

12 Sexual harassment in public spaces in India

Victimization and offending patterns

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12.1 Introduction

Over the past decade, sexual harassment (SH) of women in public spaces as a form of violence against women has received considerable attention in both developing and developed countries. SH, an improper behavior that has a sexual dimension and intonations includes nonverbal, verbal, and physical actions, mostly by males, toward females at any time of the day or night (Neupane & Chesney-Lind, 2014; Madan & Nalla, 2016). By “sexual harassment in public spaces” we mean forms of SH provocations that are not limited to what occurs on public streets, parks, and marketplaces but includes public transport spaces such as buses, bus-stops, trains and train stations, and other public transit spaces.

India, like many other countries, is no exception to the occurrence of SH (Jagori & UN Women, 2011). SH is widespread, particularly in mega-cities such as Delhi, where, for over 98 percent of the population, public transport (including taxis and auto-rickshaws) is the only means to get to work, school, or attend to family matters (Madan & Nalla, 2016). The insecurities of urban spaces and SH in public spaces drew worldwide attention following an event that occurred in 2012 in Delhi, India. A 23-year-old woman was sexually harassed in a moving public bus by a group of young men, including the driver and the conductor. This harassment escalated to the victim being beaten-up, gang raped, and brutally tortured, resulting in her death. This incident, which later came to be referred to as *Nirbhaya* (the *fearless*, who tried to fight off the six offenders) drew thousands of protestors—facilitated through social media and the media—who spilled into the streets all over the country demanding government action to this extremely pervasive and much neglected form of violence against women.

While there is a smattering of literature on the subject in India, most of the prior work focuses on SH victimization in public spaces, and we found very little work that focuses on offenders. The aim of the current research is to examine the extent of sexual harassment in public spaces in India with a focus on victimization as well as the self-reported behaviors of offenders. Additionally, we examine the congruence between reported victimization rates and self-reported offending patterns as well as SH offending patterns of their male friends.

12.2 Theoretical considerations

For many developing countries, particularly in South Asia, SH in public spaces remains a concern because of traditional cultures and religions that have a bearing on women's place in public spaces (Niaz, 2003). Prior research, which is grounded in the framework of the patriarchy, identifies structural forces that influence male dominance and masculinity, which in turn shape gender roles in social and economic spheres (Acker, 1992; Hearn & Parkin, 2001). MacKinnon (1979), drawing on observations based on socio-cultural perspectives, noted that SH occurred in societies with unequal power distance and where sexual requirements are imposed on the "weaker" party, in this instance, women. The work of MacKinnon (1979) and others (e.g., Uggen & Blackstone, 2004) suggests that men and women are socialized differently with varying expectations among genders. For instance, men are stereotypically expected to pursue qualities of domination, leadership, and sexual initiative while women are expected to be submissive and nurturing, resulting in men often pursuing women to gain power and self-interest (Luthar & Luthar, 2007).

Other competing theoretical perspectives that shed light on and are relevant to SH victimization relate to work advanced by Cohen and Felson (1979), which suggests that victimization is likely to be higher when people remove themselves from their routine activities. This could lead people (in this case, women) to have diminished guardianship, creating more opportunities for motivated offenders. Applying these principles to SH, Ceccato (2014) observed that the likelihood of SH victimization occurring increases when a potential victim intersects with a motivated offender in the absence of or decreased vigilance. Victimization is often interconnected to personal and lifestyle characteristics, many of which are unavoidable, such as going to school, work, and running errands (shopping, visiting family, etc.) (Tseloni & Pease, 2004). Furthermore, in countries such as India, which is the second-largest producer of fruits and vegetables in the world, women represent nearly 50 percent of those employed in the supply chain of fruit, vegetables, fresh produce markets and small businesses. This creates greater opportunities for them to be in public spaces (Gurung, 2006). For many of these women, public transportation is the only means to get around, and it is often inadequate relative to the population, resulting in overcrowding and thus creating greater vulnerability to women commuters (Parikh, 2018).

Prior research on SH in public spaces in India

A number of studies on SH of women in public spaces in both developed (Macmillan, Nierobisz, & Welsh, 2000) and developing countries (for a review see Madan & Nalla, 2016; Ceccato & Paz, 2017) have addressed gender violence in public spaces. In India, in the past decade, many studies have addressed gender violence specifically related to sexual harassment. There were a few researchers who addressed women's safety and how they negotiate everyday

risks in public spaces in metro cities such as Mumbai (Phadke, 2005; Bharucha & Khatri, 2018), Kolkata (Sur, 2014), Chennai (Natarajan, 2016) and other smaller cities in northeastern India (Bhattacharyya, 2016). The findings from these studies show that an overwhelming percentage of the respondents reported public spaces as being unsafe due to fear of crime and victimization, with specifically fear of sexual harassment being the most significant factor. These findings highlight women's safety and fear of sexual violence in their everyday life, a finding echoed in Western research (Macmillan et al., 2000).

One of the earliest surveys examining the incidence of SH in public spaces (buses) prior to the *Nirbhaya* incident was conducted in the South Indian city of Chennai with a small sample of respondents ($N=100$) (Chockalingam & Vijaya, 2008). Findings showed a high incidence of female victimization in the age group of 15–35 who had experienced unwanted touching and groping. The offenders were described by their victims to be between 35 and 70 years old, well-dressed and seemingly educated, and targeting women who wore non-traditional South Indian clothes.

One of the most systematic studies done to assess SH victimization in public spaces in Delhi in 2010 ($N=5,000$) highlighted the various forms of sexual harassment women face while in public spaces such as markets, bus terminals and roadsides (Jagori & UN Women, 2011). The report found that nearly 66 percent of women and girls experience SH in public spaces with 51.4 percent reporting public transport buses as the most common public spaces where maximum sexual harassment occurs. This finding is not surprising given that, in metro cities such as Mumbai, an estimated 88 percent of the residents rely on public buses and metros, and in Delhi 43 percent of residential households rely on public transport (Badami & Haider, 2007). The inadequate public transport services in India's cities contribute to overcrowded situations (Pucher, Korattyswaroopam, & Ittyerah, 2004) making it easier for offenders to participate and escape detection after committing SH.

Despite the significance of the *Nirbhaya* incident in 2012, very few studies have since been conducted in India that addressed this issue. One of the earliest studies following *Nirbhaya* was a study conducted with a small convenient snowball sample of 20 women, aged 18 to 30 years, from the middle and upper-middle classes in Delhi (Dhillon & Bakaya, 2014). Interviews with respondents on their experiences in the city revealed that between 50 percent and 100 percent reported some form of SH as they commuted to work or walked to the market, to a movie theater, or, in essence, used public spaces.

One of the few large-scale systematic research studies was conducted in Delhi Metro area in 2014, drawing a sample of 1,387 males and females by employing a multistage cluster and quota sampling technique (Madan & Nalla, 2016). The findings show that public transport was the main mode of transportation for nearly 99 percent of males and females. Compared with males (50.9 percent), females (26.8 percent) felt unsafe in public spaces and over half the women in the sample reported being a victim (57.6 percent) of SH or knew a friend or family member who was a victim (48.3 percent) in the last 12 months

(Madan & Nalla, 2016). Overall, while there is a general congruence between genders in terms of seriousness of 20 SH behaviors, the differences, however minor, were statistically significant with women rating them as more serious (Madan & Nalla, 2016).

A more recent study with a sample of 1,600 respondents who travel by public buses, drawn from multiple cities in India, reported that 554 (34.9 percent) reported sexual harassment with groping being the most frequent, more often than even catcalls and sexually-laced comments (Lea, D'Silva, & Asok, 2017). A survey of 300 women in Mumbai, selected randomly from among those walking in the market areas and to and from metro stations, revealed that 77.2 percent experienced SH in the form of lewd comments, catcalls, and insinuating songs. Additionally, 30 percent reported stalking, 29 percent reported being groped, and 7 percent molested (Bharucha & Khatri, 2018). Using a convenient but systematic sample of 200 female students from two women's colleges in Lucknow in the state of Uttar Pradesh, another study assessed the incidence and frequency of SH victimization experienced in a variety of modes of transportation, which included buses, taxi-cabs, three-wheeled min-cabs (Tripathi, Borrión & Belur, 2017). Findings from this study confirmed findings from prior research (Madan & Nalla, 2016) in that of all forms of public transportation, buses were considered the least secure and 100 percent of the respondents indicated that they were either personally a victim or witnessed a physical or verbal form of SH. Given that data are from college students, the findings of the Lucknow study, as in other studies (Dhillon & Bakaya, 2014; Neupane & Chesney-Lind, 2014), finds young women at greater risk of SH. Findings from the central Indian city of Bhopal reveal that 88 percent of women were harassed while using public transport and 40 percent reported facing harassment on a regular basis (Bhatt, Menon, & Khan, 2018). Interestingly, however, 100 percent of public bus drivers and conductors did not believe it was a prevalent issue and another 30 percent believe that women were equally responsible for SH perpetrated against them (Bhatt, et al., 2018).

Unlike serious sexual offenses such as rape, which has the propensity to occur more frequently among acquaintances and other non-strangers, SH is more prevalent among strangers (Macmillan et al., 2000). Among the reasons for the causes of SH, the respondents felt that migrant men from small towns are not only patriarchal but "awed" by Delhi women who are independent and travel alone, prompting men to demean or sexually harass women to put them down (Dhillon & Bakaya, 2014). The reasons attributed by female victims of SH for men engaging in SH were slightly different in another study from a Southern Metro city of Chennai. Natarajan (2016, p. 6) noted that college students attributed the reasons to patriarchy ("male domination," "discrimination," "cultural values"), differential ("socialization of boys and girls") and situational ("alcohol," "boredom," "more women seeking education and employment" and "lack of bystander intervention") reasons. Among the reasons attributed to males' behavior for this were a patriarchal mindset (77 percent), absence of fear of the law (57 percent), lack of effective police patrol (45 percent), poor street

lighting (13 percent), and women's choice of apparel (11 percent). These findings are similar to other prior studies (Natarajan, 2016).

In summary, four major themes emerge from prior research. The first theme relates to women's fear of public spaces and the associated fear of victimization. The second thread relates to the high incidence and prevalence of victimization among younger women of various forms of SH occurring in a variety of public spaces. The third relates to gender differences in perceived seriousness of SH. The final theme relates to victims' perceptions of why males engage in SH. While this research adds to our understanding of SH prior research, with the exception of a couple of studies, findings are often drawn from sample sizes employing a convenient sampling framework with a focus exclusively on the incidence of SH in general with a limited focus on victims. This exploratory research therefore attempts to contribute to the sparse literature on SH with greater attention to offenders' self-reported participation in SH behaviors. More specifically, we examine (1) the gender differences in perceptions of imagery of what constitutes SH; (2) a comparison of the awareness of SH laws and their enforcement between victims and offenders; (3) congruence in the rates of reported female victimization of SH and males' self-reported offending; and, (4) congruence between self-reported offending and male friends' participation in SH.

12.3 Current study

Context

In India, street sexual harassment is euphemistically referred to as "eve-teasing", a long recognized social problem and a reference that trivializes the seriousness of various forms of offensive behaviors against women. This phrase interestingly, however, does not appear in any Penal Codes in India. Worse, such behaviors are not taken seriously, and are accepted as a minor nuisance and a lighthearted ritual associated with young men's transition to adulthood. Others suggest that these behaviors are often brushed off by men as jocular and lighthearted practices that are validated culturally across the country (Bhattacharyya, 2015).

Delhi, the National Capital Territory (NCT), India, with over 18 million people is the fifth most populous city in the world. Delhi has the highest recorded crime compared with all other geographic distributions in India according to the 2016 National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB) report (2017) and is considered one of the most unsafe cities in the world (Gaynair, 2013). Delhi NCT also reported the highest rate of crimes against women for rape and other sexual offenses per 100,000 women in India (86.96 compared to a national average of 22.16) (National Crime Records Bureau, 2015, p. 24). Among crimes against women, Delhi also has the distinction of highest rate of crimes per 100,000 relating to sexual harassment under the categories of *Insult to the modesty of women* (15.1 vs. 1.6 national average), and *Assault on women with intent to outrage her modesty* (47.9 vs. 13.7 national average) (National Crime Records Bureau, 2015, p. 32).

Data and method

Data for the study were drawn from a larger study conducted in 2014. Drawing from prior work (Jagori & UN Women, 2011; Neupane & Chesney-Lind, 2014), and contextualizing it to the local cultural setting, we constructed a survey questionnaire (bilingual, English and Hindi) drawing from various themes pertaining to sexual harassment in public spaces. A total of 20 sexual harassment behaviors were identified that fell into three broad categories (listed in Table 12.3, later): nonverbal, verbal, physical. In addition, all of these behaviors are cited as examples in the Indian Penal Code under various sections noted above. All respondents (both male and female) were asked to rate the seriousness of behaviors constituting sexual harassment on a seven-point scale (0 = *not at all serious*, 1 = *not serious*, 2 = *less serious*, 3 = *neutral*, 4 = *somewhat serious*, 5 = *serious*, 6 = *very serious*).

Sample

Using multistage cluster and quota sampling strategies, we drew between 250 and 275 respondents from each of the five primary zones (North, East, West, South and Central) in Delhi, the capital city of India. Data collection for this study lasted nearly 60 days (pencil and paper method) and resulted in a total of 1,387 respondents (male=621/45 percent; female=766/55 percent). The demographic breakdown of the respondents is presented in Table 12.1.

The educational background of victims and offenders was fairly evenly distributed: primary=23.3 percent vs. 23.6 percent; secondary=24.8 percent vs. 22.4 percent; high school=22 percent vs. 29 percent; and, college and higher=30.5 percent vs. 24.8 percent. A similar distribution was apparent in monthly income levels (1 US\$=Indian Rupees ₹~72), for victims and offenders: those earning less than ₹10,000=54.8 percent vs. 47.4 percent; ₹10,001 to 25,000=23.5 percent vs. 33.9 percent; and, those earning ₹25,001 and more=21.7 percent vs. 17.7 percent. Nearly 77 percent of the victims and 65 percent of the offenders were ever married (includes currently married or married in the past).

Regarding place of residence, 92.9 percent out of 766 females live in Delhi. Among males, 87.8 percent of the 621 live Delhi. 93.8 percent of victims and 87.2 percent of offenders live in Delhi. However, relative to the number of victims (6.2 percent) who live on the fringes of the city (e.g., Noida, Ghaziabad, Gurgaon, and Faridabad), there were nearly twice as many offenders (12.8 percent) from outside Delhi. Given the small number of *N* for participants living outside Delhi, these percentages appear exaggerated.

The primary purpose of the use of public transportation for the majority of victims (75 percent) compared with offenders (39.7 percent) was visiting friends, family and shopping. A majority of the offenders are employed (78 percent). However, 43.1 percent of offenders, compared with 5.8 percent victims use public transportation for work or business. This suggests that a

Table 12.1 Descriptive statistics of victims ($N=467$, 60.7%) and offenders ($N=317$)

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Categories</i>	<i>%* victims</i>	<i>%* offenders</i>
Education			
1 = Primary education		22.8	23.6
2 = Secondary education		24.8	22.4
3 = High school		22.0	29.0
4 = College and above		30.5	24.8
Income (per month, in INR)			
1 = Less than 10,000		54.8	47.4
2 = 10,001–25,000		23.5	33.9
3 = 25,001 and above		21.7	17.7
Relationship status			
1 = Never married		22.6	34.9
2 = Ever married		77.4	65.1
Place of residence			
1 = Delhi		93.8	87.2
2 = Around Delhi**		6.2	12.8
Public transport—purpose			
1 = Visit friends/family/shopping		75.0	39.7
2 = School/college		16.2	17.7
3 = Work/business		5.8	43.1
4 = Other		3.2	3.7

Notes

* Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

** Includes Noida, Ghaziabad, Gurgaon, and Faridabad.

majority of offenders who harass women are employees who commute to and from work.

12.4 Imagery of sexual harassment

One of the questions in the survey related to capturing respondents' imagery of behaviors that constitute SH. All females ($N=766$) and males ($N=621$) were asked to describe what sexual harassment means to them, to which 1,201 and 1,016 comments were received from females and males respectively. These responses were coded to group comments that fit into broader themes and categories (Figure 12.1). The most common imagery of SH for both females (28.1 percent) and males (26.7 percent) is sexual teasing/jokes and comments, suggesting a close resemblance between the two groups of respondents. An interesting imagery that was reported by both females and males are "forceful sexual relations/rape," which is a more violent form of sexual crime, and "forceful attempt to kiss/have sex". Although, comparatively, more females' (14.6 percent) compared with males' (9.3 percent) imagery of SH was described as rape, a similar disparity in the opposite direction was found for females (13.3 percent) and males (21.6 percent) regarding forceful attempt to kiss/have sex. Together,

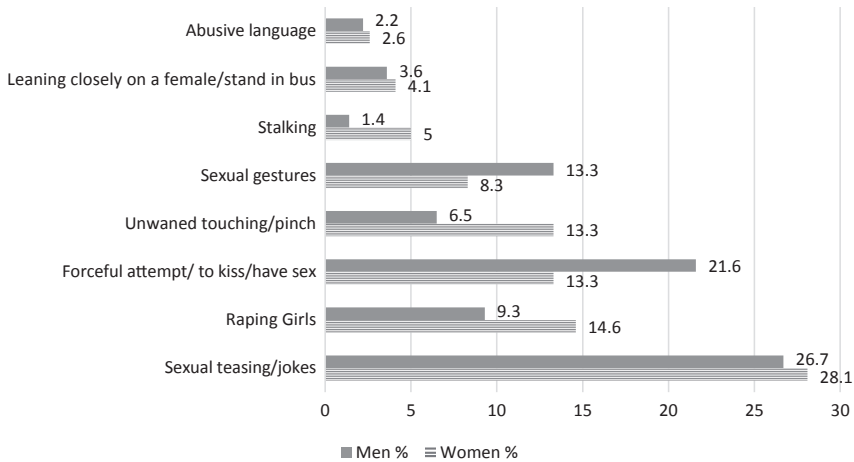


Figure 12.1 Percentage comparisons of the imagery of SH for females ($N=766$) and males ($N=621$)

these two categories represented close to a third of all imagery related to sexual harassment. Nearly twice as many females (13.3 percent) compared with males (6.5 percent) described unwanted touching and pinching as imagery associated with SH, while fewer females (8.3 percent) reported sexual gestures representing SH compared with men (13.3 percent). More women (5 percent) described stalking as SH experience compared with males (1.4 percent) while the numbers and the gap for genders relating to leaning closely on a female or using abusive and profane language was rather small. Comments that were undecipherable or representing similar images noted in the figure were not represented.

12.5 Profiles of victims and offenders—age

The average age of the respondents is 36.3 years. The age range for the victims was 18 to 74 and the youngest age at which a victim first reported SH experience was 10 years of age. For offenders, the age range was 18 years to 80 years old; however, that survey did not have the question regarding the age at first time offending in the survey. Description relating to age break down for both victims and offender is presented in Figure 12.2. The trend lines suggest that there is a close alignment in spikes and lows for both groups for the ages around 24 through 50 years.

A closer look at the breakdown of age groups for prevalence of victimization and offending shows some categories that are more compatible. Twenty-seven percent of victims and 30.3 percent of the offenders were in the age group of 18 to 25 years. However, an overwhelming majority of 80.7 percent victims and 71.8 percent offenders were 40 years and under. Among the offenders, close to

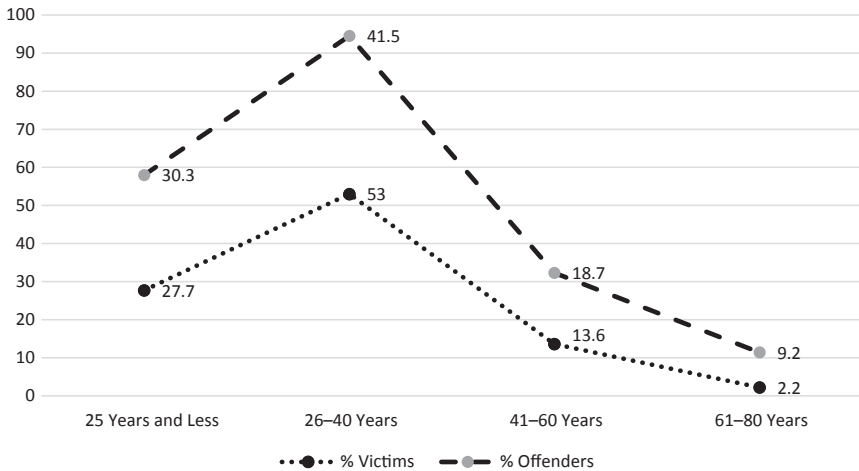


Figure 12.2 Frequency and age distribution of victims and offenders.

a third were 40 years and above with 12 percent in the age group of 41–50, 6.7 percent in the age group of 51–60. A surprising finding from our data was that 9.2 percent of offenders were in the age group of 61 and above compared with only 2.2 percent of victims. Even more interesting is the finding of senior citizens ($N=11$, 3.4 percent) self-reporting as offenders were in the age group of 70 and 80 years.

Victims/offender views on awareness and effectiveness of SH laws

A vast majority of the victims (83.5 percent) and offenders (95.8 percent) are aware of the *Nirbhaya* event (Figure 12.3). Surprisingly, however, only about two-fifths of the victims (38.1 percent) and offenders (42.2 percent) are aware of laws that punish SH offenders. Less than a third of victims believe the effectiveness of SH laws (30.8 percent vs. 29.2 percent) or that SH laws are effectively enforced (30.9 percent vs. 33.8 percent). However, the respondents had more positive views of the role of media in informing citizens about SH (58.5 percent vs. 46.9 percent).

Victimization and self-reported offending

From among the 766 females in the sample, 467 (61 percent) reported one or more forms of sexual harassment and 425 women (55.5 percent) knew a friend or family member who was victimized. Among the victims, 325 (42.2 percent) noted that they were harassed in the last 12 months, of whom a fifth were harassed at least once, 17.4 percent between two and five times, and 5 percent

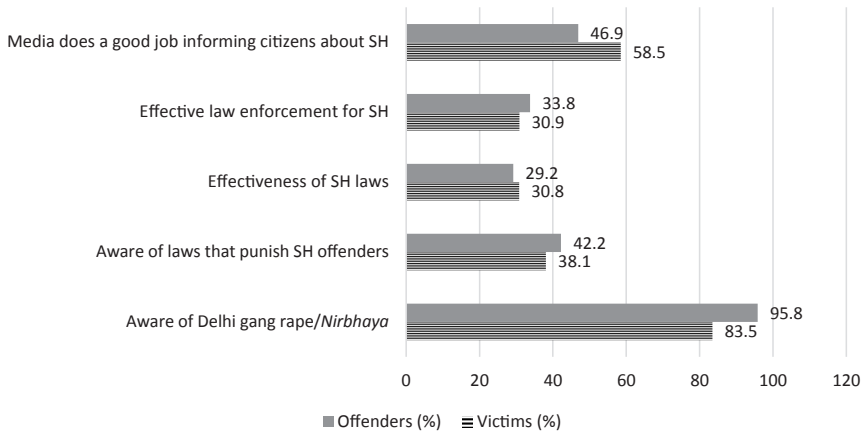


Figure 12.3 Percentage of victims ($N=467$) and offenders ($N=317$) awareness of SH laws and their effectiveness.

six or more times. Seventy-nine percent of these victimizations occurred during daytime. From among the sample of 621 males, 317 (51.1 percent) reported to have engaged in one or more forms of sexual harassment. The SH self-reported offenders noted they know a male friend ($N=389$, 62.6 percent) who also engaged in SH offending.

In Table 12.2, we present the percentage comparisons of victims' reporting and self-reported offenders for 20 specific types of SH behaviors. In addition, for each behavior, we also presented the gap/concordance rates between the two. The findings are presented from the highest to lowest percentage of victimization experiences for each SH behavior. The top four forms of SH victimization are *unwanted deliberate touch/pinching* (80.9 percent), *leaning closely on a female or pushing loosely/slowly* (77.5 percent), *standing close or brushing up against a female* (68.2) and *whistling* (57.4 percent). In contrast, 60.5 percent of offenders admitted to *leaning closely on a female or pushing loosely/slowly* which was the highest percentage of self-reported SH behavior followed by *standing close or brushing up against a female* (46.2 percent), *whistling* (40.9 percent), and *unwanted deliberate touch/pinching* (38.4 percent). Compared with self-reported offending, between a third and half of all victims reported *stalking* (44.7 percent vs. 17.1 percent), *referring as babe or honey or similar words* (42.1 percent vs. 26.7 percent), *unwanted sexual looks or gestures* (41.3 percent vs. 7.5 percent), or *using obscene or abusive language* (39.1 percent vs. 9.5 percent). Among these behaviors, the largest gap or lack of concordance between victim and offender reports were found for *unwanted sexual looks or gestures* (33.8 percent), *using obscene or abusive language* (29.6 percent), and *stalking* (27.6 percent). It is unclear from the data if gaps exist in gender differences for certain types of non-verbal and verbal SH categories, particularly a behavior such as *unwanted*

Table 12.2 Comparison of percentage of victimization (N=467) and self-reported offending (N=317) of SH behaviors

	Victims (%)	Offenders (%)	Concordance rate %
Unwanted deliberate touch/ pinching	80.9	38.4	42.5
Leaning closely on a female or Pushing loosely/slowly	77.5	60.5	17
Standing close or brushing up against a female	68.2	46.2	22
Whistling	57.4	40.9	16.5
Stalking/A stranger following you	44.7	17.1	27.6
Referring as a girl babe or honey or similar words	42.1	26.7	15.4
Unwanted sexual looks or gestures	41.3	7.5	33.8
Using Obscene/Abusive Language	39.1	9.5	29.6
Unwanted sexual teasing jokes remarks or comments	30.1	11.3	18.8
Kissing sounds howling and smacking lips at a female	29.3	12.5	16.8
Poking with penis	26.6	6.2	20.4
Sexual comments about the clothing anatomy or looks	25.8	8.7	17.1
Patting on the buttocks	24.8	4.8	20
Putting hands on the shoulders	23.4	10.3	13.1
Pulling or playing with the hair	19.5	7.6	11.9
Asking personal questions about sexual life	10.5	10.8	0
Asked/asking for sexual favor(s)	8.9	5.9	4
Showing pornography/ naked pictures	8.0	3.7	4.3
Exposing genitals/masturbating in front of the women	3.8	2.5	1.3

sexual looks or gestures as offenders may not be even aware their looks make women uncomfortable.

In the next categories comprising verbal and physical behaviors, compared with self-reported offenders, reported victimization of SH ranged from a third to one-fifth of total victimization rates. Among them are *unwanted sexual teasing* (30.1 percent vs. 11.3 percent), *kissing/howling sounds/smacking lips* (29.2 percent vs. 12.5 percent), *poking with penis* (26.6 percent vs. 6.2 percent), *sexual comments about clothing/anatomy* (25.8 percent vs. 8.7 percent), *patting on buttocks* (24.8 percent vs. 4.8 percent), *putting hands on shoulders* (23.4 percent vs. 10.3 percent), and *pulling/playing with hair* (19.5 percent vs. 7.6 percent). Of these, with the exception of *pulling/playing with hair* (11.9 percent) and *putting*

hands on shoulders (13.1 percent), the remaining behaviors had a lower concordance rates with a gap of 17 to 20 percentage points.

Among the 20 SH behaviors, about 10 percent or fewer victims and offenders reported SH experiences for four types. Among these, a comparison of victimization and self-reported offending numbers show *asking personal questions about sexual life* (10.5 percent vs. 10.8 percent), *asked/asking for sexual favors* (8.9 percent vs. 5.9 percent), *showing pornography/naked pictures* (8.0 percent vs. 3.7 percent), and *exposing genitals/masturbating in front of women* (3.8 percent vs. 2.5 percent). Of these behaviors, while the percentage of both victimization and offending were lower, the concordance rates were higher than all other forms of SH behaviors. *Asking personal questions about sexual life* (-0.3 percent) and *exposing genitals/masturbating in front of women* (1.3 percent) had the highest concordance rate while the other two had about 4 percent concordance rate.

A comparison between open-ended responses of imagery of what constitutes SH behaviors in Figure 12.3 and victimization rates reported in Table 12.1 show a glaring discrepancy for some categories. Though there are many other responses from the open-ended imagery question that resembles the language used in the 20 SH behaviors listed in Table 12.2, we picked the six highest percentage responses. From among the six, just one category *unwanted sexual teasing* had the highest concordance rate for imagery and actual victimization (28.1 percent vs. 30.1 percent). The remaining five behaviors have a large gap in the percentage of imagery and actual victimization and are: *unwanted deliberate touch/pinching* (13.3 percent vs. 80.9 percent), *leaning closely on a female or pushing loosely/slowly* (4.1 percent vs. 77.5 percent), *stalking* (5 percent vs. 27.6 percent), *unwanted sexual looks or gestures* (8.3 percent vs. 41.3 percent), and *using obscene or abusive language* (2.6 percent vs. 39.1 percent).

12.6 Self-reporting SH offenses versus their male friends' SH offenses

In this study we also examine the concordance rates between self-reporting SH offenders and SH offending patterns of their male friends. Findings are presented in Table 12.3.

Findings from Table 12.3 show a rather high degree of correspondence between the self-reported offending patterns and those claimed to have been perpetrated by their male friends. With the exception of few behaviors (e.g., whistling, groping/squeezing breasts, and asking for sexual favors) which had a gap of 4 to 6 percentage points, the remaining behaviors differed by a margin of 3 percent or less. The greatest concordance between self-reported offending and offending by a friend was for leaning closely/pushing female, use of obscene language, patting on the buttocks, and unwanted deliberate touch/pinching; and exposing genitals/masturbating in front of women. The congruence between self-offending and friend's offending may be a function of offenders' perpetration occurring in the company of friend/s.

Table 12.3 Comparison of percentage of self-reported offending and offending by their male friends

	<i>Offender (%)</i>	<i>Offender's male friend (%)</i>	<i>Concordance %</i>
Unwanted deliberate touch/ pinching	38.4	37.4	1.0
Leaning closely/pushing female	60.5	60.4	0.1
Standing close/brushing up against a female	46.2	49.6	-3.4
Referring as a girl babe or honey etc.	26.7	24.3	2.4
Whistling	40.9	34.9	6.0
Stalking/following you	17.1	20	-2.9
Asking questions about sexual life	10.8	14.2	-3.4
Obscene/Abusive Language	9.5	9.9	-0.4
Sexual jokes/teasing jokes remarks	11.3	14	-2.7
Pulling/playing with hair	7.6	5.7	1.9
Kissing sounds/smacking lips	12.5	10.1	-2.4
Sexual comments on clothing/ anatomy/looks	8.7	12.5	-3.8
Asking for sexual favor(s)	5.9	10.1	-4.2
Sexual looks/gestures	7.5	10.5	-3.0
Putting hands on shoulders	10.3	8.3	2.0
Touching/rubbing/squeezing breasts	6.2	11.9	-5.7
Showing pornography/naked pictures	3.7	5.5	-1.8
Poking with penis	6.2	7.1	-0.9
Patting on the buttocks	4.8	4.3	0.5
Exposing genitals/masturbating in front of women	2.4	3.6	-1.2

12.7 Discussion

In this study, we assessed victimization as well as offending patterns of SH in public spaces following the *Nirbhaya* event in 2012 in Delhi, India. One of the findings relates to perceived gender differences in the imagery related to what constitutes sexual harassment. Findings from this study suggests that imagery of SH for both a majority of offenders (30.9 percent) and victims (27.9 percent) produced an image of rape and forceful attempt to have sex, which according to the IPC are violent crimes against women and do not fall into statutes relating to sexual harassment. This finding may have some implications to understanding offenders' attitudes towards SH in general. That is, for some offenders, the propensity to engage in less serious forms of

sexual violence (e.g., sexual teasing, comments, touching, etc.) may seem less harmful and more acceptable since they believe they are not engaging in what they believe is sexual harassment in the form of rape and forceful attempt to kiss or have sex with a woman. The data in this study does not offer the opportunity to tease out if such a disconnect between perceptions and actual behavior of offenders is present. Future research is well worthwhile pursuing if such a disjunction exists for some offenders.

A second finding from this research suggests that although over 95 percent of the victims and offenders are aware of *Nirbhaya* incident, more than half of them are not aware of the existence of laws that punish sexual harassment and close to two-thirds do not believe the effectiveness of these laws and their enforcement. This finding is critical from the perspective of SH prevention efforts for both victims and offenders. Clearly, government efforts to publicize the seriousness as well as the legal implications for violating SH laws is critical to preventing and mitigating these forms of crimes. Only about half of all victims and offenders believe the media does a good job of informing the public of the problem of SH. This suggests media outlets have to assume a greater role and responsibility in educating the larger population of the problem.

A third finding from this study relates to a presence of a wider age range for both victims and offenders along the age spectrum in comparison to prior research. For victims, consistent with prior literature, younger women have greater propensity for being harassed. However, findings from this study shed light on the age range of the victims that concentration of higher victimization rates is in the age group of 26–40 years (53 percent). Overall, nearly 81 percent of the victims are in the age group of 18 and 40 years with the remainder in the age group of 41 and 80 years. Interestingly, however, of the latter group nearly 10 percent of all victims are 61 years and above.

Findings regarding self-reporting offenders from this research are perhaps a major contribution to the literature on SH. In contrast to the stereotype of the offender being young, good-looking, and well-educated (Natarajan, 2016), our finding shows a slightly different picture. Offenders' age groups are well distributed with about a third under 30 years of age, but, interestingly, 15.9 percent of all offenders are 51 years and above, stretching well into their 70s. While 96 percent of all offenders heard and are familiar with the *Nirbhaya* case, they reported having committed SH. Additionally, although fewer than half of the offenders (42.2 percent) knew there were punishments associated with SH offending, fewer than a third believed that neither the SH laws (29.2 percent) nor SH enforcement of laws (33.8 percent) were effective. These perceptions may have some impact on their behavior and willingness to engage in SH.

12.8 Limitations and implications for future research

An important finding from this study is that for many of the SH behaviors included in this study, the concordance rates for victimization and offending is fairly significant for many categories, with the exception of behaviors that either

require fairly deliberate physical contact or nonverbal behaviors that are obvious and noticeable (e.g., showing pornography, genitals, or masturbating in front of a woman). But for many other behaviors, there are considerable gaps or differences between the two groups. One factor to consider is the infrastructure surrounding mobility and public transport facilities in cities such as Delhi, which is woefully inadequate for the city's population size, and the consequences these factors have on women's experiences. Many of the behaviors recognized as SH in public spaces listed in research do not lend themselves to being convenient for filing formal complaints. For instance, SH behaviors in public spaces such as unwanted sexual comments or remarks about clothing or anatomy or leaning closely or pushing against a woman in crowded situations (a quick Google search for images of crowded buses in India will offer an imagery and context) can be vague and leaves no evidence. The researchers traveled in public buses to gain first-hand experience when the data for the study were gathered in Delhi in 2014. Often, there are long lines at public bus stops and metro stations most all day. When buses arrive at a bus stop, they are tightly packed and leaning like sardines and leaning to one side with the weight of the people hanging on to any little foothold they can find, leaving no room for people to either get out or get in. Passengers are often reluctant to move to let people out for fear of losing their spot on the bus as new passengers push in to find any standing room that is available. The conditions are often chaotic with every passenger's single-minded goal being to board the bus. Given these physical conditions, identifying the perpetrator or the motive for some of the SH behaviors in public spaces becomes complicated. These factors are important precursors for researchers and policymakers to pursue in efforts to ameliorate SH problems.

Another area for possible future direction in research relates to patterns of offending. The offending patterns of the self and male friends are closely aligned, suggesting a couple of possibilities. The first is that sexual harassment occurs in a group context; that is, rather than an offender acting out alone, they are more likely to perpetrate in groups. The second possibility is that for some SH behaviors where detection is likely (e.g., touching/squeezing breasts) the degree of risk associated with detection or confrontation may result in the offender being more voyeuristic and self-indulgent, resulting in a slighter bigger margin; that is, relatively less concordance with the offender's own behavior. Finally, for some behaviors (e.g., touch/pinching or leaning closely) that occur in packed, moving buses in Indian cities where entry and exit from buses is difficult, physical contact between humans is virtually impossible to avoid under such circumstances. Perhaps offenders and victims' perspectives on similar behaviors could differ in terms of offending and victimization. Unfortunately, we do not have the data to draw inferences to these assumptions other than to consider them as important issues for future research.

12.9 Conclusion and policy implications

Profound issues stemming from globalization and traditional cultural tendencies have created unfavorable settings for women in public spaces. SH as a specific

form of sexual violence in South Asian countries draws greater attention because of the disjunction between the prevalence of sexual harassment and the governments' inability to counteract such phenomena (Niaz, 2003). Findings from this research draw attention to two important factors from policy perspectives. The first relates to mobility and access to quality public transit infrastructure to create a greater sense of safety and security for women to participate and contribute to the overall economic and social advancement of the nation. As evidenced in this study and others, infrastructure can play a large part in the degree and prevalence of SH (e.g., overcrowded buses). As such, a goal of any democratic nation should be to demonstrate fair and equal treatment of all its citizens, including keeping women safe from SH wherever possible.

The second factor relates to the state's demonstration of its ability to effectively enforce the laws to reach a degree of deterrence in the eyes and minds of potential offenders. The large number of SH offenders that do not believe the state has either effective laws or effective enforcement of SH laws speaks volumes and could increase boldness among perpetrators of violence against women in public spaces. In addition, the state educational departments could institute curricular changes to introduce subject matter in schools to educate and sensitize students to this subject from an early age. Finally, findings from this research also point to the importance of media in educating the public about criminal laws and penalties relating to SH for both potential victims and potential offenders. Given the large fan following that entertainment and sports personalities enjoy in India, the media can play a critical role in bringing public service messages and dedicated news coverage of this form of social problem to a larger audience.

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