

A Study on Students' Awareness of Women's Safety in Higher Education Institutions

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ABSTRACT

The safety of women in colleges and universities has become an urgent matter of great importance, not only determining who can join universities but also the wellbeing of students as a whole. The current research focuses on the perception of university students regarding the safety procedures for women, the infrastructure available, and the support provided by universities. The data were obtained using a well-designed questionnaire filled out by 300 respondents. It is evident that students are aware of elementary issues of safety like college policies, CCTV cameras, and security guards; however, information regarding self-defense courses, gender sensitivity, and late-night safety is still unknown.

Keywords: *Women, Security, Safety, Awareness, Higher Education, Student Perception, Students*

The issue of safety of women students in college has been of interest lately. College is not only a place for acquiring knowledge but also an environment in which the social and emotional growth of students takes place. It is necessary that they should feel safe so that they can engage, voice opinions, and confidently navigate campus activities. Despite all of the policies and measures that have been established for ensuring safety, it is dependent largely on the students being informed of these measures. The students will be able to benefit from these measures when they have awareness about them.

This research project examines the level of awareness of the students regarding the safety and security of women in their colleges and makes recommendations accordingly.

Need and justification of the study

The study aims to explore the safety and security among the students in higher education institutions (HEIs). The UGC guidelines focus on creating a safe and gender-fair environment. They include basic facilities, Internal Complaints Committees (ICC), and quarterly reports. By looking at how these guidelines relate to female students' safety and security, the study hopes to provide insights for improving policies and practices. The goal is to promote gender equality, prevent sexual Harassment, and increase women's participation and leadership in HEIs.

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Objective of the Study

To study the level of awareness on women's safety and security among students of higher education institutions.

Operational Definition of the key terms

1. **Awareness-** In this study, awareness refers to the level of knowledge and understanding students have about women's safety and security.
2. **Women's safety and security-** In the present study, women's safety and security refers to the safe and secure environment provided in the higher education institution for female students as per the guidelines issued by UGC.
3. **Higher Education Institutions-** In the present study Higher Education Institution (HEI's) refers to the organization those typically offering undergraduate, post graduate and sometimes doctoral degrees to female students by providing them safe and secure environment.
4. **Students-** In the present study the students refer to those boys and girls who are enrolled and pursuing under graduate or post graduate programmes in higher education institution.

Delimitations of the study

1. Students from only one government and one Private University of Lucknow will be taken as part of the study.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A study by **Biswas** in **2018** assessed the safety and security measures for girl students in 20 Government-aided degree colleges in West Bengal's Nadia and Murshidabad districts. Using a 20-point checklist, on safety and security, the study found that most colleges lacked essential facilities, including hostels, CCTV cameras, immediate complaint mechanisms, emergency information systems, student counselling systems, and medical facilities. Out of 400 responses, only 178 girl students were positive, while 222 girl students were negative, A significant gap was noticed in implementing UGC guidelines in the college views. The study 9 concluded that most colleges failed to provide a safe and secure environment for girl students, highlighting the need for improved measures to ensure their safety and well-being.

Opika K. and Rao M.C. in **2020** conducted a literature Review on the topic "**An Evolution of woman safety and security system: A Literature Review**". On the development various safety measures for women by using different technologies and systems in order to provide security and decrease violence against women. The study highlighted that there are many securities and safety system for the protection of 10 women, but sometimes there are few drawbacks of all these systems. They are not able to get the exact solution for the problems encountered by the women in the society. The study concluded that all the devices are built by using new technologies and sometimes it may be difficult for women to operate in rural areas and by uneducated people. The paper concluded that to make the device for easy operation especially for rural and uneducated women. People who are not comfortable in using smart phone, should made the device in different forms with specific components for a user friendly.

A study by **Venkataramana** and **Padmavathi** in **2021** explored safety challenges faced by women in higher education institutions in Telangana's Nalgonda district. Surveying 120 women students from various UG, PG, and technical colleges using stratified random sampling, it was found that most institutions lacked adequate 11 safety and security facilities.

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Only a few engineering colleges demonstrated satisfactory adherence to safety and security protocols. The study highlighted the need for improved measures to ensure women's safety in higher education settings.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopts a descriptive survey method. A total of **300 students** from higher education institutions were selected as the sample. The data was collected using a structured questionnaire based on a five-point Likert scale. The questionnaire included items related to safety awareness, institutional mechanisms, infrastructure, and support services. The collected data was analysed using percentage analysis to interpret the level of awareness among students.

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S. No	Statements	N	SA	A	N	D	SD
1	I am aware of the rules and regulations related to women's safety and security in my campus.	300	92	151	34	9	14
			% 30.66	50.33	11.33	3.00	4.66
2	I am familiar with helpline numbers for emergencies and complaints mentioned in the student handbook.	300	79	120	64	25	12
			% 26.33	40.00	21.33	8.33	4.00
3	There are unsafe or dark areas on the campus at night.	300	30	83	77	73	37
			% 10.00	27.66	25.66	24.33	12.33
4	I know the process to approach the Internal Complaints Committee in case of sexual harassment or misconduct.	300	69	105	67	47	12
			% 23.00	35.00	22.33	15.66	4.00
5	Complaint boxes are available and accessible on campus.	300	48	121	64	42	25
			% 16.00	40.33	21.33	14.00	8.33
6	Professional counselling services are available for women students on the campus.	300	47	125	71	38	19
			% 15.66	41.66	23.66	12.66	6.33
7	The campus lacks adequate lighting in all public areas, including hostels and libraries.	300	32	82	67	76	43
			% 10.66	27.33	22.33	25.33	14.33
8	CCTV cameras are installed in important public places on the campus and functioning well.	300	91	137	51	11	10
			% 30.33	45.66	17.00	3.66	3.33
9	Visitor entry is monitored through proper identification and passes at the entry gates.	300	87	99	48	34	32
			% 29.00	33.00	16.00	11.33	10.66
10	A secure campus environment is maintained with boundary walls and controlled entry.	300	88	123	60	19	10
			% 29.33	41.00	20.00	6.33	3.33
11	Transport facilities provided by the university is safe and reliable.	300	64	114	78	31	13
			% 21.33	38.00	26.00	10.33	4.33
12	Transport services are available during late hours specially for girl students.	300	50	83	91	53	23
			% 16.66	27.66	30.33	17.66	7.66

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13	University provides access to a 24-hour medical facility for girls' health care.	300	61	98	82	36	23
			20.33	32.66	27.33	12.00	7.66
14	Female security guards on campus are less in numbers.	300	44	110	66	49	31
			% 14.66	36.66	22.00	16.33	10.33
15	An ambulance facility is available for emergency situations on campus.	300	77	134	57	20	12
			% 25.66	44.66	19.00	6.66	4.00
16	Women hostels provide a safe and secure living environment to girl students.	300	78	132	71	11	8
			% 26.00	4.00	23.66	3.66	2.66
17	Food provided in hostels and canteens is hygienic and nutritious.	300	56	91	83	44	26
			% 18.66	30.33	27.66	14.66	8.66
18	Regular quality checks have been done by the food safety officials.	300	47	94	108	31	20
			% 15.66	31.33	36.00	10.33	6.66
19	Self-defence training programs are organized regularly for women students in campus.	300	34	75	96	66	29
			% 11.33	25.00	32.00	22.00	9.66
20	University conducts Gender sensitization programs regularly to make students aware about women issues.	300	42	96	95	48	19
			% 14.00	32.00	31.66	16.00	6.33
21	Health awareness and health check-up camps are organized for women students.	300	35	108	91	42	24
			% 11.66	36.00	30.33	14.00	8.00
22	Women-specific health issues are rarely discussed during campus programs.	300	37	105	93	53	12
			% 12.33	35.00	31.00	17.66	4.00
23	Scholarships and financial support are available for women students.	300	51	133	73	27	16
			% 17.00	44.33	24.33	9.00	5.33
24	University motivates women from disadvantaged backgrounds to continue education.	300	70	115	84	20	11
			% 23.33	38.33	28.00	6.66	3.66

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The majority of students, 80.99%, claim that they are familiar with the institutional guidelines regarding safety for women. Thus, the institutions manage to inform students about the safety guidelines.

About 66.33% of students are familiar with emergency helpline numbers. Even though it demonstrates a fair level of awareness, some students have no clue what these emergency helpline numbers are.

Some students claim that the campus contains unsafe areas with poor lighting. The percentage here is about 37.66%. It shows that infrastructural safety issues are not entirely solved yet.

Regarding the Internal Complaints Committee, only 58% of students claimed they were familiar with its existence. In addition, about 56.33% of students claimed familiarity with

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complaint boxes. Hence, the process of dealing with complaints is not entirely unknown to students.

Concerning counselling services, about 57.32% of students are familiar with their existence. So, these services do work but need to be popularised within the student body.

The awareness of the physical security measures is rather high. Thus, 75.99% of students know about the CCTV cameras existing in the institution, about 62% know about visitors' control, and around 70.33% say that the campus has good boundary protection measures.

Awareness in transport facilities and health services is variable. Around 59.33 % of students are concerned about the safety of transportation facilities, while around 44.32 % are aware of night transport facilities. In addition, around 53 % of students are aware of 24-hour health services. This is an indication of lack of awareness concerning crucial safety measures.

Anxiety is high among around 51.32 % of the students over the inadequate number of female security personnel, implying that there is a need for gendered personnel to improve safety concerns.

The students show good awareness of hostel facilities and ambulance facilities. Around 70 % of the students regard hostels as being safe, and similarly, around 70.32 % are aware of ambulances.

However, there is inadequate awareness concerning preventive measures. Awareness of self-defense programs stands at around 36.33 %, while gender sensitization programs stand at 46 %. Awareness concerning health awareness campaigns is at 47.66 %. These results indicate that such programs have not been widely covered among the student population.

Around 61 % of students are aware of scholarships provided to women within the institutions.

Overall findings

Findings indicate that the level of awareness among the students about the issues of safety and security for women is fairly high or moderately high. The level of awareness is high in cases where infrastructure is directly involved, such as CCTV systems, campus security systems, and other means of physical protection.

However, there are lower levels of awareness concerning those aspects that involve communication or participation of students in them, such as training, counselling, or support services.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that while higher education institutions have implemented several measures to ensure women's safety, there are still gaps in awareness among students. Students are generally informed about basic safety systems but lack sufficient knowledge about support services and preventive programs. To improve the situation, institutions should focus on organizing regular awareness campaigns, promoting self-defence and gender sensitization programs, improving communication about available facilities, and addressing infrastructural gaps such as unsafe areas on campus.

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Enhancing awareness will not only improve safety but also empower students to make informed decisions and contribute to a safer and more supportive campus environment.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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