

# Effects of Harassment and Abuse on Psychological Well-Being among Women in India

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## ***Abstract:***

*Abuse and harassment are serious issues that are now plaguing both India and the rest of the world. An unethical or harmful response to a circumstance or style of acting toward a person is defined as psychological harassment, it is described as unpleasant or hostile conduct by one or more people directed against a third party either directly or indirectly, whereas Abuse is the wrong handling or use of something, frequently done to unfairly or wrongfully benefit from it. This article analyses Effects of Harassment and Abuse on an Individual and also to examine its correlation with depression, anxiety, negative mental health and its overall effect on psychological well-being in both India and the rest of the world and the social problems it is creating.*

**Keywords:** *Mental Health; Depression; Harassment; Psychological well-being.*

## 1. Introduction

Abuse and harassment are serious issues that are now plaguing both India and the rest of the world. People can experience sexual abuse in addition to normal harassment at work or home. Despite all the steps taken to stop harassment and its impact on a person's mental health and wellbeing, the problem persists and never ends. Everyone's emotional and physical health in India is being badly impacted, notably that of working women (Mushtaq, 2015). The negative and growing impacts of harassment can have a negative impact on a person's psychological health, as well as their performance at work, motivation, and tolerance for work, all of which can have a negative impact on their mental and psychological wellbeing and even cause depression. Harassment is a persistent stressor that interferes with a victim's ability to function and causes them to experience great physical and emotional strain. stress, Depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, suicidal thoughts, adjustment problems, and phobic disorders are just a few of the severe mental health effects they may experience (Powell, 2020). According to (Gale, 2019), Working women who encounter sexual harassment are predicted to experience depression 4–9 times more frequently than those who did not. Because sexual harassment pollutes the workplace and destroys the psychological health, job performance, and confidence of individuals impacted by it, it is recognized as a major stressor associated with increased depression symptoms. Motivated by the worldwide #MeToo movement, women who reported misconduct against powerful men have frequently faced blowback, including harassment, retaliation, attempted bribery, flaws and bias in the legal system, stigma, and threats. Criminal defamation laws from the colonial era have frequently been utilized by those accused to silence women who dared to speak out. The result of sexual harassment manifests as worry, which causes the victims to avoid going to work, suffer from medical ailments, perform poorly, or even attempt to leave that company. The majority of the time, this results in unabated unemployment as well as short- and long-term losses for the employers. Employees may experience ongoing worry as a result of sexual harassment when an unwelcome person or persons are present in the same firm (Bai, 2022). The victim of harassment may also experience sadness, acute emotional retaliation, and financial difficulties. In order to better understand the practice of harassment and abuse and how it affects psychological health by contributing to stress, anxiety, and depression, the current research was undertaken. So, for a Survey on it we have taken the following literature review and the following hypotheses were developed.

## 2. Literature Survey

(Mushtaq, 2015) determines the prevalence of sexual harassment in nurses and to look at its correlation with negative mental health (depression, anxiety and stress). A significant positive correlation of sexual harassment with depression, anxiety, stress and combined effect of them was found. Assessment tools like Sexual Harassment Experience Questionnaire and Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale were used in the study. (Marks, 2012) summarized the instances of abuse and harassment in sports. Sexual assault and harassment have serious physical and psychological repercussions for the victim, their team, and the overall health and integrity of sport. This article offers sport healthcare practitioners a useful primer on preventative tactics as well as guidance on identifying and handling suspected misuse. The

prevention and early identification of SHA in sports can be greatly aided by a team physician. They might also be able to help athletes who have suffered from SHA find the right resources after the abuse to lessen any physical or psychological repercussions. However, (Powell, 2020) described the harassment and abuse that take place through digital means. Digital harassment and abuse refer to a range of harmful, interpersonal behaviours experienced via the internet, as well as via mobile phone and other electronic communication devices. According to the findings, transgender individuals are significantly more likely than heterosexual cisgender people to be victims of online harassment and abuse in general, as well as sexual, sexual orientation, and gender-based harassment and abuse.

(Gale, 2019) reported that exposures to verbal abuse, sexual harassment, and sexual assault are common among cabin crew, with 63, 26, and 2% of respondents, respectively, reporting harassment in the past year alone. Workplace abuse was associated with depression, sleep disturbances, and musculoskeletal injuries among male and female crew, with a trend toward increasing odds ratios (ORs) given a higher frequency of events. Their study is the first to comprehensively characterize workplace abuse and harassment and its relation to health in a largely female customer-facing workforce. The strong associations with health outcomes observed in their study highlights the question of how workplace policies can be altered to mitigate prevalent abuses. Clinicians could also consider how jobs with high emotional labour demands may predispose people to adverse health outcomes, educate patients regarding their psychological/physical responses and coping strategies, and be aware of signs of distress in patients working in such occupations in order to direct them to the appropriate treatments and therapies. Consequently, (Ahmad, 2020) examined the incidence of street harassment and its sociopsychological effects on women residing in Pakistan's capital city, Islamabad. When women are the victims of street harassment, it is a kind of gender violence that breaches their dignity by making them feel exposed and uneasy in public. On the basis of empirical assessments of the opinions of 200 female students from eight different universities in Islamabad, Pakistan, the findings have been put together. According to the report, objectification, harassment on the street, and assault are undeniable aspects of women's lives in Pakistan. Women continue to live in a patriarchal environment that thrives on harassing, discriminating, and oppressing them in both public and private realms in Pakistan despite making up more than half of the population. According to the study's findings, street harassment is a serious problem that has terrible emotional, physical, and psychological repercussions. It also suggests that policy interventions be made to stop this horrible crime against women.

(Young, 2004) employed a gender diagnostic (GD) method to look at the links among bullying, peer relationships, psychological well-being, gender-atypical behavior, and gender roles (masculinity—M and femininity—F) in a large community sample of 15-year-olds. Little correlation between GD and gender roles was seen. Regardless of sexual orientation, M was favorably and F adversely related with harassment. Boys who identified as "gender atypical" reported higher levels of victimization, loneliness, lack of male friends, and distress than their "gender typical" counterparts. After controlling for M and F, "femaleness" (defined as "highly gender-typed" females and "gender atypical" boys) was linked to psychological discomfort. GD is a useful and unobtrusive technique for pinpointing a group whose vulnerability psychology, health, and education experts should be aware of.

(Bai, 2022) shows that abusive supervision can have negative impacts on both its victims and other people (peer abusive supervision). However, the research on abusive supervision neglects to look at the effects of abusive supervision on victims who are mistreated by peers or other third-party employees. Their argument, which is based on the social learning theory, is that victims are subjected to peer harassment and ostracism by third parties who themselves have learned abusive leadership behaviors from abusive leaders. Furthermore, they contend that a victim's proactive nature will mitigate these indirect, detrimental impacts. To test the hypotheses, they carried out two investigations using three-wave longitudinal data. Their study contributes to the existing body of research on abusive supervision by emphasizing the social learning process of third-party peer abuse and indicating the impact of abusive supervision on the victim's performance. According to this study (J, 2018) parent-child interactions continue throughout life despite childhood abuse, and maintaining a relationship with an abusive parent may harm the psychological health of adult victims. Adults who were maltreated as children should have their unresolved concerns with the parent properly handled while dealing with their mental health difficulties. Childhood abuse by parents has a bad effect on a person's mental health as an adult. However, little is known about whether or how current connections with abusive parents may explain the negative impacts over the long term. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate the mediating role of connections with abusive parents in later life on the relationship between parental child abuse and psychological well-being.

(De, 2021) stated that Childhood sexual abuse (CSA) has been linked to a variety of harmful physical, mental, behavioral, depressive, and social impacts. Furthermore, it's probable that people are unaware of the potential psychological tools that can help mitigate the detrimental effects of childhood emotional abuse. Therefore, it has been suggested in this research that deep learning assisted impact of psychological abuse and depression (DL-IPAD) in children be used to manage major health issues for their children and coordinate that role with necessities of everyday living. The relationship between parental psychological maltreatment of their children and teenage mental health issues was researched by DL-IPAD. In a strategy for measuring mood and depression, the suggested method finds converging evidence of a living spirit that lessens the impact of childhood mental abuse and neglect on subsequent depressive symptoms. Emotional dysregulations and the subsequent behavioral problems relating to depressed symptoms are mediators of emotional maltreatment in childhood. This paper aims to demonstrate how Child Protective Services can be careful in identifying and stopping childhood emotional abuse. Finally, techniques for emotional regulation and emotional health might lessen depression.

(Martinez-Gonzalez, 2021) illustrated that the decisions made by women in simulated scenarios of psychological abuse are examined in this study. 73 women who have experienced domestic abuse took part. The analysis was based on how they responded to vignettes presenting the following domestic violence scenarios: humiliation of women's maternal identity with children as witnesses and body shaming; their coping mechanisms; early maladaptive schemes; and their decisions. In addition to some early maladaptive schemes (defectiveness/shame, attachment, social isolation/alienation, emotional deprivation, failure to achieve, and subjugation) associated with their reactions facing a humiliating situation with children as witnesses, the participants presented some coping strategies (seeking social

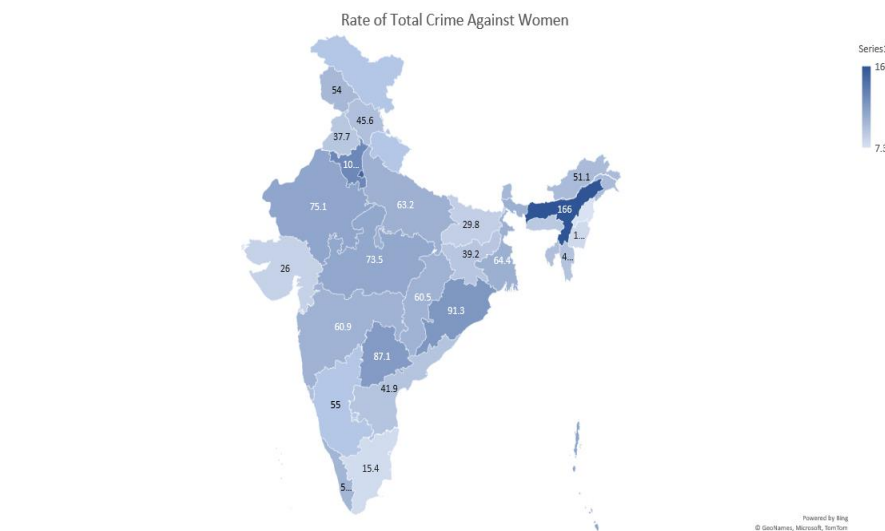
support, wishing for the best, and seeking professional support). Their responses were correlated with certain coping mechanisms (wishful thinking, professional assistance seeking, autonomy, negative auto-focus coping, and positive reappraisal) and one maladaptive mechanism (defectiveness/shame) when the humiliation was directed at their body image. In comparison to women who made aggressive choices, those who reacted avoidantly sought out more social and professional assistance but also had higher signs of discomfort and a decline in self-esteem. When it comes to the construction of coping mechanisms and maladaptive schemes in female victims of domestic violence, the presence of children as witnesses appears to be a stress factor.

### 3. Methodology

The research work has measured the intensity of sexual abuse and harassment on women in India through various parameters like Percentage share of each State and Rank states on the basis of incidences, cognizable crimes, child marriage, dowry system, crime rate, etc. with the help of National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), Government of India as well as United Nations' Indexes, Surveys and Statistical Data.

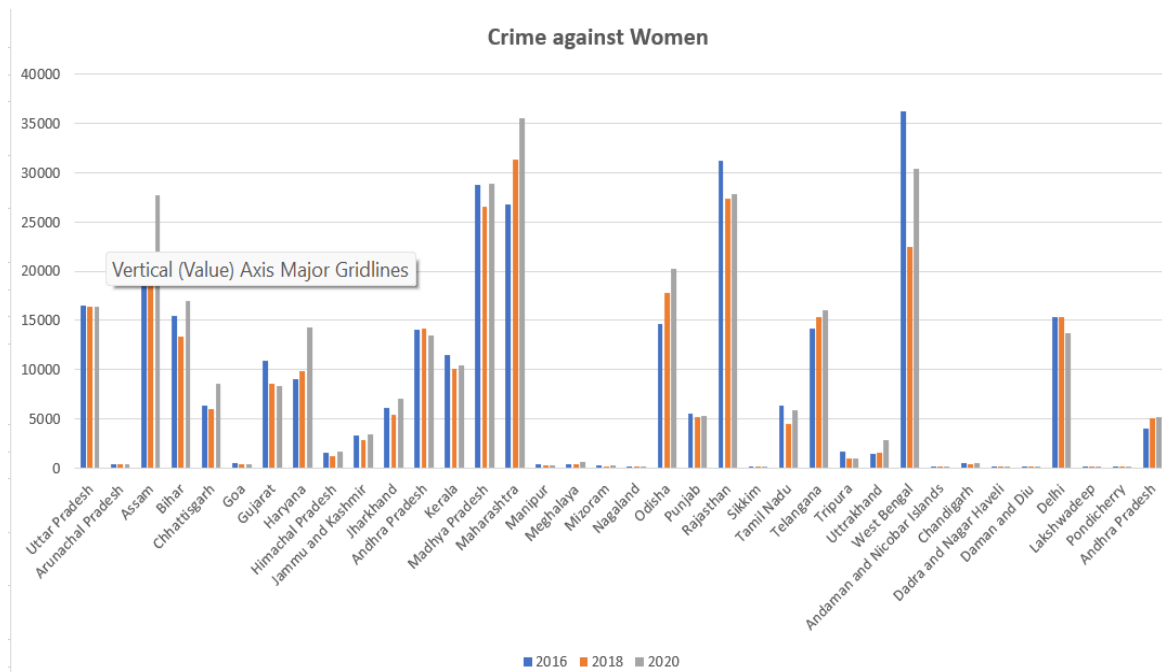
### 4. Data Analysis

Figure 4.1: Total Crime Rate Against Women



National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) published a report of Crime in India from 2018 to 2020, Government of India ranked states and union territories of India according to total crime rate against women. As of 2016, Delhi is the least safe State/UT with the highest total crime rate of 160.4 (per 100,000 persons). Nagaland has the lowest incidence of crime based on the percentage of share.

Figure 4.2: Crime Against Women (IPC + SLL)



The crime rate against women as well as the harassment rate in India state-wise are discussed for the years 2016, 2018, and 2020. In Chandigarh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Daman and Diu, Lakshadweep, Goa, Andaman and Nicobar Island, and other North Eastern States, it is hardly noticeable. In Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, and West Bengal, it is still expanding.

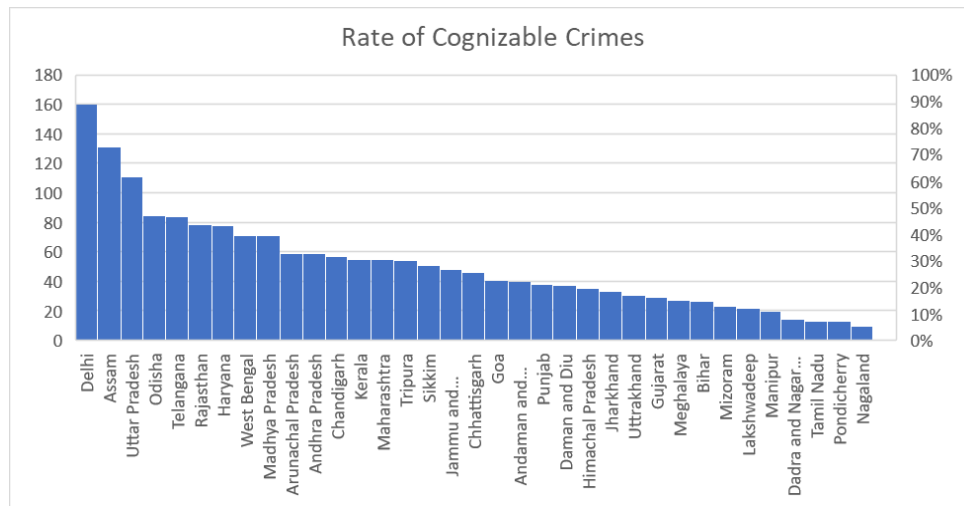
Figure 4.2: Gender Vulnerability Index of India

Category	GVI	Rank
Goa	0.656	1
Kerala	0.634	2
Mizoram	0.627	3
Sikkim	0.613	4
Manipur	0.610	5
Himachal Pradesh	0.604	6
Karnataka	0.604	7
Punjab	0.592	8
Maharashtra	0.592	9
Tamil Nadu	0.582	10
Telangana	0.580	11
Andhra Pradesh	0.578	12
Uttarakhand	0.576	13
Nagaland	0.564	14
Chhattisgarh	0.552	15
Gujarat	0.543	16
Tripura	0.530	17
West Bengal	0.519	18
Haryana	0.516	19
Jammu and Kashmir	0.509	20
Meghalaya	0.504	21
Rajasthan	0.496	22
Odisha	0.483	23
Assam	0.483	24
Madhya Pradesh	0.467	25
Arunachal Pradesh	0.452	26
Jharkhand	0.450	27
Delhi	0.436	28
Uttar Pradesh	0.434	29
Bihar	0.410	30
India	0.531	

The GVI, created by Plan India, aims to identify the vulnerabilities encountered by women and girls in all key areas, including education, health and survival, poverty, and

protection.one can use the GVI, to realign and review critical areas. Goa is the state where girls are least at risk, according to the Index. the GVI being 0.656. Goa is ranked first in terms of protection, fifth in terms of education, sixth in terms of health and survival, and eighth in terms of poverty. Kerala comes in at number two with a GVI of 0.634. This is the result of excellent progress in the health area. At 0.627, Mizoram is tied for third place with Kerala in the GVI. Additionally, it does well in the protection and poverty dimensions.

Figure 3.4: Cognizable Crime Rate of states in India



From the above figure, Northeast India has consistently had the lowest incidence of crime, with four out of five of the least crime-prone states being from the region. Nagaland has continued to have the lowest registered crime rate (69.4 per lakh population) in the country, although it rose from 44. It also had the lowest incidence of crime based on percentage of share of the nation. Among cities, Delhi, Chennai, Ahmedabad, Surat and Mumbai have the most registered crimes in 2020 (although according crime rate these positions vary).

### 5. Findings

In 2019, roughly 62 out of every 100,000 women in India were victims of a crime, which represents India's overall crime rate against women. The crime rate increased when compared to the previous year's numbers. The number of crimes against women may increase as a result of a number of psychological and social reasons. In India in 2020, domestic violence or abuse committed by a husband or other family members received the most reports of victimization. With nearly 85,000 occurrences reported, assault came in second place that year. Over 28 thousand rape incidents were reported across the nation, frequently making headlines. This was one of more than 371 thousand crimes against women that were reported that year. According to a survey by the Public Health Foundation of India, the rate of rape-related crimes in India increased by 70.7% over the past 20 years, from 11.6 per 100,000 women and girls in 2001 to 19.8 in 2018. Odisha ranked highly on the list with 49.4 instances per 100,000 women and girls in 2018, while Bihar recorded the fewest incidents with a rate of 1.8 per 100,000. The survey also stated that Delhi's rape-related crime rate nearly doubled compared

to the other states between 2012 and 2014 before settling at 49.3 per 100,000. According to the "Women, Peace and Security Index 2021," India is ranked 148th out of 170 nations. The total number of reported crimes of any kind is divided by the entire population, and the result is multiplied by 100,000 to determine the overall crime rate (because crime rate is typically reported as X number of crimes per 100,000 people). The prevalence of crime varies widely between nations and is affected by numerous variables.

For instance, a nation's crime rate tends to increase when poverty and unemployment are high. On the other hand, tough police enforcement and harsh punishments tend to lower crime rates. Additionally, there is a significant relationship between age and crime, with people in their 20s and 30s committing the majority of crimes, particularly violent ones. Rate of all cognizable crimes in India: According to the National Crime Records Bureau, India's crime rate (crime incidence per 100,000 people) climbed from 383.5 in 2018 to 385.5 in 2019 to 383.8 in 2020 (Mushtaq, 2015). COVID-19-related restrictions and infractions are commonly thought to be the cause of the increase in crime in 2020 (Marks, 2012). In 2020, crimes including rape, kidnapping, and crimes against children decreased, but crimes connected to disrespecting state servants grew by 21% (Powell, 2020). A total of 5 million offences that were cognizable in 2018 were reported, including 3 million under the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and 2 million under Special & Local Laws (SLL) (Gale, 2019). 2020 will see an average charge-sheeting rate of 82.5% (Mushtaq, 2015).

## **6. Discussion**

The results of this study indicated that abuse and harassment are serious issues that are now plaguing both India and the rest of the world. People can experience sexual abuse in addition to normal harassment at work or home. Harassment is a persistent stressor that interferes with a victim's ability to function and causes them to experience great physical and emotional strain. stress, Depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, suicidal thoughts, adjustment problems, and phobic disorders are just a few of the severe mental health effects they may experience. According to reports, working women who encounter sexual harassment are predicted to experience depression 4–9 times more frequently than those who did not. The majority of the time, this results in unabated unemployment as well as short- and long-term losses for the employers. Abuse and harassment are serious issues that are now plaguing both India and the rest of the world. People can experience sexual abuse in addition to normal harassment at work or home. Northeast India has consistently had the lowest incidence of crime, with four out of five of the least crime-prone states being from the region. Nagaland has continued to have the lowest registered crime rate (69.4 per lakh population) in the country. Among cities, Delhi, Chennai, Ahmedabad, Surat and Mumbai have the most registered crimes in 2020 (although according crime rate these positions vary). Rape-related crime rate in Delhi almost double compared to the other states since 2012 before stabilizing at 49.3 per 100,000, the report added.



## 7. Conclusion

Exposure to abuse has been consistently shown to increase the likelihood of depression, but it also causes many other mental health problems. Experiencing sexual and psychological abuse have been found to be risk factors for developing depression in adulthood. There is a need to provide trauma-focused, cognitive-behavioral-based treatments that should serve as first-line treatment for abused survivors of children and adults, focusing on understanding the role of trauma-related symptoms. Psychiatrists working with survivors of any kind of abuse understand that it can lead to the development of mental and physical health symptoms, and include trauma-focused treatment where appropriate. Evidence-based treatment must be provided.

Psychotherapists also need to be aware of the fact that many survivors of sexual assault have multiple health problems. Further research is needed on the impact of abuse history on response to treatment for common problems among victims. It is also important to examine the abuse history of the presented case to understand the underlying dynamics of symptoms. To effectively treat depressed patients through psychological interventions, it is important to specifically address the underlying factors associated with abuse at all stages of life: psychological, physical, or sexual abuse. A variety of childhood adversities with a particular focus on can influence specific etiological pathways of depression, and understanding these pathways will be beneficial for the development of individually tailored interventions. However, relatively few studies have addressed the specific mechanisms by which abuse of any kind may increase vulnerability to subsequent depression, and longitudinal studies are generally lacking. Therefore, the implementation of personalized therapy in clinical settings remains very difficult.

Today, the media has emerged as a powerful tool of social change. It may be used to combat the horrendous acts of street harassment. Media can portray the ugliness of the demon of harassment that sadly pervades our society. Strong media campaigns may to be launched on radio, television and internet to educate the people of the enormity of this social evil. We have witnessed social media in recent past exposing some hideous elements involved in the episodes of street harassment. It can continue its drive through shaming the culprit. In addition, it is critical to reinforce social skills among the citizenry, especially young women to help them encounter street harassment more effectively.

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