

## INNOVATIVE SAFETY MEASURES ADOPTED BY KOLKATA POLICE: A MICRO STUDY OF THE WINNERS TEAM

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### Abstract

Gender based violence such as eve-teasing and molestation mars the life of women in this city as elsewhere. Such gender based violence is one of the most recognized human rights violation and is pervasive in our society. Gender violence is a manifestation of an unequal power relation between men and women; and male patriarchy is cited as a cause for the prevalence of violence against women. It is necessary to increase the overall strength of women in police. Kolkata Police is striving hard to ensure safety to its citizens especially women. It is also necessary that civil society extend their helping hands to Kolkata Police to ensure safety and security for women.

**Keywords :** Women empowerment, women's safety measures, Kolkata Police

### Introduction

*A Kolkata based model actor Ushosi Sengupta, her friend and their Uber driver were chased and harassed by a mob in the heart of the city. While returning home with a colleague their Uber cab was hit by a few men on motorcycles near Elgin Road in Central Kolkata. According to her the group stopped their Uber Cab, drag the driver and assaulted them. However when she called police, initially they did not help. Later the police intervened, but the group ran away. However they followed her and her friend, threw stones at the car and tried to drag her out of the car.<sup>1</sup>*

*A man was arrested for allegedly stalking a woman executive of a top travel and tourism firm for past one week. As the group of five continued to tease the woman, passengers protested and did not leave the bus till the culprits were handed over to the police.<sup>2</sup>*

All these incidents prove for the umpteenth time that women are often stalked and groped in public space in Kolkata. Gender based violence such as eve-teasing and molestation mars the life of women in this city as elsewhere. Such gender based violence is one of the most recognized human rights violation and is pervasive in our society. Gender violence is a manifestation of an unequal power relation between men and women; and male patriarchy is cited as a cause for the prevalence of violence against women. According to the *Crime in India 2017*, 309 and 249 cases have been reported under Section 354 IPC (assault on women with intent to outrage her modesty) and Section 509 IPC (insult to the modesty of women) respectively.<sup>3</sup>

**Research Methodology** : A micro study of the civil society was conducted by the author in Kolkata to find out level of occurrence and methods of combating such crimes. An empirical survey was conducted, partly on-line and partly manual by following a snowball sampling method. The total sample size was 50 (fifty). Further the author discusses the All Women's Patrolling Unit of Kolkata Police - The Winners Team and its work to ensure safety and security of citizens of Kolkata. An empirical survey was conducted on 24 women police personnel of The Winners Team on 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> October 2019 with the help of an open-ended questionnaire by following purposive sampling. A focused group discussion was held with the officers of the rank of sub-inspector in the Winners Team.

The results of the findings of the micro-study on members of civil society are as follows:

**Table 1.0 : Age of the respondents**

Age Group	No. of respondents	Percentage (hence forth %)
Less than 20	2	4
20-29	6	12
30-39	15	30
40-49	19	38
50-59	2	4
60-69	4	8
70 and above	2	4

**N=50**

From the above table it can be interpreted that in the present survey 38 % and 30% respondents belong to the age groups 40-49 years and 30-39 years respectively. Thus it can be interpreted that since majority of women are above thirty years of age they have considerable experiences on issues of street crime.

**Table 1.1 : Religion of the respondents**

Religion	No. of respondents	%
Hinduism	41	82
Islam	4	8
Humanity	4	8
Spiritual, not religious	1	2

**N= 50**

From the above table it can be interpreted that in the present study 82% respondents are Hindus.

**Table 1.2 : Educational Qualification of the respondents**

Educational Qualification	No. of Respondents	%
Graduates	10	20
Post Graduates	16	32
Doctorates	13	26
Class 12 passed	3	6
Class 10 passed	3	6
Others (Studied till class five)	5	6

**N=50**

From the above table it can be interpreted that 32% and 20 % respondent are post graduates and graduates respectively.

**Table 1.3 : Marital status of the respondents**

Marital status	No. of respondents	%
Married	34	68
Widow	2	4
Divorced	1	2
Separated	1	2
Spinisters	10	20
Others (not yet married)	2	4

**N=50**

From the above table it can be interpreted that 68 per cent respondents are married in the present research study.

**Table 1.4 : Place of living**

Place of Living	No. of Respondents	%
City	46	92
Town	1	2
Village	3	6

**N =50**

According to Table 1.4, 92 % respondents are living in the urban area.

**Table 1.5: Types of occupation of the respondents**

Types of occupation	No. of respondents	%
Academics	22	44
Managers	2	4
Consultants	1	2
Social Worker	1	2
Caregivers	5	10
Beauticians	6	12
Self Employed	1	2
Service	7	14

**N=50**

According to Table 1.5, 44 % respondents are in the academic world. (Of the respondents two of were house wives, two were retired and one student).

**Table 1.6 : Annual Income of the respondents**

Annual Income of the respondents	No. of Respondents	%
Less than a lakh	12	20
1-5 lakhs	9	18
6-10 lakhs	13	26
11-20 lakhs	4	8
21-29	2	4

30 and above	5	10
Not Disclosed	3	6
Don't know	2	4

**N=50**

According to the Table 1.6, 26 % respondents have an annual income ranging from 6-10 lakhs, only 10 % respondents have annual income ranging 30 lakhs and above.

**Table 1.7 : Place of work of the respondents**

Place of work	No. of respondents	%
Urban	43	86
Semi Urban	1	2
Rural	2	4

N=50

According to Table 1.7, 86 % respondents work in urban areas and only 2 % in rural area.

**Table 1.8 : Regular mode of communication**

Mode of Communication	No. of respondents	%
Public transport	34	68
Private transport	15	30
Both	1	2

N=50

From the above table it can be interpreted that in the present study 68% respondents avail public transport system whereas only 30 per cent use their own private transports.

**Table 1.9 : Do you return home late night\***

Return home late night	No. of respondents	%
Yes	12	24
No	35	70
Very rarely	02	4
Sometimes	01	2

N= 50

\*Late night mean after 12 am till 4 am.

According to the above table 70 per cent respondents do not return late night.

**Table 1.10 : Feelings when returning home alone at night**

Feelings while returning home	No. of respondents	%
Safe	6	12
Unsafe	44	88

**N=50**

From the above table it can be interpreted that 88 % respondents feel unsafe when they return home at night. Their feelings range from being anxious, nervous, apprehensive, on alert, cautious, awkward and threatened.

**Table 1.11 : Experience of stalking/ eve-teasing**

Experience of stalking /eve-teasing	No. of respondents	%
Yes	30	60
No	20	40

**N= 50**

In the present study, 60 % respondents have experienced stalking and eve-teasing.

**Table 1.12 : Place of experience of stalking**

Place of experience of stalking	No. of respondents	%
Real world	23	46
Virtual world	4	8
Both	3	6

**N=50**

From Table 1.12, it can be interpreted that 46 % respondents have experienced stalking in real world.

**Table 1.13 : Resisting stalking**

Resisted stalking	No. of respondents	%
Yes	12	40
No	18	60

**N=30**

From the above table it can be interpreted that 60 % respondents never resisted stalking .The respondents mostly ignore their stalkers. One of the respondents was vocal against the stalker in public space and tried to slap the stalker. Another respondent replied she took a different direction to reach her destination. Around 75% respondents never lodged complained with the police.

**Table 1.14 : Knowledge of unarmed combat techniques**

Knowledge of unarmed combat	No. of respondents	%
Yes	10	20
No	40	80

**N= 50**

From the above table it can be interpreted that 80% respondents do not have knowledge of any unarmed combat techniques.

**Table 1.15 : Use of articles for self-defense**

Use of articles for self defense	No. of respondents	%
Yes	10	20
No	40	80

**N= 50**

From Table 1.15, it can be interpreted that 80 % respondents in the present study do not use articles for self defense.

Though the sample size is small and cannot be generalized, but this micro study reveals that educated women living in urban area, come from moderately well-off family, have experienced stalking/ eve teasing. But a vast majority of them around 60 % respondents do not resist eve-teasing or stalking perhaps because around 80 % of women are not aware of any self defense techniques. Only 20 percent use articles such as pointed hairpins, pepper spray, mobile phones, deo, small knife, nails.

### **Initiatives undertaken by Kolkata Police to ensure safety and security of its citizens**

To ensure safety and security of the citizens is the first responsibility of any government. Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.<sup>4</sup> Article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that no one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.<sup>5</sup> However even after seven decades of independence women are denied human rights from the womb to the tomb. According to CEDAW, the state parties have the legal obligation to take ‘all appropriate measures to modify the social and culture patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customs and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women’.<sup>6</sup> The Beijing Platform for Action’s (1995) critical area of concern on violence against women included integrated measures to prevent and eliminate violence against women, ensure safety by creating policies and programs to protect and support women victims of violence, spread awareness and education.<sup>7</sup>

To bring a sense of safety and security to women on the streets of Kolkata and a fear of law to the stalkers and rowdies, Kolkata Police have launched an All Women Patrolling Team named The Winners on 11<sup>th</sup> July 2018.<sup>8</sup> They have been involved in patrolling the roads of Kolkata on two-wheelers (scooty) aiming to tame the road Romeos and assisting women victims of such crimes. The team has 24 women Constables, lead by 3 Sub-Inspectors and Smt. Aparajita Rai IPS, Deputy Commissioner, posted at Lalbazar, Kolkata Police Headquarter is in-charge of the unit.. The logo of the team is the wing of a bird in pink color. The logo symbolizes a bird which can fly all over and keep a surveillance, similarly this patrolling team can patrol any area and maintain a surveillance on the deviants. The findings of the survey are as follows:

**Table 1.16 :Age of the respondents**

Age Group	No. of Respondents	%
20-25	10	41.6
26-30	9	37.5
31-35	2	8.3
36-40	1	4.16
41-45	2	8.3

**N= 24**

From Table 1.16, it can be interpreted that around 41.6 % and 37.5 % women in this team are in the age groups of 20-25 years and 26-30 years respectively. It implies the team consists of young women.

**Table 1.17 : Religion of the respondents**

Religion	No. of respondents	%
Hinduism	16	66.6
Islam	7	29.1
Christianity	1	4.16

N= 24

From Table 1.17, it can be interpreted that majority of the team members follows Hinduism. The minority communities such as Islam and Christianity are less represented in this team.

**Table 1.18 : Educational Qualification of the respondents**

Education Passed	No. of Respondents	%
Class 10 passed	1	4.16
Class 12 passed	4	16.6
Graduates	14	58.3
Graduation continuing	1	4.16
Post Graduate	4	16.6

N= 24

From Table 1.18, it can be interpreted that in this team 58.3 % respondents are graduates and 16.6 % respondents have completed their post graduation. The team consists of educated, conscious citizens as police personnel.

**Table 1.19 : Place where the respondents belong**

Place	No. of Respondents	%
Hooghly	1	4.16
Coochbehar	2	8.3
Nadia	4	16.6
Kolkata	1	4.16
North 24 Parganas	5	20.8
East Burdwan	2	8.3
South 24 Parganas	3	12.5
Malda	1	4.16
Dakhin Dinajpur	1	4.16
Paschim Medinipur	1	4.16
Medinipur	1	4.16
Birbhum	1	4.16
Howrah	1	4.16

N=24

From Table 1.19, it can be interpreted that 20.8 % of women in this team belong to North 24 Parganas. The table does indicate that women from remote districts have stepped out of their

house for job in police which is still now considered a male bastion. They have empowered themselves and are providing safety and security to women-in-distress in the streets of Kolkata, thereby empowering such women.

**Table 1.20 : Family support received in choosing this job**

Family Support received	No. of respondents	%
Yes	20	83.3
No	4	16.6

**N= 24**

From Table 1.20, it can be interpreted that 83.3 % respondents replied their family supported them in joining this profession of policing.

**Table 1.21 : Reasons for joining police service**

Reasons for joining police force	No. of respondents	%
Government job provides security	16	66.6
Government jobs provide security + Getting no other jobs	1	4.16
First Option Cracked the examination	2	8.3
Getting no other job opportunities	2	8.3
Economic necessities+ getting no other job	4	16.6

**N=24**

From the above table it can be concluded that 66.6 % respondents joined police force because government jobs provide economic and social security.

### **Training**

The Winners Team received six months of basic training and three months of advanced training at Police Training School, Kolkata. The training modules includes: driving two-wheelers Scooty, rifle training, unarmed combat techniques, human rights, first-aid, traffic laws etc. They are equipped with folding stick, knee-guard, helmet, gloves, anklet, with a body camera in front, gloves, and Tetra communication set (wireless communication set).

### **Work of the Team Winners**

The police personnel after doing risk assessment of the area, are engaged in risk surveillance and manage the danger zones by following a zero-tolerance approach, thereby trying to protect the citizens. At present the Winners Team are working in three shifts. In the morning shift, the focus



is on various parks of the city, popular among morning walkers of the metro. In the afternoon, the team makes it a point to patrol areas close to educational institutions, shopping malls, entertainment places such as cinema hall, metro stations and parks. The hub of night life in Kolkata such as Park Street, Camac Street, other places such as Lake area, Southern Avenue, Prince Anwar Shah Road etc are covered within the jurisdiction of their patrolling areas. The team works in collaboration with the local police stations and control room of the division they are patrolling. They patrol in a group of eight to ten women constables lead by women officers of Sub-Inspector rank. A few of them are in civilian dress to get hold of the molesters and road Romeos. Within a year the Winners Team have arrested more than 200 eve-teasers who are then handed over to the local police station for further action.

### **A few milestones achieved by the Team Winners**

- During Durga Puja, young people gather around Maddox Square, a park in South Kolkata. The Winners Team caught hold of a man who was busy taking photographs of the private parts of women in guise of photographing the idol of the goddess Durga.
- In Park Street area, at night two girls wearing shorts were teased and then stalked by a man. The team when approached quickly responded by getting hold of the deviant
- Near St. Tomas School in Port Division of Kolkata Police, a man was caught trying to touch the private parts of a woman. He was handed over to Watgunje police station.
- In Park Street area women accompanying their partners are often drunk and drive in high speed on two-wheelers without helmet. The Winners team apprehended such cases also.

At times citizens play an important role in the production and dissemination of crime related knowledge to police. They verbally complain such as in Babughat area of Central Kolkata a man was seen taking drugs. On the basis of verbal complain, the Winners Team responded by arresting the person.<sup>9</sup> Their 'visibility' has increased an opportunity for women to come forward and vent out their grievances regarding stalkers and eve-teasers.

### **Suggestions**

It is necessary to increase the overall strength of women in police, especially in the Winners Team. It is necessary that the minority communities are adequately represented in the police force and the Winners Team. A proportional representation from different districts of Bengal should be maintained and included in this team. The members of the Winners Team should be provided with medicated shoes, to avoid putting pressure on the foot of their leg. It is also necessary to create awareness and spread the message of the work performed by the Team Winners within the civil society. A documentary on the work performed by the Team Winners can be shown before the beginning of a movie in cinema halls. In a few selected traffic crossings of Kolkata their work can be highlighted in billboards. Such measures will help to create awareness of the unit among the civil society. A Geographical Positioning System showing detailed topography of the area where these women are deployed should be attached with their mobile set or with the communication set they carry for their duty. It is also necessary that academic institutions conduct surveys on the impact of the relationship between fear of crime

and such projects launched among citizens. Research based policy making is the need of the hour.

### **Conclusion**

From the above study it can be interpreted that Kolkata Police is striving hard to ensure safety to its citizens especially women. It is also necessary that civil society extend their helping hands to Kolkata Police to ensure safety and security for women.

### **Notes and References:**

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9. As told by the members of The Winners Team to the author during the survey in 2019.