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The Dimension of Women Safety in Delhi: Examining the so- called “Must Not Go Places”

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ABSTRACT:

Women's safety in the urban areas has been an issue of growing concern. The debate on violence and fear of violence has been going on within urban politics and planning. The objective of this research is to examine these matters from a spatial perspective. Fear leads women to take precautions which are often spatially linked, such as avoiding certain parts of the city or places or avoid going out after dark. It may be argued that fear is a consequence of women's unequal status and experience. It also contributes to perpetuating gendered inequality.

However, the spatiality of fear does not mean a simple identification and description of the most frightening places and areas, but rather a complex analysis of gendered spatiality .It is important to understand that how spatial constraints are interlinked with gendered power relations In this paper the author tries to analyze quantitative and qualitative information about the women negotiation with different public spaces of urban areas as safe and unsafe spaces. The Study area is Delhi city which is known as the most unsafe city for women in India. The paper analyses various demographic and social dimensions of women safety. The paper is based on primary survey carried out in the city of New Delhi at various locations. The paper tries to bring out people’s perception especially women’s perception about safe and unsafe places.

KEY WORDS: Spatial understanding, Gendered inequality, Fear, Unsafe places, sex ratio, awareness level, Virginitophobia.

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INTRODUCTION:

An urban area can presents various images ranging from high rise buildings, crowded place, crime, traffic congestion to pollution. These images can affect everyday geographies of a person who is residing there and in consequence his or her interactions with the city. A person choose his or her daily ways (to work, to home, to school) based on their mental maps and understandings. The cities are based on a composite images and experiences, both negative and positive. The type of fears experienced by city dwellers are as diverse and multiple as the persons and places. Similarly it is believed that fear is not known, or wholly measurable and is diverse, dynamic and open to interpretation. With cities like Delhi to Mumbai, the fear factor is generally based on a person's own identity whether it is based on race, class, ethnicity, or gender however the relationship between identity and fears is also not very clear. For centuries, urban sociologist has been looking thoughtfully the relationships between social indicators and the city. These indicators affect mobility, housing access, employment and general feelings of belonging within the city. It is with these social effects that the issue of female insecurity is concerned. The paper analyses various demographic and social dimensions of women safety. The paper is based on primary survey carried out in the city of New Delhi at various locations. The paper tries to bring out people's perception especially women's perception about safe and unsafe places.

Fear of crime, in general terms, can be described as a feeling of "fear" and "insecurity" derived from a feeling of a person who senses his/her personal security to be under the threat. It has seen that people prepare their mental map about safe and unsafe places and paths on the bases of their fear and anxiety. These maps also include the intricacies about time of day or night and whether they are alone or in group. On the bases of these people choose their ways to move. They may avoid certain areas and can choose others¹. Fear also leads women to prepare a spatial understanding, such as avoiding certain parts of the city or not going out after dark. This spatial understanding of fear does not necessarily indicate the most frightening places of the city but rather a complex understanding of gender spatiality. This gender spatiality may differ from person to person based on their individual experiences of violence.

In 1961, the publication of Jane Jacobs' book "The Death and Life of Great American Cities" attacked on the city planning and design. One of her major criticisms was of the way modern city designs have undermined the ability of residents to observe public streets and activity so have reduced informal social control of criminal activity. She advocated the design of pavements and neighbourhoods

to reduce fear and crime. This can be done by attracting people and circulating them through an area and by breaking down isolated private spaces to create communal areas. Its important for the residents to establish interpersonal contacts by promoting natural surveillance and social cohesion. These ideas infact are put forward often as a solution to women's fear of attack in public space. In 1988-89 Gill Valentine conducted intensive interviews and small group discussions with women from two suburban areas. He demonstrated that reading women feel safer in the presence or visual range of others. In the city like Delhi many areas provide safe sites for criminal activities and need to be take care by urban planners. However, if through more thoughtful planning these features were eliminated so that the design of the environment facilitated informal social control women would feel more confident to go out. Similarly, research has also shown that street lighting can reduce both interpersonal assaults and perception of fear². Perception of fear not only restrict the geographical mobility of urban women but fear of crime and disorder may 'keep people off the streets' and that have been used to influence public policy, urban (re)development, and the accessibility and tenor of public space in some cities. Therefore the urban geographies of fear have implications beyond the personal, emotional landscapes and paths of individuals.

Stanko ,2000 and Ferraro,1996 feels that in most of the urban industrial societies women fear more and use more financial resources to protect themselves from possible crimes than men though men are generally face more incidences of violence in their day to day life^{3,4}. What are the reasons that women feel so insecure or most of the surveys reports give the impression of their insecure feelings? This enigma of fear has been endorsed by various factors, which includes regular incidences of suppression, violence and other types of aggression that never reported to police and therefore in crime statistics women victimization is reported low than its actual scale. One most notable factor in women's reported fear of crime is the fear of rape, at time explicated as the anxiety of murder if one were oppose or be apparent that she will be fight back⁵. Though , women's fear of crime by unfamiliar people remains absurd , since women are more likely to be sexually assaulted or murdered by familiar people rather than unknown people ^{5,6,7}.

According to Delhi Police statistics it was reported that six cases of rape and eight cases of molestation were filed every day on an average in the national capital of India in 2019 till November 15th. As many as 1947 rape cases have been registered by Delhi Police till November 15. A total of 2616 women reported molestation cases, 427 filed a case of insult to modesty of women. Plus, 3104 cases of

kidnapping of women in Delhi have been registered. There are 2,000 dark and desolate stretches in the Capital - identified by Delhi Police - which are considered too dangerous for women to venture out, especially in the evening hours. Such stretches are located around the airport, according to a report by India Today published on 2 December 2019; Metro and Railway stations, malls and even posh localities of South Delhi and multiple civic agencies have failed to install or repair street lights in these dark zones for years now. Twenty-five of these stretches are extremely crime-prone. Fifteen of these lead to Metro Stations such as ITO, Jama Masjid, Govindpuri, Dwarka Mor, Uttam Nagar, Janakpuri West, Janakpuri East, Tilak Nagar, Shadipur, Chandni Chowk, Kashmere Gate, New Delhi, Adarsh Nagar, Vishwavidyalaya and Jahangirpuri. The other stretches on this list include South Delhi's Lajpat Nagar, South Extension, Saket, Vasant Vihar and Dhoola Kuan neighbourhood. In April 2017 Delhi Police released a report as part of its yearly disclosure was shocking also the numbers, it fortify the national capital reputation of being a unsafe city specially for women who made a distress call to women help lines every 9 minutes on an average. According to Hindustan Times, April 2017 report, allegations of crimes against women a molestation complaint every two hours, a rape case every four hours remained staggeringly high. The report also mentioned that most of the cases that remained unsolved were street crimes robberies, snatching, pick-pocketing and similar thefts. These incidents are more widespread, affecting most citizens. As per the report, in every six minutes, someone becomes a victim of theft. There was a case of snatching reported every 30 minutes on an average.

AIM AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The paper aims to analyse the psychological framework of the residents of Delhi in order to understand the so called “must not go places” for the women. The main research questions are:

1. How much safe are the so called “safest places” for women?
2. Which are the actual fears of the females?
3. Is age and Occupation linked to such fears?

MATERIAL AND METHOD

To analyse and perform the psychological study it becomes important to talk to masses. The study is based on a primary survey conducted through a well-structured questionnaire in December 2019. The questionnaire consist of various questions based on individual detail especially age and occupation, place of work and place of residency, type of family etc. The questionnaire also focused on

various questions linked to fear of places and movement of females in the city. It also analyses the causes of such fear and later discusses on to what women wants?

To carry out the survey a random sample technique was being used at different places of public importance. The places selected were:

- Academic institution (one school and one college)
- Commercial paces (Nehru Place, Connaught Place)
- Residential areas (One each in north, south, East , West and Central Delhi)
- Kamla Nagar and Malviya Nagar market
- Three Metro stations and three bus stops

A total of 250 respondents were randomly interviewed at above mentioned places and care was taken to include people of different age, gender and occupation. Besides a questionnaire survey, video and pictures were also clicked to understand the fear of going to must no go places.

DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

Delhi's sex ratio narrates its story about female shrinking space. A mega city like Delhi has a huge job potential and educational opportunities, this attract the migrants from the nearby states to come to Delhi and later settle down. The city has experienced a low sex ratio of 821 females per thousand male in 2011 last census conducted in India. This figure was comparatively higher in 2001 i.e 868 females per thousand male but not at all satisfactory (Figure 1).



Figure 1 : Sex Ratio of Delhi

Data source: Statistical Abstract of Delhi

Even the child sex ratio is as low as 868 females per thousand male in 2011, which was 871 in 2001. This again shows that the sex ratio is completely partial to males in case of Delhi. According to findings of a several reports published in Times of India, 23rd August 2014, the significant gap caters to female feticide and preference to male child in the city. This shows the psychological and behavioural pattern of the residents of Delhi. The report also briefs that the sex ratio improved little bit after the introduction of *Ladli* Scheme for girls in 2008, which grants financial support to every girl child whose birth has been registered. According to Civil Registration data system 2011, Delhi is among the 10 worst states and union territories in terms of sex ratio. The little improvement in sex ratio can also be because of Pre-Natal Diagnostic Technique Act, which prohibits the selective abortions due to detection of female child, which is highly condemnable.

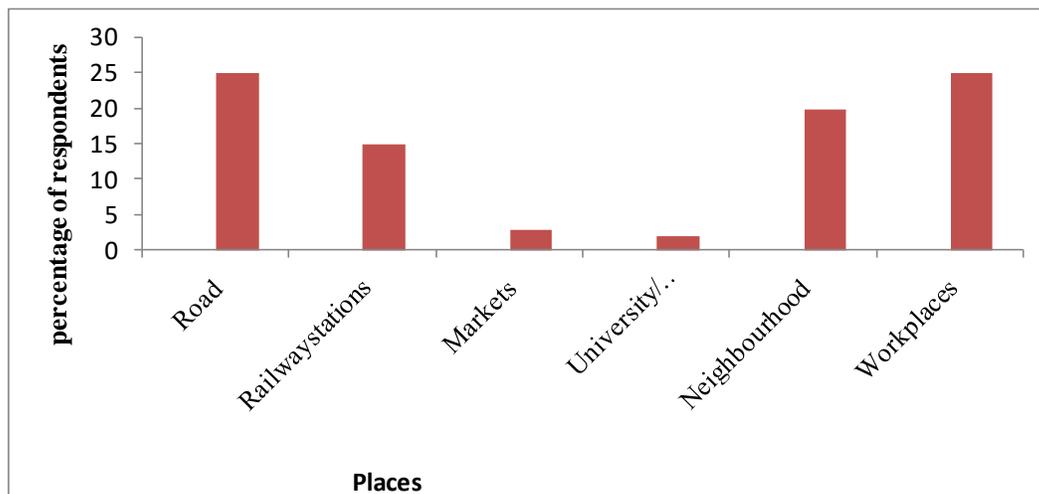


Figure 2: perception about Unsafe places for women

Source: Primary Survey

The cities world around change their shape and size and with that they change their psychological spaces. Cities in today's world need to be inclusive and liveable. They should try to meet the standards of habituation. Liveability is linked to comfort and safety too. For women, safety has always remained an issue in cities. Cities like Delhi exhibits men dominated domain. There is an essential need to worry about female safety. To understand the spatial aspect of this fear, the respondents were asked to identify and rank unsafe places for women in Delhi. Nearly 25 percent of the respondents consider roads and lanes to be most unsafe for females. Same number of respondents ranked work places to be the most unsafe places for women followed by neighbourhood, railway stations and markets

respectively. Educational institutes were not a common unsafe place according to the respondents as only 2 per cent consider it to be unsafe. The figure 2 points out that roads and workplaces are the most unsafe places for women. Such an outcome shows that several women face safety issues i.e crime, molestation, rape, sexual harassment, gender biasness etc on such places. This indicates that women who are working or are on move from their houses feel unsafe and even men thinks such places are unsafe for women. So shall we believe that women at their homes are safe? To find out the anomaly of safety between workplace and house of women, a further cross questioning has been done. It was found that nearly 55 per cent of respondents believe that houses are safe for females while 10 per cent are not sure about it. This shows 45 per cent of the respondents do not completely agree that houses are safe for women (Figure 3). This breaks the myth of the belief that women should not work and remain at home as home does not guarantee them safety too.

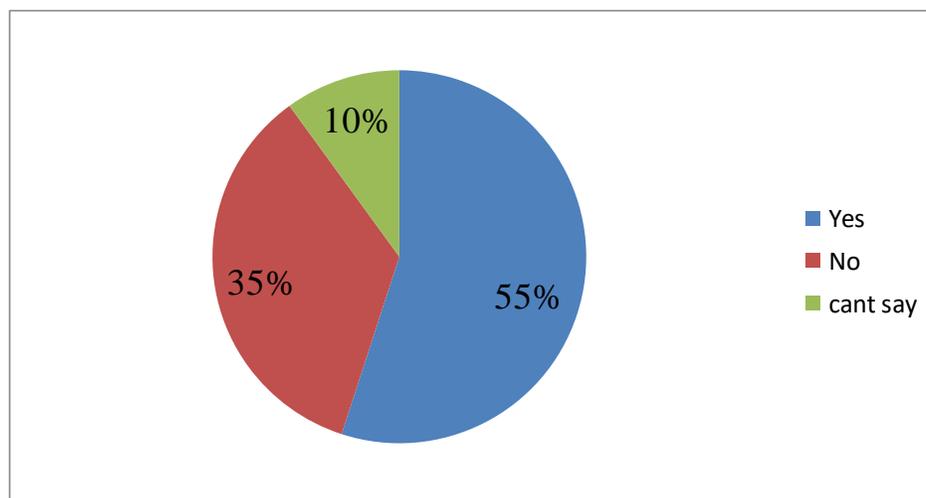


Figure 3: Are Houses safe for women?

Source: Primary Survey

Considering safety an issue, females would definitely build their fears linked to it. On asking the female respondents about their fearfulness, it was found that almost all females of different age groups and different occupations feel fearful. The primary survey shows that mostly females are fearful of being raped. “Virgivitophobia” is a term used for fear of being raped. Phobias are developed due to combination of external factors and internal predispositions. Not all women are being raped but their phobia is linked to the risk and fear that have been nurtured in their minds since birth. There can be complex causes to such fears. This can also be linked to “scelerophobia” i.e fear of bad men. Theses bad men phobia can create fear of being attacked, murdered or robbed or molested by any bad men. These

fears are part of society's or families' way of nurturing. Very commonly we see small kids are being taught not to talk to strangers or stay away of strangers. This stranger is generally a man who is unknown. Female strangers are generally unknowingly pardoned in this learning process.

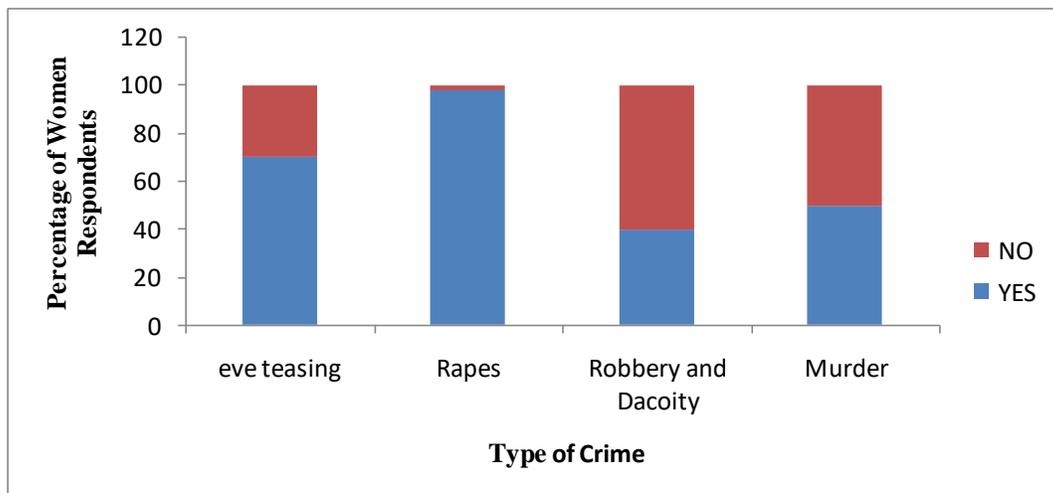


Figure 4: I am Fearful of

Source: Primary Survey

According to a report by United Nation Entity for Gender and Equality and the Empowerment of Women, the pervasive ferocity against females augments to women and girls' fears of being victims of crimes like mugging and other types of physical attacks. For instance , In Gallup's Annual Crime Survey Report, 2010, Women are more than twice as likely as men to say they are afraid to walk alone at night near their home, 50% vs. 22%. This 28-point gender gap conforms to what Gallup found on this issue globally in 2009⁸. Sexual abuse is the key reason of fear among women in urban areas. Sexual violence against women is a major public health problem and a human rights violation. It has direct negative effects on individual women, their families and the community, including psychological, health and economic effects⁹. The study here shows that nearly 99 per cent of the females fear to be raped and around 70 per cent fear to be molested (figure 4). Fear of being robbed or murdered is also very high.

Awareness is knowledge or perception of a situation or fact. So are we aware and differentiate between safe and unsafe places, fear and phobias, stories and reality, myth or fact. It's very difficult to answer such questions as it depends upon its source of origin and flow. In earlier days elderly people in the house were the prime source of information, they were considered to be much reliable and trustful source of information. In modern days, media (television, newspaper and social media) is the main source of information and flow of information. They lack personal touch and create a fact into a story.

But at the same time they disclose many unsaid and unreported stories of incidents happened with women all around the world.

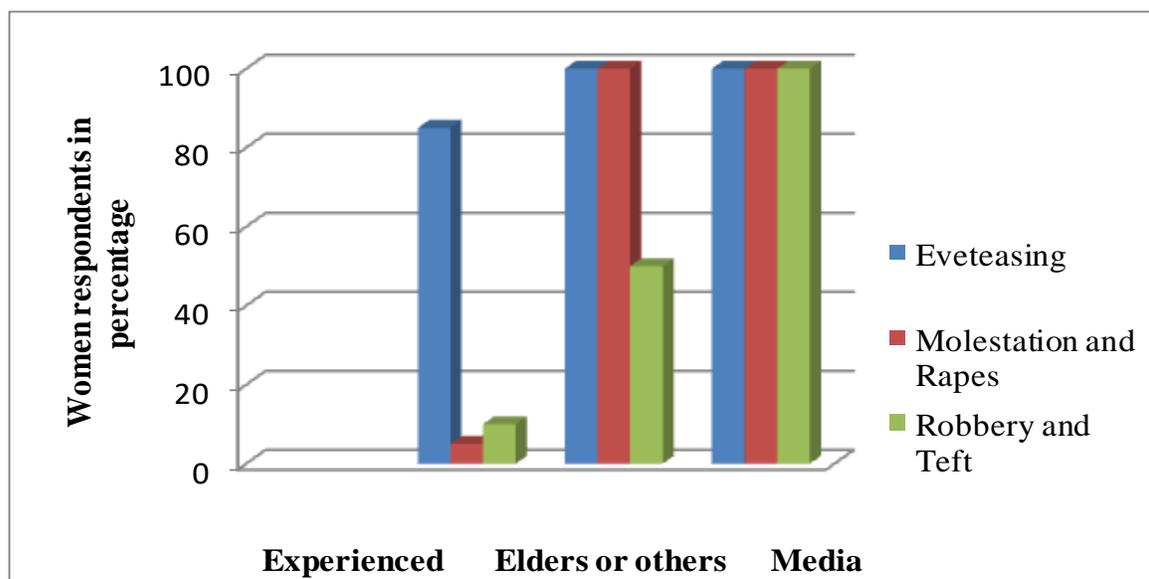


Figure 5: Experience, Awareness or Mindset

Source: Primary Survey

Experience of eve teasing in cities is very common. In Delhi nearly 85 percent of the respondents have experienced eve teasing and 5 per cent have faced molestation (Figure 5). This is a very high figure and shows the safety issue in the city. Elderly or neighbourhood are still the main source of information for young ones but media rules. Media captures and runs several incidents and mishappenings. Since people of all ages now days watch TV and use mobile phones and are part of various social media platforms, therefore, they easily come to know about the incidents reported. So, on one hand media creates awareness but it also create mindsets and build up fear by the way the incidents are being reported.

Is crime against women age bound? To find out this, the survey was conducted on different age group of women. It was an effort to analyse which is the most common fear in different age groups. Fig 6 shows that talking to strangers is very fearful among girls of less than 10 years of age. Even 25 per cent of girls between 10-20 years feel fearful while talking to the strangers. Eve teasing is not at all age bound. It is a common fear among above 10 years of age of girls. This fear is reported by almost 70 percent of females above 50 years of age. Snatching and robbery fear is common in more than 50 years of age of females. Even 25 per cent of girls between 10-20 years of age also reported such fear of

snatching and robbery. Fear of molestation and rape is higher in the females in reproductive ages between 10- 50 years of age. But it is surprising to note that 40 per cent of females above the age of 50 feel the same fear (Figure 6).

Therefore, it can be interpreted that fear is not age bound, though the intensity of fear or type of fear can vary with age. Ferraro in 1996, researched on age/fear of crime paradox. He found that although women rank consistently higher with respect to fear of all victimization types, that most of the variance explained diminishes or is reversed when fear of rape is taken out of the equation. He further analysed that the younger women age, the fear of sexual assault most. Older women are more concerned with their personal injury during the course of any crime because they are physically weaker and the potential for harm is greater¹⁰.

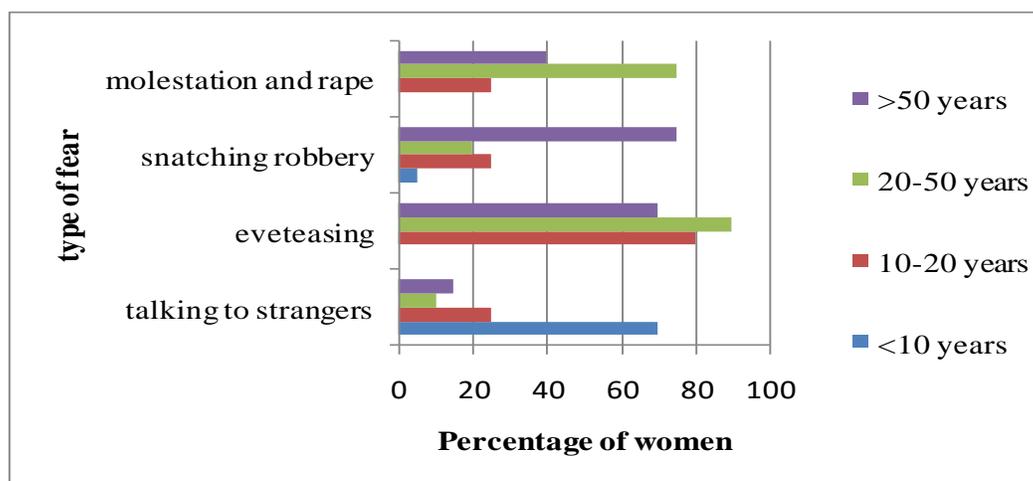


Figure 6: Age-Fear among Women

Source: Primary Survey

Women play several roles in her life and are into various different type of occupations. Where on one hand formal sector in India is abide to certain gender sensitive rules, the informal sector has no formal rules and regulations. To analyse the fact that women in different occupations have different type of fears, the questions were asked from students, formal sectors, informal sector and housewives. House makers should be ideally fearless towards any kind of crime against them. But as it has been mentioned earlier that 45 percent women do not feel safe at homes, the common fear among them are to be raped, molested and domestic violence (figure 7). In unorganized sector, where the women are easily victimized as there are no formal rules and regulations, women are in need of job and mostly worked as unskilled labourer, they are more prone to all types of crime especially violence and fear of losing job.

In organized sector besides strict rules and regulations, the women fear of eve teasing, molestation, rape and loss of job. Many women also reported the unfair and disrespectful attitude of male colleagues, unequal pay at same posts, working hours etc make them vulnerable to mental harassment.

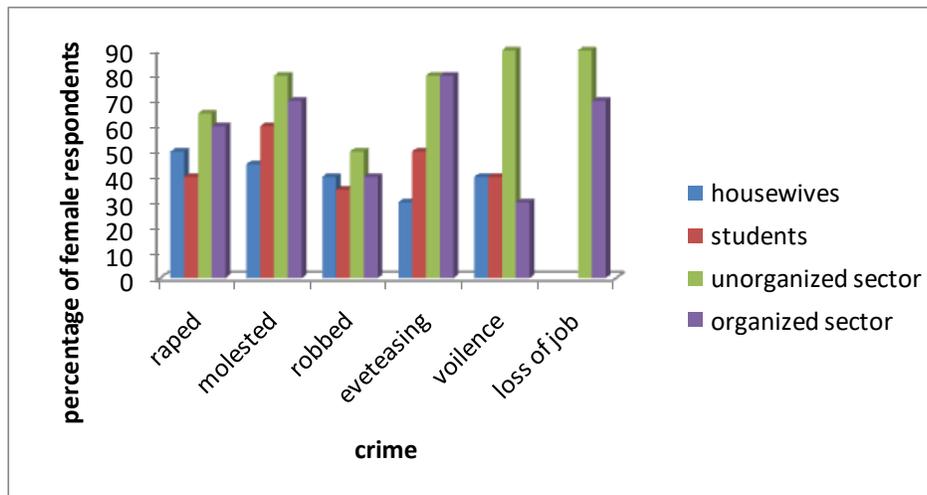


Figure 7: Fear of Being

Source: Primary Survey

CONCLUSION

Sexual violence is likely to occur more commonly in cultures that foster beliefs of perceived male superiority and social and cultural inferiority of women ¹¹.

Fear and insecurities are derived from the feeling of a person when he/she feels personal threat or risk. Cities are symbols of modern world. Urbanization are often linked to development. But development is hoax if it does not include the fearlessness of its nationals. The paper has tried to highlight the psychological and behavioural aspect of women in Delhi. It can be interpreted that women fear are common in all age groups and different occupations. Even the women do not find her home to be safe. The design of public space has been suggested by many thinkers as the major influence on women's sense of safety in that space. She recognizes various fears like fear of talking to strangers, fear of being molested, raped, fear of domestic violence, robbery and snatching. These fears build up unhealthy mind and restrict movement of females from one place to another. "Must not go" is used as a phrase in the paper, while the paradox is almost all places are unsafe for women because of not only external reasons but also the internal fear and phobias in her mind. What can be done? Fear should not be gender specific. All men are fearless, it's not true. But mostly the women are fearful about the crime against them especially molestation, rape and eve teasing. Older theories

consider them physically weak to fight against their enemies. But at the same time it's true that society made them mentally weak too by determining their safe and unsafe spaces. A fearless mind is safe everywhere.

ETHICAL DECLARATION

All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

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