

**STREET HARASSMENT: AN UNADDRESSED FORM OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE**

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<sup>1</sup>Rustagi Neeti, <sup>2</sup>Orpinas Pamela. <sup>1</sup>Maulana Azad Medical College, India; <sup>2</sup>University of Georgia, Athens GA, USA

**Background** Street harassment refers to verbal comments and physical actions between strangers that are unwelcome or threatening and that occur in public places. It is an understudied form of violence against women.

**Objective** To assess the magnitude of the problem of street harassment experienced by adolescent girls and young women, evaluate its consequences, and identify the types of social support availed by them.

**Method** We conducted a cross-sectional assessment of 40 female adolescents and young women aged 15–25 years living in an urban resettlement colony of East Delhi, India. The interview protocol requested information about various forms of street harassment, consequences, and societal support sought in response to such experiences.

**Results** Participants reported the following forms of street harassment by strange men: purposely being touched (51.2%), being commented upon (46.3%), being stalked (22%), being pushed (14.6%) and being threatened (2.4%). Such behaviour made them feel humiliated (53.7%), disturbed about their body (29.3%), lose their appetite (19.5%) and have sleep problems (14.6%). Only half had discussed such episodes with their guardians, friends or other elders and had sought their advice. For averting such incidences, females resorted to: curtailing of outdoor activities (60%), staying away from places where such episodes had occurred (46.3%) and avoiding going out alone (34.1%).

**Significance** This pilot study highlights the pervasiveness of street harassment, which can lead to the restriction of women's mobility outside their homes and psychological problems. Public education strategies are discussed.