causes**

***Lack of sex education***

Three respondents stated that one of the causes of eve teasing is lack of sex education. The interviews revealed that systemic changes need to be undertaken by educational institutions to generate proper awareness about sex, sexual harassment, and the role of consent. The minimal information about sex and sexual practices that is available to the public is also questionable and requires modifications. It was identified that sex education is not only required to curb eve teasing and other forms of sexual harassment, but also to help victims identify what constitutes as inappropriate behaviour and eve teasing.

*“It’s another problem in our country, we don’t have such education so we don’t even know what’s good or bad, we learn like this. Hit and trial...So, none of us knew, now when I look back I’m actually not very happy to think that okay something has happened but the worse thing is you don’t know what’s happening and what to do. And since we don’t know, we don’t*

*know what to do next. So, forget reporting and all, first we need to know, comprehend the event.” R15*

According to a research report released by ActionAid, an NGO in 2016, more than 4 in 10 women (41%) in India face harassment or violence before the age of 19. It also revealed that around 6% women in India experience harassment before the age of 10 (Dhawan, 2016). When it comes to sex education in India, teenage pregnancy and HIV/AIDS infection are stressed upon, signifying that there is severe lack of awareness regarding menstruation and safe sex practices. Despite the current growing awareness around child sexual abuse, there are still very little attempts taken by schools to include the understanding of distinguishing between the non-sexual and sexual touch (Chowdhury, 2020).

Countless studies conducted in the West have depicted how inclusion of sex education in schools and colleges results in healthier sexual practices and lower rates of sexual harassment. Goldfarb and Lieberman proposed to study the role of school-based sex education in promoting sexual health and well-being of young people and conducted a systematic literature review of three decades of research on school-based sex education curriculum to unearth evidence for the benefits of providing comprehensive sex education. They found out that introduction of comprehensive sex education in elementary school leads to the development of positive and inclusive understanding of human sexuality, reduction in intimate partner abuse, prevention of sexual abuse, and increased media literacy. (Goldfarb & Lieberman, 2021).

### ***Social media, Internet exposure, & Other causes***

Over exposure to social media, unregulated pornographic content on the internet, media coverage of sexual assault, peer pressure, and drugs & alcohol abuse were covered under this section. Participants highlighted social media and pornography play a significant role in fetishizing certain bodies. Such unrestricted exposure at a young age might motivate

adolescents and youngsters to imitate actions performed by people on the internet. As respondent 12 stated;

*'I also feel these days the media and pop songs are at fault. Just look at what kind of filthy songs are out these days. They don't understand the actors are acting and they do things onscreen like eve teasing and all the youngsters start copying them without considering the consequences.'* R 12

*'This generation is too exposed to such content and so involved in social media. Like the songs they hear, they show such incidents and many others in those videos in a very funny way. So young boys begin thinking that it's funny in real life too. They might watch a movie and think a girl might be enjoying stalking or this unsolicited attention, but in reality, people don't. I don't think they even realize that all this is wrong. Especially school boys of 14-15, they get exposed to such content at this age and then before they even enroll in college, they start eve teasing.'* R 9

*'The way they show things in porn, like they don't show love and they are all treated as objects in porn and mechanically doing things. You don't see women being treated respectfully there. And porn is so easily accessible these days that you can type anytime and there are plenty of options, google whatever.'* R 11

In an extensive literature review conducted by Upton et al. (2020), a strong association was found between pornography consumption and harmful sexual attitudes and violence towards women. The relationship determined specifically holds true for the consumption of aggressive or violent pornographic content.

Hald et al. (2010) conducted a series of nonexperimental studies which found significant association between pornography consumption and attitudes supporting violence against women. Wright & Tokunaga (2015) found strong associations between pornography

consumption and increased probability of engaging in verbal as well as physical acts of sexual aggression. The correlation discovered was relatively more significant for verbal rather than physical aggression.

### ***Executive, Legislative & Infrastructural causes***

All the participants recounted problems with infrastructure and executive and legislative forces. Lack of proper implementation of relevant legislations and adequate infrastructural facilities are considered as one of the many causes of eve teasing. When it comes to the police, three of the participants stated that apart from being judgmental and insensitive, cops are also some of the biggest eve teasers. Thus, to them, increasing surveillance and security seems futile as

*“Even if you go to report such cases, you’re made to face more harassment in the police station, sometimes even more than the incident that you’re there to report.” R1*

It was recognized that comparatively, there’s been improvement with regards to the provisions available and legal consequences of eve teasing. However, it was highlighted that there are issues with implementation and access. Another problem which was brought up under these causes was that in public spaces such incidents occur more frequently because of a certain level of anonymity which protects the perpetrators. Hence, when it comes to reporting eve teasing incidents, there’s a major gap because most of the times *“you’re not able to get a good look at the perpetrator” R1* and even if the perpetrator gets identified, how will the victim produce any evidence? In such cases, there’s no time to take immediate action.

The research by MacMillan et al. (2000) explains why literature available on other types of harassment such as in the workplace, domestic sphere, or academic institutions is not as applicable to street harassment. There is a marked difference in women’s perception of stranger harassment and non-stranger harassment. Street or public harassment is perpetrated by

strangers and in this case the victim may have little assistance available. For example; there are policies against sexual harassment framed to safeguard women at work or colleges, whereas, regarding public harassment there are few policies in place and they may be hard to implement (MacMillan et al., 2000). For instance, even if a woman reports to the police after facing public harassment, the perpetrator may be long gone from the scene by the time a woman returns with some help (Lord, 2009). Furthermore, Lenton et al. (1999) observed that police do not usually respond to complaints of street harassment.

Bowman (1993) and Nielsen (2000) highlighted the legal aspect concerning stranger harassment, suggesting that research on the same may be lacking because there is limited or no legal provisions available, hence, it becomes nearly impossible to punish a stranger who escapes in a flash for public harassment, and it is probable not many people support laws restricting the freedom of speech in public spaces.

In their book *Why Loiter*, Phadke et al. (2011) state that access to public spaces is dependent on the availability of actual material facilities, which make it possible to use those spaces. Hence, it is not just the attitude towards women in public which thwarts women's access to public spaces, but also the availability or lack of public space including infrastructure and design of the concerned city. Usually, public spaces and infrastructure are designed for a 'generic user' and this prototype user who avails these facilities is always imagined to be a middle or upper class, upper caste, able-bodied, heterosexual male. Thus, women and other marginalized citizens have to learn to negotiate dark streets, dingy parks, and inadequate public toilets (p. 94).

A study conducted by The Asia Foundation in partnership with Safetipin and the Centre for Social Research (CSR), on "Making Cities Safe for Women in India", highlighted how specific infrastructural issues such as absence of streetlights, poor or no lighting at transport stops, poor

infrastructure at stops, unavailability of adequate space, obstructions on footpaths, non-availability of public conveniences like public toilets, drinking water facilities, etc. have an impact on women's feeling of safety. The report emphasized how these issues impact the everyday mobility of women as well as generate fear of harassment from strangers (Mandal, 2019).

In the book, *Delhi a Role Model of Urban India - Part I*, Agrawal (2016) provided in-depth information on different aspects of urban development, focusing on different issues like education, health, transport, crimes against women, civic infrastructure, etc, stating that lack of proper and functional infrastructure such as streetlights, public transport, toilets, and lack of police presence on roads as one of the reasons for increasing crimes against women such as eve teasing and harassment (Agrawal, 2016).

Dhillon and Bakaya (2014) in their qualitative study on street harassment in Delhi received similar responses as their participants believed there is general apathy towards women's concerns about street harassment, which was seen to extend from politicians to the police. One of the perceived causes of street harassment included poorly implemented laws and lack of awareness about the laws. Some of their respondents reported that they had been stared at and whistled at by police personnel.

According to Ilahi (2009), street harassment may be ignored by authorities to some extent because women do not usually report cases of public harassment to the police. This may happen for two reasons. One reason is the difficulty involved in identifying the harasser when it comes to harassment in public spaces. The other reason may be the sense of mistrust women have toward the police or state machinery.

Perceptions of the police as apathetic seem widespread. Mitra-Sarkar and Partheeban (2011) found that 11% of the women surveyed by them reported incidents of harassment to the police and only a handful of women found them helpful. Moreover Baxi (n.d.) asserts that assault reports are open to interpretation by the police. Hence, what women think about the attitudes of law-enforcing agencies has acute ramifications for how they address incidents of harassment. When women believe the state machinery to be either unwilling or unable to address their problems, as expressed here, it usually functions to silence women around the issue.

### ***Socio-cultural causes***

A number of socio-cultural issues were identified as a possible cause of eve teasing. All the participants interviewed for the study saw the patriarchal culture within Patiala as perpetuating harassment. Participants felt that issues that stem from living in a patriarchal setup such as the objectification of women, strict adherence to gender norms at homes as well as schools, women's subjugated position in the society, everyday sexism, masculine honour ideology, faulty parenting, policing of women's clothing and bodies, etc. contribute to eve teasing and female victimization. Three of the respondents stated that the role of parenting and socialization needs to be considered when reviewing eve teasing. As respondent 19 stated

*"I have seen parents who inculcate no sense of respect for women in their sons and in fact this kind of 'teasing' is even encouraged and even appreciated sometimes like 'oh good' you did that nice. Or 'oh you've become a man now'."*R19

Instead, women and girls are told to be 'careful' and ignore eve teasing when it occurs, whereas, young boys grow up believing that they are entitled to women. Women are taught from the beginning to suppress their actions and expressions in public spaces and occupy as little space

as possible when out of their homes. They are appreciated when they adhere to specific roles assigned to their gender and follow the 'rules' of the society they inhabit, which no matter how arbitrary, are supposedly meant for their own 'safety'. Such attitudes and this kind of cultural setup reinforces eve teasing behaviours and the general public's apathetic attitude towards it, which in turn, prove harmful to women and girls. The role of women in normalising eve teasing was also highlighted, respondent 22 stated that

*"We always say it's fine only, it used to happen when we were young, now also it's happening, it will keep happening, they are perverts only." R22*

Then the main issue is not just eve teasing, but also how women are taught to deal with them. Another related socio-cultural cause that is identified includes the masculine honour ideology which, in this case pertains to aggressive actions undertaken by male members of the family to protect the 'honour' of women related to them. In South Asia, this form of aggression and violent behaviour is justified and treated as a necessary response to incidents like eve teasing which are perceived as threats or insult to a man's 'family honour'. This kind of response or approach to addressing a problem, rather than helping women in any way, hinders them from opening up to their families about eve teasing or assault.

*"I know about the male members of my family... I'm familiar with their aggression. Like I know if by chance I spill that something like this happened with me, and if they get to know who did it by chance, then I can imagine the consequences and how they'll react. So there's no point regretting later, I mean things could go really bad I know them. They could get extremely violent or so because of 'honor'." R1*

Participants also felt that the probability of getting eve teased increases if a woman is dressed up in western attire as compared to traditional attire. The participants reported that they

personally never judge women based on their attire or how they choose to appear in public or endorse such ideas. However, they believed that this form of policing is prevalent in their society and that men as well as women engage in it.

*“If you’re wearing like skinny jeans or something you will attract attention. More than when you’re wearing a suit. Even if I’m wearing a saree here, I will attract attention but that’s like with respect. But western clothing attracts attention the wrong way.” R15*

The relationship between eve teasing and a woman’s attire is highlighted by Phadke et al. (2011) who state that dress codes that outline what women can and cannot wear are examples of “explicitly articulated regulatory codes of behaviour” (p. 60). When women face eve teasing, the discourse is ultimately formulated on the lines of prevention and their attire is scrutinised. Most of the times, women are banned from wearing certain kinds of clothes such as skirts or shorts, although it is a well-established fact that adhering to strict dress codes does not offer security as women who wear salwar-kameez or burqas too face harassment. But the choice of attire does influence the public perception of the woman who’s been harassed (Phadke et al., 2011).

Participants in the current study also noted that taboos around sex and limited opportunities to interact with the opposite sex in a healthy setting contribute to eve teasing. These factors lead to sexual frustration which often gets unrecognized in societies where sex is a forbidden topic. People who eve tease might be looking for sexual favours and through their objectionable actions such as staring or following, might try to wrongfully assess if a woman is ‘available’.

*“I think if this is a Patiala specific question, then one of the causes is desperation. You see how people are so restricted to do anything, literally anything. Even at Mocha, I’ve been there a*

*couple of times, I've not seen a lot of mixed group people, either they are all boys or girls, or if they are mixed they are related." R15*

The women interviewed by Dhillon and Bakaya (2014) revealed the patriarchal culture thriving within Delhi as maintaining harassment. Also underlining sexual frustration as one of the causes because in our society sex is treated as a forbidden subject.

Phadke et al. (2011) assert that concerns regarding safety of women in public are actually about ensuring 'sexual safety' as described by patriarchal society as well as the government, and not safety from other kinds of crime such as murder or accident. The discourse on women's sexual safety is not based on consent or their personal sense of bodily autonomy, but rather connected to ideas embodying 'honour' of the family and the community they inhabit (p. 77). When honour or izzat is valued more than women's safety in public spaces, then safeguarding women's respectability supersedes the value placed on their actual safety. Consequently, the demand for women's safety is expressed in terms of surveillance, policing, and protection, which results in restricting their mobility instead of expanding their access to public spaces.

Similarly, Gardner (1995) found that marginalised social groups including women, members of the LGBTQI+ community, individuals belonging to racial or religious minorities, and people with disabilities are most likely to be the target of harassment in public spaces, indicating that public harassment is rooted in socio-structural problems. Ussher (1997) underlined the role of sociocultural myths in perpetuating harassment (such as 'men will be men'), stating that these myths are promoted by the state, including laws related to public harassment.

According to Deegan (1987) women put extensive amounts of effort to present themselves as 'good women' to ensure that their claims to access public spaces are not denied. This Madonna vs Whore dichotomy limits women's mobility and supports patriarchal control over public

spaces. Women who confront their harassers often note that men continue to escalate the harassment in order to mark their control over the public domain (Garner, 1980).

**Theme 4- Self-protection Strategies**

This theme further explores how women try to avoid eve teasing by moderating how they navigate public spaces, shedding light on the different types of self-protection strategies adopted by them and what it indicates about women’s situation in society in general.

Self-protection strategies comprise measures adopted prior to appearing in public spaces as well as measures taken by them on the instant, when eve teasing occurs such as deciding to be accompanied by a male when going out in public, refraining from accessing public spaces at a certain hour, modifying their attire when stepping out of the house, maintaining a strict expression in public to show their disinterest, changing one’s route, sharing live location, etc. Self-protection strategies are divided into 6 categories and the tabular data is represented below.

**Table 10- Self-protection Strategies (Column-relative frequency)**

|                                       | G 1 (18-25)   | G 2 (25-32)   | G 3 (33-40)   | G 4 (40-60)   | Totals        |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| ◇ Change route                        | 2<br>11.11%   | 3<br>13.04%   | 2<br>9.09%    | 4<br>18.18%   | 11<br>12.94%  |
| ◇ Keeping someone informed and others | 1<br>5.56%    | 6<br>26.09%   | 3<br>13.64%   | 5<br>22.73%   | 15<br>17.65%  |
| ●◇ Male companion                     | 3<br>16.67%   | 2<br>8.70%    | 6<br>27.27%   | 3<br>13.64%   | 14<br>16.47%  |
| ●◇ Modifying behaviour/attire         | 11<br>61.11%  | 10<br>43.48%  | 8<br>36.36%   | 6<br>27.27%   | 35<br>41.18%  |
| ●◇ Timing                             | 1<br>5.56%    | 2<br>8.70%    | 3<br>13.64%   | 4<br>18.18%   | 10<br>11.76%  |
| <b>Totals</b>                         | 18<br>100.00% | 23<br>100.00% | 22<br>100.00% | 22<br>100.00% | 85<br>100.00% |

The figures illustrate that modifying behaviour/attire at 41.18% is a strategy that all age groups resort to the most. Followed by keeping someone informed & other strategies at 17.65% and male companion at 16.47%.

**Table 11- Self-protection Strategies (Row-relative frequency)**

|                                       | G 1 (18-25) |               | G 2 (25-32) |               | G 3 (33-40) |               | G 4 (40-60) |               | Totals    |                |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|-----------|----------------|
| ◇ Change route                        | 2           | 18.18%        | 3           | 27.27%        | 2           | 18.18%        | 4           | 36.36%        | 11        | 100.00%        |
| ◇ Keeping someone informed and others | 1           | 6.67%         | 6           | 40.00%        | 3           | 20.00%        | 5           | 33.33%        | 15        | 100.00%        |
| ● ◇ Male companion                    | 3           | 21.43%        | 2           | 14.29%        | 6           | 42.86%        | 3           | 21.43%        | 14        | 100.00%        |
| ● ◇ Modifying behaviour/attire        | 11          | 31.43%        | 10          | 28.57%        | 8           | 22.86%        | 6           | 17.14%        | 35        | 100.00%        |
| ● ◇ Timing                            | 1           | 10.00%        | 2           | 20.00%        | 3           | 30.00%        | 4           | 40.00%        | 10        | 100.00%        |
| <b>Totals</b>                         | <b>18</b>   | <b>21.18%</b> | <b>23</b>   | <b>27.06%</b> | <b>22</b>   | <b>25.88%</b> | <b>22</b>   | <b>25.88%</b> | <b>85</b> | <b>100.00%</b> |

The above table demonstrates that compared to all groups, participants falling within group 1 (18-25) adopt the strategy of modifying behaviour/attire more than others at 31.43%. It is also indicated that the aforementioned strategy is adopted less with age.

**Timing**

One of the first strategies identified includes modulating time when accessing public spaces whenever possible. Three respondents reported that there are certain public places in the city which they need to access on their own on a regular basis or moderately to accomplish some task, a chore, or for recreational purposes. Due to their familiarity with that public space and repeated exposure to eve teasing in that area, they strategize by assessing what time of the day would be the safest for them to access that place alone and step out accordingly. If a certain public space is appraised as unsafe for solitary visits, they choose not to access that place without a companion. Respondent 2 narrated:

*“One of the strategies is timing. You know you try to access public spaces as at time when know it's going to be fairly safe. If I have to go to the ATM or for some other task on YPS road, I would try not to go at the 12.30 time that I would either try going before 12 or after 1. So one is modulating the time.” R2*

**Male companion**

Another self-protection strategy adopted by three of the respondents includes having a male companion by their side, especially when they need to access public spaces which they consider unsafe and when it's dark. This leads to increased dependency on men when it comes to accessing public spaces. Respondent 3 stated that

*"...it is dark and you've seen this environmental park, I like that park, it's a nice walk. But I'll never go there alone, I always ask a male colleague, so we both of us go."* R3

**Modifying behavior and other strategies**

Some of the other strategies listed by the participants include trying not to grab attention by pretending to be busy on the phone, making a *"conscious effort to not laugh or smile because all of that can be misunderstood as encouragement"* R2, changing the way they dress or act in public to avoid unwanted and uncomfortable advances, choosing to take different route while driving, etc. These strategies are intended to deal with mistreatment and can be analysed as ways by which women attempt to manage the abuse they know or suspect they might receive. As respondent 2 narrated

*"We just feel that may be, may be that person by chance if you show disinterest may be that person will back off. That's the only probability that is there in the mind based on which you react how you react."* R2

**Changing route**

This strategy involves changing one's route while accessing certain places or commuting from one place to the other, be it on a vehicle or by foot. Participants reported switching their routes

regularly in order to escape stalkers or avoid men who might keep a note of their everyday route and harass them while commuting from one place to another.

*'I change the route if I suspect anyone if following me, or I speed up' R 5*

*'I do change my route regularly, because there are many ways to reach my place...I don't keep one route because sometimes there are people who follow' R 13*

*'When it comes to strategies I'll say I usually change my route, I change the street I'm walking in.' R 4*

### ***Keeping someone informed & Other Strategies***

One of the common strategies reported by the participants includes keeping someone close to them informed about their whereabouts by sharing live location, or making calls before leaving or after reaching a certain place, and keeping phone on speed dial. A few other listed strategies involved making sure the car's doors and windows are locked at all times, moving in groups or pairs, sharing a cab's number with parents or friends, keeping pepper spray or a tool which can be used as a weapon.

*'I send my live location to either of my friends who's not coming with us. The one who is in PG knows it, so she's tracking and even my mom. I drop her a call that I'm here and also used to inform my guardian. Just to like give them an upper hand if something happens they can come.'*

*R 6*

*'Make sure your phone is charged all the time. Make sure even if you're in your car and somebody is following you, you lock your car. Like central locking, keep your windows up. These are the few things; these are instinct based. They won't guarantee safety. Till the time*

*you haven't had a first-time experience, you don't think of these strategies. It just prepares you from then on.'* R 21

The rationale behind adopting such strategies is to make efforts on their part to avoid similar incidents in the future, because if eve teasing has happened once, it could happen again. Women's previous experiences guide their present behaviours. For instance, by choosing to stick to a specific attire while exploring an open market space or a park, to avoid instigating any such incident by-mistake, while being completely aware that those who do eve tease, do it irrespective of the age of the woman or what she's wearing. Women hope their attire would send a message to the onlookers that they are accessing this space for a particular reason and are not interested in their advances. This need to strategize and modify one's own behaviour or the way one expresses oneself in the public stems from some form of critical self-inspection. They strategize thinking that it might protect them from future harm or minimize mistreatment which underlines another phenomenon that women consider themselves to be responsible for their own safety.

A number of studies offer accounts of how women modify their own behavior in public to reduce the risk of being publicly harassed. Women avoid stepping out alone after dark, choose not to go out without companions, or walk only within specific areas which they feel are comparatively safer (Deegan, 1987; Stanko, 1990).

Guano (2007) investigated the discussion and practices surrounding gender roles and access to public spaces, asserting that women modify their public behaviors to avoid drawing attention from men. By using such strategies to counter their exclusion from the public domain, women ultimately end up reproducing the same restrictions that reduce their claim to public spaces.

Phadke et al. (2011) in their study of Mumbai women recounted that even privilege doesn't ensure women safety and they are forced to strategize, consciously or unconsciously, to manoeuvre through public spaces safely. Similar to Guano's view, these strategies do help to expand women's access to public space, but their access remains restricted because by adhering to follow normative gender rules (for e.g., changing one's dressing while going out), women end up reinforcing the same gender norms and discriminatory structures that act as a barrier to their access in the first place. Hence, safety for women is not determined alone by institutional factors, but has to be consistently manufactured by women themselves on a daily basis (Phadke, 2010).

Ilahi, (2009) in her analysis of street harassment in Cairo, illustrated that women modify their movements and daily actions, many of her respondents reported that they made conscious alterations in their form of dress and movement, such as wearing scarves to cover their torso, or avoiding eye contact with strangers or specifically men considered to be potential threats. All these behaviours can be decoded as strategies women adopt in order to escape harassment and negotiate personal safety by managing aspects of personal space.

Dhillon and Bakaya (2014) conducted a qualitative study on street harassment in Delhi and reported that women considered staying safe to be there be their responsibility. A number of strategies were listed by participants which were aimed at keeping unwanted attention away from them. Some of the strategies included marking personal boundaries within the public space's women occupied, adopting 'dead-pan' facial expressions, avoiding eye contact with strangers, altering their dressing styles in public sphere, and avoiding to step out alone at night.

Gardener (1995) did extensive research on gender-related public harassment which included in-depth interviews with nearly five-hundred Midwestern women and men, documenting

harassment faced by women in public and various ways women react to and interpret it. Every woman interviewed for the research reported that she had implemented at least one of a number of strategies depending on their suitability in the public sphere. Strategies included altering their attire, for e.g. deliberately choosing to wear sunglasses in public, or droopy hats covering their face, or intentionally pulling up their coat or jacket collars to avoid unwanted attention. Other strategies were focused on altering their behaviours in public such as refraining from smiling or laughing too much, keeping up a serious facial expression, and avoiding eye contact with strangers. Another significant strategy which was reported included accessing public spaces with a male companion. When not accompanied by a man or someone else, some women admitted to fabricating fictitious accounts suggesting the presence of a man elsewhere (Gardener, 1995).

A categorisation of strategies adopted by women depicts that they can sometimes manage to manoeuvre through public spaces safely, but it also underlines women's doubts regarding the same strategies and discontentment with the fact that in cases of harassment they are the ones who have to take certain steps to handle issues incited by men (Gardner, 1995). All the respondents in the current study were fully aware that strategizing doesn't guarantee safety or escape from eve teasing, and if a perpetrator wants to cross a line they will, despite one's social status or social position.

### **Theme 5- Effects of Eve teasing**

This portion of the study focuses on identifying the immediate as well as gradual effects of eve teasing. The effects are categorised into three subthemes including fear, restricted mobility, and altered perception of men & society post the eve teasing incident(s).

**Table 12- Effects of eve teasing (Column-relative frequency)**

|                                | G 1 (18-25)          | G 2 (25-32)          | G 3 (33-40)          | G 4 (40-60)          | Totals                |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| ●◇ Fear                        | 12<br>23.53%         | 15<br>34.09%         | 10<br>27.78%         | 5<br>16.13%          | 42<br>25.93%          |
| ●◇ Perception of men & society | 11<br>21.57%         | 4<br>9.09%           | 6<br>16.67%          | 8<br>25.81%          | 29<br>17.90%          |
| ●◇ Restricted mobility         | 28<br>54.90%         | 25<br>56.82%         | 20<br>55.56%         | 18<br>58.06%         | 91<br>56.17%          |
| <b>Totals</b>                  | <b>51</b><br>100.00% | <b>44</b><br>100.00% | <b>36</b><br>100.00% | <b>31</b><br>100.00% | <b>162</b><br>100.00% |

The figures illustrate that restricted mobility is the most common consequence of eve teasing with relative frequency of 56.17%, followed by fear and altered perception of men at 25.93% and 18%, respectively.

**Table 13- Effects of eve teasing (column-relative frequency)**

|                                | G 1 (18-25) |               | G 2 (25-32) |               | G 3 (33-40) |               | G 4 (40-60) |               | Totals     |                |
|--------------------------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|------------|----------------|
| ●◇ Fear                        | 12          | 28.57%        | 15          | 35.71%        | 10          | 23.81%        | 5           | 11.90%        | 42         | 100.00%        |
| ●◇ Perception of men & society | 11          | 37.93%        | 4           | 13.79%        | 6           | 20.69%        | 8           | 27.59%        | 29         | 100.00%        |
| ●◇ Restricted mobility         | 28          | 30.77%        | 25          | 27.47%        | 20          | 21.98%        | 18          | 19.78%        | 91         | 100.00%        |
| <b>Totals</b>                  | <b>51</b>   | <b>31.48%</b> | <b>44</b>   | <b>27.16%</b> | <b>36</b>   | <b>22.22%</b> | <b>31</b>   | <b>19.14%</b> | <b>162</b> | <b>100.00%</b> |

The table demonstrates that both fear and restricted mobility relatively decrease with age, indicating that restricted mobility and fear are directly proportional to one another. Compared to other groups, group 1 (18-25) records the highest percentage (38%) for altered perception of men/society post the eve teasing incident.

***Fear***

This theme should be read as an aftermath of eve teasing, an unpleasant consequence triggered by such experiences. In the current study, fear is not treated as an isolated immediate emotional response to such an event, but explored as a ghastly outcome of eve teasing, which gradually

takes affect and operates at a much deeper level and in many complex ways, having multiple ramifications such as women might avoid stepping out to public spaces as a result of fear caused due to previous experiences of harassment, thereby, restricting their mobility.

*'We get scared or offended because we start thinking of other things. Next this can happen, next this can, will he walk by too close? Will he touch me? If he touches me, what is he going to touch? Then what is he going to do? So, we start thinking of all that as well and they may or may not be thinking of that but we always are.'* R19

Women's isolation within the private sphere is sometimes pathologized as Agoraphobia. However, McHugh (2000) categorizes Agoraphobia as a gendered construct, considering that the majority of individuals in the US who have been diagnosed with the same are women. McHugh (2000) links cultural factors to Agoraphobia such as women's limited mobility outside the private space of the home, restricted societal roles, and socialization (for example, they are socialized to express fear more than their male counterparts). The diagnosis of this condition involves experiencing fear which is baseless or illogical, but for women there might be valid reasons to fear stepping out into public.

Hickman & Muehlenhard (1997) conducted a research on the fear of rape among women. The results generated signify that street harassment contributes to increasing women's fear of rape, thereby affecting their mobility in public spaces. The study also found out that women tend to be more terrified rape committed by someone unknown to them as compared to acquaintance rape, even though the respondents knew that the former was comparatively less prevalent than the latter.

Ferraro's (1996) 'shadow of sexual assault' hypothesis proposes that women are generally more fearful because the fear of rape infiltrates their fear of other victimizations such as public

harassment. As rape, for women, is a prospective result of any material experience of victimization, it may be a principal root of worry. The research conducted by Ferraro (1996) found evidence furthering this hypothesis. Findings indicate that women's fear of rape anticipated their fear regarding other crimes such as harassment, or mugging. Fisher and Sloan (2003) reproduced Ferraro's (1996) study, finding evidence supporting the same hypothesis. When considered together, both the researches indicate that public harassment by strangers may increase women's fear of and perceived risk of rape.

On similar lines, Harris and Miller (2000) found out that compared with men, women are invariably more afraid of ambiguously threatening situations involving men. The authors posited that this fear may arise from everyday instances of relatively peripheral victimizations they are subjected to, which are possibly neglected because of their no-criminal nature such as stares, catcalls, whistles, and being interrupted when speaking. Such victimizations encountered on a daily basis causes women to be more fearful of any threat to themselves. Although this hypothesis was not tested.

One of the most thorough studies on the impact of sexual harassment on fear was led by Junger (1987). Results of a quantitative study with a sample of 127 women based in the Netherlands revealed that sexual harassment escalated perceived risks and the implementation of precautionary behavior among women.

MacMillan et al.(2000) noted that relational distance may offer some context with regards to the effects of harassment on fear, uncovering that potential of sexual harassment to induce fears of sexual attack may be much higher in contexts and exchanges where the perpetrator is a stranger. Meaning that public sexual harassment by strangers has more pervasive and notable effect on women's fear as opposed to non-stranger harassment. Thus, harassment by strangers

should be distinctly damaging women's feelings of security. MacMillan et al. (2000) noted that 'Stranger harassment reduces feelings of safety while walking alone at night, using public transportation, walking alone in a parking garage, and while home alone at night' (p. 319).

### ***Restricted Mobility***

Another severe consequence of eve teasing is restricted mobility, which goes hand in hand with the pervasive feelings of fear. The interviews reveal that part of a woman's concern may not be to avoid acts of eve teasing themselves so much as to avoid the type of site where she believes that others would think she would not be safe when alone or with a group of women. Whenever such incidents happen in public spaces, they not only violate a woman's privacy and cause mental or physical distress, but also convey a message that women's presence isn't welcome in public spaces. Eve teasing instils fear and as a result, women start avoiding public spaces or abstain from accessing them alone. Hence, hampered mobility could also be understood as a consequence of eve teasing along with fear.

Eve teasing not only affects women's mobility in terms of their access to some of the most basic resources such as education, but also access for its own sake, access to pleasure and entertainment in public spaces. This access is also dependent on a woman's caste and class location in a particular urban setup. In their interviews, all the respondents acknowledged that they couldn't claim public spaces for having fun or even for the simplest of pleasures such as walking their dog, going out for a jog, or hanging out in a park. Even when public spaces are accessed for routine tasks such as parking their car before visiting the market, their access is smeared by fear.

*"Of course, it limits pleasure, it limits the types of outings also that you want to do. You want to go to places, you want to explore stuff, you want to go alone to a park and sit and read a*

*book. But I can't do that, I'll be scared, I'll always be on the lookout if someone's there, coming near. What if I get so engrossed in the book that someone comes too close for comfort?" R19*

Speaking of pleasure, Phadke et al. (2011) note that the popular discourse surrounding women's mobility and accessibility to public spaces has solely focused on guarantying safety for women while accessing resources such as education, employment, healthcare, etc. rather than on access for its own sake.

Eve teasing doesn't always physically affect access or that one stops going out altogether (although, it might be true for some women), but it makes women insecure about their safety in public spaces. They might think multiple times before stepping out, strategize beforehand, contemplate whether there might be elements outside that need to be avoided. Hence, access gets hampered not in terms of physical mobility, but more psychological, depending on previous experiences and how paralysing the fear can be.

The respondents expressed that it's not like every time a woman steps out of the house, she experiences eve teasing, but women just want to minimize the probability and one of the ways is by not going to a place at all, especially on their own or when it's dark. Hence, women alter their definition of fun such as deciding to go out with family, a single male companion, or a group of friends, instead of going out alone for pleasure or for entertainment. As one respondent stated

*"...I won't go to a park or any area alone no matter. What is that area under construction? I think Quila Mubarak, yeah, I have been very fascinated to go there but I'll never go there until and unless it's (officially) open for public. People can go and they still go I know." R15*

Hampered mobility in this case could be also understood as women putting restrictions on their own movement based on their previous experiences, in order to escape the possibility of getting

harassed. There is also a thought that if eve teasing happens while they are accessing public places for fun, their mobility will be the first to get questioned.

Gardener's (1995) research also highlighted that women consciously chose to avoid certain places where harassment was feared to occur unless accompanied, like avoiding particular types of activities in which they suspected they would receive public harassment such as taking walks for pleasure or exercise, going on errands, bike riding, jogging, walking the dog, delivering a child to school, bike riding etc. Extreme forms of avoidance included moving, altering one's occupation, changing a night job for what was hoped to be a safer daytime job, changing the branch of a company where one worked, deciding to take time off work, quitting a job, or switching schools or majors.

Bowman (1993) argues street harassment acts as a barrier to women's participation within the public sphere, resulting in an 'informal ghettoization of women', where they are reduced to the private sphere of the home. According to Ilahi, (2009) harassment hinders women's mobility and undermines their access to public spaces, which results in women restricting their own movement within urban spaces because of fear of being publicly harassed by strangers.

In their study on socio-psychological implications of public harassment for women, Ahmad et al. (2020) interviewed 25 female students from 8 different universities in Islamabad, Pakistan and found out that one of the major consequences of street harassment includes limited mobility, which was visible in increased dropout rates from college and universities.

Talboys (2015) in her study on the public health impact of eve teasing concluded that eve teasing has a detrimental effect on women's safety and psycho-social wellbeing. The results of the study indicated eve teasing to be significantly connected with strict restrictions on girl's mobility, and the worst-case scenario being inability to attend school.

Research conducted by Deegan (1987) and Stanko (1990) also depicts that woman restrict their own mobility in order to reduce the risk of public harassment by avoiding stepping out at night and at times, women are even forced to turn down job offers due to street harassment and the danger associated with it.

### ***Altered Perception of men & society***

One of the effects of eve teasing constitute the development of negative attitudes towards men or the society women inhabit post eve teasing incidents. Women who have faced public harassment might begin facing trust issues, might develop negative opinions about strange men, or start questioning the society they're living in. As respondent 10 stated:

*'I think yes, it does alter perception of men. A lot! Because at the end of the day you are like that first of all this is wrong. This is how it is any day. But this fear develops in your mind with regards to strange men. Even if someone is not actually doing anything, a lot of times you misunderstand also to be very honest. It's not like every man does these things, but this has infiltrated our mind so much (women's) that even if no one's actually teasing them, they think otherwise.'* R10

*'You can say may be that's men's nature, that's how they are as they think women are beneath them that's why they think they can do whatever or say whatever and get away with it.'* R25

Laroiya & Arya (2017) examined how eve teasing deprives adolescent girls of basic human rights. Using a mixed methods approach, they studied the attitude of girls towards eve teasing and assessed the impact of eve teasing experiences on self-confidence and well-being of adolescent girls based in rural Haryana. Results indicated that experiencing episodes of eve teasing leads to a decline in adolescent's psychological well-being and promotes the development of negative attitudes towards male counterparts.

## **Theme 6- Victim Blaming**

When it comes to understanding experiences of eve teasing, it's important to mention another consequence of living in a patriarchal set-up; victim blaming. Victim blaming occurs when the victim of a crime, in this case a woman who has been eve teased is held partially or wholly responsible for the harassment she's subjected to in public. In the present study, victim blaming is found to be a significant component of the discourse on eve teasing. All the participants reported that any mention of an eve teasing incident is automatically followed by reaction including being questioned about ones movement, choice of attire, or company or worse, being blamed for being eve teased. In some cases, family members might put restrictions on a woman's movement if they come to know about an eve teasing incident. Thus, women consciously choose not to share their eve teasing experiences at home, no matter how distressing. This fear of being negatively judged by the society or their family intensifies in situations when they dare to access public spaces for fun or take the liberty to step out at an 'unreasonable hour' and end up facing some form of public harassment.

*"For instance, girls can't go out after sunset, if they move out it's risky and the society doesn't encourage it. There's also this fear that even if you come back and tell your family that something wrong has happened, they will always put blame on you, 'we told you before that don't go out in the dark, at this hour, and get dressed properly and don't go out alone'." R 22*

When eve teasing occurs at unavoidable places, for instance, when a woman is commuting to her workplace or college, then too some women might feel the pressure to justify their actions or choices at home. This pressure is a result of the prevalence of victim blaming in the society.

Phadke et al. (2011) state that practices like victim blaming deter women from reporting cases to the police or take any legal action. This, further affects the manner in which women perceive

themselves in relation to the city they inhabit, themselves reducing their claim to public spaces in order to avoid offering justifications. This practice attaches shame to the victim of harassment rather than to the harasser who is engaging in such acts. This results in women not even disclosing incidents of public harassment to their family members or guardians.

Similar results were reported by Dhillon and Bakaya (2014) in their qualitative study on street harassment, highlighting that to safeguard their daughters from public harassment, parents chose to impose restrictions on their ward's mobility instead of offering any constructive solution to the problem.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

#### 6.1 Conclusion

The study unveils the association between incidents of eve teasing or gender-based public sexual harassment and restriction on women's mobility. It is clearly established that public harassment not only leads to the development of fear but also restricts women's access to public spaces as they might be avoiding stepping out altogether or alter their ways of accessing public spaces by adopting self-protection strategies. While accessing public spaces, women face what can only be described as systemic oppression and an assault on their fundamental right to free movement in the form of eve teasing. The continual harassment women are subjected to on the streets, buses and in other public domains constitute a serious threat to their mobility. Eve teasing causes women to restrict their time in public places, be perpetually alert while out, and modify their behavior in public in order to avoid harassment.

#### 6.2 Limitations

The study attempts to elucidate women's experiences on eve teasing in Patiala, however, it does not aim to make generalizations. The sample of the study is restricted to women based in Patiala, hence covering a small demographic of women. Second, the possibility that there may have been more to the experiences of the participants than the present interviews captured can't be ignored. Qualitative data analysis in the form of field interviews requires translation and the process of transcription, hence, the possibility of researcher's bias cannot be ignored in a qualitative study. However, the researcher attempted to maintain reflexivity throughout the research process.

### **6.3 Implications**

Shedding light on such incidents of eve teasing occurring in smaller cities such as Patiala will help generate an organized demand for better infrastructure and legal provisions for women living, working, and studying in such places. Thereby, helping women reclaim their right to public spaces.

### **6.3 Scope for Future Research**

More research and studies need to be conducted to understand women's eve teasing experiences and explore in what all ways it can affect their lives. Increasing the sample size may yield better results. For more widespread data, women from different caste, class, and religious backgrounds need to be included in the study samples to further illuminate our understanding of eve teasing and how it affects women's mobility.

Future research within this area needs to understand the experiences of women from various class, caste, religious backgrounds to understand how these categories intersect and shape women's experience of public spaces. More research should be conducted focusing on women inhabiting Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities. Exploring other aspects and effects of eve teasing also seems promising.

## NOTES

1. Section 294 of the IPC holds that: ‘Whoever, to the annoyance of others, (a) does any obscene act in any public place, or (b) sings, recites and utters any obscene songs, ballads or words, in or near any public space, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term that may extend to three months, or with fine, or with both.’ This provision is included in Chapter XVI entitled ‘Of Offences Affecting Public Health, Safety, Convenience and Morals’ and is cognizable, bailable and triable by any magistrate.

Section 354 IPC: Whoever assaults or uses criminal force on any woman, intending to outrage her modesty or knowing it likely that he will thereby outrage her modesty, shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to two years, or with fine, or with both.

Section 509 (*Word, gesture or act intended to insult the modesty of a woman*) is included in Chapter 22 entitled ‘Of Criminal Intimidation, Insult and Annoyance’, and is cognizable, bailable and triable by any magistrate. It holds: ‘Whoever, intending to insult the modesty of a woman, utters any word, makes any sound or gesture, or exhibits any object, intending that such word or sound shall be heard, or that such gesture is seen by such woman, or intrudes upon the privacy of such woman, shall be punished with simple imprisonment for a term which may extend to one year, or with fine, or with both.’

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## **APPENDIX**

### Questionnaire

Q1- You are a part of this study because you indicated you have been a victim of eve teasing in the past. Can you please detail the experience for me?

Q2- How did you react to your own personal experience of eve teasing? This question automatically follows 2 questions. a) have you been a part of the group where one woman has been singled out to be eve teased ? How did you react then? b) how did the victim react as well as the group? Did the group do anything in this context?

Q3- Have you thought of talking about it to someone you trust? Be it friends or family? If so, what was their reaction?

Q4- What according to you are the causes of eve teasing in public spaces? Do you think those factors are internal or external to you? Elaborate.

Q5- Does eve teasing limit mobility or restrict your access to public spaces? If yes, how?

Q6- What are some of the strategies adopted by you to manoeuvre through public spaces safely?

Q7- Do you think that the onus of demonstrating that they 'did not ask for it' continues to rest with women?