

A Comprehensive Study On Self-Defence Strategies For Enhancing Safety And Empowering Women In India

Das Antoni Arokianathan. S
Outreach Officer; Azim Premji University

Subrat Kumar Mishra
Head Of Placements; Azim Premji University

Rufina Augustine
Director Of Administration: Red Brigade Lucknow

Abstract

Self-defence for women in India has become an increasingly significant topic due to the rising concerns over women's safety and the need for empowerment. This research paper explores the various facets of self-defence strategies for women in India, including the challenges women face, government and NGO initiatives, and education's role in promoting self-defence awareness. The key objectives are to enhance women's ability to protect themselves, boost their self-confidence, and create a safer atmosphere for women in India. Women in India face a high peril of violence and harassment, and the need for self-defence training is crucial to be imparted for the benefit of women. The aim of this research paper is to scrutinize the current state of self-defence training for women in India, including the efficacy of different approaches, the barriers to implementation, and the possible solutions. A review of the literature and statistical data is used to explore the frequency of violence against women in India and the factors contributing to it. The paper concludes with recommendations for policymakers, educators, and community leaders to improve the accessibility and effectiveness of self-defence training for women in India.

Keywords: Self-defence, Safety for Women, India, Empowerment, Challenges, Initiatives, Education, Awareness,

Date of Submission: 03-06-2024

Date of Acceptance: 13-06-2024

I. Introduction

In India, the problem of violence against women is of immense proportions. According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), every three minutes a woman is a victim of crime in India. This includes physical, mental and sexual violence. Women are more likely to be victims of domestic violence and sexual assault than men. The most common types of violence against women in India are dowry deaths, honour killings, acid attacks, rape, sexual harassment, and trafficking. Glenn et al. (2008) avows the introduction of the martial arts in physical education programs for women, as an effective means to distinction the problem of violence against women and to safeguard. In a country where one in three women face physical or sexual violence, it is necessary for women to know how to protect themselves. Self-defence can help women to protect themselves in dangerous situations and build confidence in their own capabilities. It can also help them to identify potential dangers and to respond effectively to them. Self-defence techniques can also provide women with the skills and knowledge to deal with physical and mental aggression. Knowing how to defend yourself can help to reduce the risk of becoming a victim of violence and can empower women to live a life of safety and security.

India is home to a population of more than 1.3 billion people, out of which 48.5 percent are women. India is a nation where a woman is worshipped as a goddess, yet there are occurrences of violence against women and gender discrimination. Despite these measures, women's safety is still a key concern in India. Instances of rape, dowry deaths, and other forms of violence against women are still in existence. It is clear that more concrete actions have to be done to confirm that women in India are safe and secure. The government needs to take more active measures to ensure that women's safety is taken seriously. This includes strengthening existing laws, setting up more helplines and special cells, and providing greater access to justice for victims of violence. Additionally, the government has to allocate more resources to safeguard that these measures are properly implemented. Awareness programs need to be conducted to educate people about the importance of respecting women's rights.

Ultimately, it is clear that the situation for women's safety in India has improved since independence. However, there is still a long way to go before the situation can be said to be truly safe and secure for women. The government needs to take more active measures to improve the situation, and society needs to work together to verify that women's safety is given the priority it deserves.

Self-defence Approach

Self-defence techniques can help women to prevent and protect themselves against different forms of violence. Self-defence methods provide women with the skills to recognise and respond to threats, such as physical and mental aggression. Self-defence practices can also help women to develop the strength and assurance to fight off an attacker and to protect themselves from harm (Cook, S. L., Gidycz, C. A., Koss, M. P., & Murphy, M. ;2011). Self-defence helps women to identify potential risks and threats in their environment and to prepare for them. Self-defence techniques should be made accessible to all women in India, so that they can feel safe and secure in their daily lives. Self-defence is very important for women in India due to the high levels of violence against them.

1. **Alertness:** It is important for women to be aware of their environment and to stay alert for potential violences. This can include being aware of people around them and their body language, avoiding dark and isolated places, and dressing appropriately.
2. **Verbal self-defence:** This can include using verbal strategies such as assertiveness, ignoring provocation, and de-escalation to protect oneself. It is also important to know when to call for help.
3. **Physical self-defence:** This includes learning physical self-defence techniques such as blocking, striking, and escaping. It is important to learn these techniques from a certified instructor who can provide the necessary guidance and support.
4. **Mental self-defence:** This includes self-esteem building, positive thinking, and relaxation techniques. It is important to build positive self-talk and to be resilient in the face of adversity.

In addition to these self-defence techniques, there are also other approaches that women can use to protect themselves. These include.

- **Installing security devices:** Installing security devices such as door alarms, window locks, and personal alarms can help to protect women against potential threats.
- **Developing networks of support:** Developing networks of support such as family, friends, and neighbours can help to create a sense of safety and security.
- **Seeking help:** It is important to seek help from the authorities if you feel threatened or unsafe.

Significance of Self -defence

Self-defence is a primary intervention; it creates an environment for a preventive method. This preventative measure not only includes NISHASTRA, which are self-defence techniques. Self-defence is just not protecting the physical body. When an incident takes place, it haunts a woman for ages mentally and emotionally as well (Sen, G. ;1984). One more thing which is true is that women have been made to feel weak and dependent for generations in this patriarchal society, sometimes women don't even realize what is going wrong with them as patriarchal practices have become so natural to society, and even women have inculcated it in their living so smoothly that it has become natural to them as well.

One more responsibility that self-defence holds is that society breaks the patriarchal chain, rethink women's strengths, and become a society that supports women. It is very straightforward to say, 'if every girl learns self -defence, they will be able to protect themselves,' but it's more challenging than it sounds. Girls/ Young Women need to realize their strengths that have been lost somewhere in patriarchal thoughts and practices; to avoid such incidents, people need to accept women's strengths and become a supportive society to help them understand their strengths. These incidents are not just a matter of physical strength; it is the mental strengths as well; even the weakest men feel more powerful than a woman of any age, shape, weight, or height, and it's the opposite with the women, a mighty woman might feel the weakest in front of men of any age, size, shape or weight.

Introducing NISHASTRA- A Renewed Approach to Self- defence developed by the Red Brigade, Harnessing the Insights of Survivors.

(New Instrument against Sexual Harassment and Stand against Rape Aggression).

1. **Quick to deploy** - To protect from sexual violence there are only 5-10 seconds. NISHASTRA is a technique that has been evolved to be implemented quickly.
2. **Real experiences and situations of sexual violence-** Because it has been developed on real experiences and situations so all these dimensions of different types of sexual violence, like eve teasing, rape cases, domestic, transportation (traveling), workplace, and public places are kept in consideration. Techniques in NISHASTRA have been developed in broad terms to encompass all these situations.

3. **Systemizing the reflex action-** Like the parts of the body does reflex action to protect themselves similarly women also do reflex action to protect themselves from sexual violence. NISHASTRA is systemized version of it and is developed into a technique.
4. **Appropriate for the marginalized adolescent girls/young women-** Usually, there is an immense difference in the muscle power of a man and a woman especially women from a marginalized community. This is a limitation for real-life situations. So NISHASTRA has overcome this limitation and has reduced the use of muscle power.
5. **Strength and limitations of Sport Based Self-Defence (SBSD)-** NISHASTRA has been developed keeping in mind the limitations of SBSBD and strengths of SBSBD. As Red brigade has learned different types of SBSBD like judo, karate, kung fu, krav maga, etc so NISHASTRA adapts the strengths of these techniques.
6. **Understanding the weakness of the attackers -** When men attempt sexual violence, certain weaknesses arise. NISHASTRA aims at those weaknesses as a means of protection.
7. **Comprehensive technique-** NISHASTRA is a comprehensive technique which requires regular practices and training.

NISHASTRA was simple, accessible, and comforting, and thus started to be accepted and more popular day by day; more and more women learned NISHASTRA. Many schools and colleges began to invite Red Brigade to train girls in self-defence.

Sports Based Self Defenced

SBSD had certain limitations which came out during the workshop. These limitations are as follows:

1. **Required fitness level -** Mostly survivors and girls/ young women from the marginalized community were present in the workshop, they said that the kind of fitness level required for this self-defence is not at all possible, where they were deprived of two square meals in a day, so fitness is far-fetched and unconquerable.

In this country where anaemia is a very severe and very common problem in women especially women in the marginalized community, we couldn't expect the possibilities of the fitness levels required for SBSBD. Now the question was do we have to wait for this far-fledged dream to come true to protect women from the sexual violence of marginalized women? Shouldn't there be a skill that would help them defend themselves in this objective situation? Vulnerability of the women in marginalized communities, with their particularly poor nutrition, increased also because they did not have any such defence system.

2. **Existence of space -** A rape survivor told in a workshop that, there was no space, or the situation was quite close when an incident takes place. So, this technique of SBSBD, which presumed space to decide to kick, punch, or elbow, would not work.
3. **Known & safe situation -** The base of SBSBD is that the situation is known and safe. A survivor shared her experience that it happened with her in the night in the dark and she had no idea which was not safe for her or known to her. Most incidents take place either in an unsafe situation or an unknown situation. This led the Red brigade to understand that the SBSBD is not effective for women's protection.
4. **Equal muscle power -** The SBSBD had these main features, where the opponent has almost the same Muscle power. When an incident of sexual violence takes place, the situation is the opposite because generally there is a huge difference between the muscle powers of a man and a woman.
5. **Rules, discipline, and respect -** Having all these is not possible at all rather it is an obscure affair.

Techniques used in NISHASTRA

NISHASTRA includes instruments which is natural in our daily lives, which we use intentionally or unintentionally, sometimes for fun sometimes by mistake. For example, NISHASTRA uses front grab, back grab, hitting in the eyes, hitting the nose, hitting the neck and also using the presence of mind which and where the technique has to be used. NISHASTRA also discusses and demonstrates all the possible incident situations and explains about the techniques accordingly. So NISHASTRA does not need any practice, because these are the techniques which people already use as defence mechanism, the only thing that needs to be understood is how to use it in which situation when an incident takes place.

Source: Red Brigade Trust has developed new module of self-defence technique / training named NISHASTRA by incorporating the experiences of survivors.

NCRB data

Lucknow

Crime against women [IPC+SLL) in Metropolitan Cities

2017	2018	2019	Actual population (in Lakh) (2011)	Rate of Total Crime against women	Charge Sheeting Rate
2426	2736	2425	5.3%	13,8%	17.4%

2020	2021	Actual population (in Lakh) (2011)	Rate of Total crime against women (2021)	Charge sheeting Rate
2636	2161	13.8%	156.3%	71.3%

Murder with Rape/Gang Rape

	I	V	R
2017-2019	2	2	0.1
2019-2021	0	0	0.0

2017-2019

	I	V	R
Attempt to Rape Total	14	14	1.0
Women (18 years & above)	14	14	1.0
Girls (Below 18)	0	0	0.0

2019-2021

	I	V	R
Attempt to Rape Total	5	5	0.4
Women (18 years & above)	5	5	0.4
Girls (Below 18)	0	0	0.0

Insult to the modesty of women (Sec 509 IPC)

2017-2019

I	V	R
2	2	0.1

2019-2021

I	V	R
0	0	0.0

2017-2019

Women (18 years and above)

I	V	R
2	2	0.1

2019-2021

I	V	R
0	0	0.0

Total IPC Crime against women

	I	V	R
2017-2019	2137	2137	154.6%
2019-2021	1914	1931	138.4%

- Population of Lucknow according to the census data of 2011 is 13.8 lakhs.
- Red Brigade trains girl above 13 years in Self-Defence.
- Total population of above 13-year-olds is approximately 11.04 lakh.
- Red Brigade launched a campaign on 24 July 2017 named Safe Lucknow Safe women.
- This Safe Lucknow Safe Women Campaign continued for 2 years.

Main Programs of this Campaign as follows:

1. 100 days 100 schools- in which Red Brigade trained 23,000 girl/young women in collaboration with Times of India in Lucknow city.
2. Community Action to End Violence Against Children (CAVACH) - in this Red Brigade trained 56,000 girls/Young women in collaboration with UP Government in Lucknow district.
3. Fight against 936- in this Red Brigade trained around 10,000 young women and girls in collaboration with INOX, Delhi in Lucknow City.
4. Other trainings- Approximately 11,000 girls / women trained in different part of Lucknow city.
 - In total, around 1 lakh girls/young women trained in Self-Defence in Lucknow City This campaign discontinued later on because of the Covid 19 pandemic as well as the financial circumstances of Red Brigade. Population of 13 year above girls is 11.04 lakhs.
 - Red Brigade trained 1,00,000 girls in self-defence, which is approximately 10% of the population.
 - According to NCRB data, In Lucknow metro the crime against women in the year 2018 was 2736 and in 2019 it was 2425 which clearly shows the fall down of 311 which is around 11%.
 - Self-defence trainings done by Red Brigade was 10%, there was a fall down of total 11% in the crime against women. This shows NISHASTRA is a major & preventive measure to combat sexual violence.

District Crime Record Bureau (DCRB- Lucknow)

Rape-2021	Rape-2022	Eve-Teasing-2021	Eve-Teasing-2022	Women Harassment-2021	Women Harassment-2022	Seal Bhang 2021	Seal Bhang 2022	Total -2021	Total -2022
41	54	61	53	318	266	54	75	474	448

Population of Adolescents in Mal block of Lucknow - Approx. 30,000

Population of Adolescents in Malihabad block of Lucknow - Approx. 37000

Self-defence trainings given by Red Brigade to Adolescent girls in the year 2021 in Mal- 1500

Self-defence trainings given by Red Brigade to Adolescent girls in the year 2021 in Malihabad - 6000

Total Population of Adolescent girls in Mal & Malihabad = Approx. 67000

Trained Adolescent girls of Mal & Malihabad in number = 7500

Trained Adolescent girls in Mal & Malihabad in Percentage = 11%

Total declination shown in sexual violence = 26 which is 5.5%

Strategies to Overcome

- **Education and Awareness:** Initiatives focusing on raising awareness about self-defence and its importance should be widely instigated. Schools, colleges, community centres, and workplaces should organize workshops, seminars, and training sessions to empower women with knowledge and skills. Education plays a vital role in empowering women to be safe and secure without any dependency on others to protect themselves from dangerous situations they face.
- **Building Assertiveness:** Combined with physical training, it is significant to address the psychological aspects of self-defence. Workshops and counselling sessions can help women develop confidence, assertiveness, and the ability to set boundaries, which can aid in avoiding potentially risky situations.
- **Community Involvement:** Engaging local communities is vital in promoting self-defence for women. Collaborations with law enforcement agencies, NGOs, and self-defence experts can provide support, guidance, and training opportunities. Awareness campaigns, self-defence demonstrations, and community

forums can be organized to encourage active participation. Community participation and involvement are appropriate to reach women in understanding their needs and safety problems.

- **Legal Reforms and Support Structures:** Strengthening the legal framework and support structures for victims of violence is crucial. Effective execution of prevailing laws and policies, faster judicial processes, and establishing support networks can give women the sureness to report crimes and seek justice. The government and NGOs must join to implement grievance cells for women to share their problems and get solutions.

Epilogue

In conclusion, the comprehensive study on self-defence strategies for enhancing safety and empowering women in India has shed light on the urgent need for proactive measures to address gender-based violence and discrimination against women in India. This study has explored various aspects of self-defence, ranging from physical techniques to psychological empowerment, and highlighted their effectiveness in empowering women and creating a safer environment (Yee, A. ;2013). The study emphasizes the importance of education and awareness programs to equip women with the knowledge and skills necessary for self-defence. By providing women with the tools to recognize potential threats, assert their boundaries, and respond effectively to dangerous situations. Furthermore, nurturing a culture of respect and gender equality through education can help transform societal attitudes toward women, reducing violence.

This research paper highlights the significance of implementing practical self-defence training programs nationwide. These programs should be accessible to women of all ages and backgrounds, addressing their needs and weaknesses. By combining physical techniques with mental preparedness, such training programs can enhance women's assurance and ability to protect themselves in critical situations. Additionally, collaborations between government agencies, NGOs, and community organizations can ensure the widespread availability of these programs and create a network of support for women.

Moreover, the study underscores the importance of legal reforms and stricter law enforcement to deter perpetrators and ensure justice for victims of violence (Sodhi, G., & Verma, M; 2003). Strengthening the legal framework, enhancing reporting mechanisms, and sensitizing law enforcement agencies can create a more secure environment for women. Establishing a system that holds offenders accountable for their actions and provides a safe space for victims to seek justice is imperative. In this research work, it demonstrates that a multi-faceted approach is required to tackle the deep-rooted societal challenges that perpetuate violence.

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank Red Brigade Trust, Lucknow, for their notable contribution and the students of Azim Premji University who participated in the study's data collection.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest concerning this article's research, authorship, and publication.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for this article's research, authorship, and publication.

References

- [1] Glenn, J.C., Gordon, T.J. And Florescu, E. (2008), State Of The Future. The Millennium Project, American Council For The United Nations University, Washington Dc
- [2] Sodhi, G., & Verma, M. (2003). Sexual Coercion Amongst Adolescents In Urban Slum In India. In L. Manderson & L. R. Bennett (Eds.), Violence Against Women In Asian Societies (Pp. 114-129). London, England: Routledge
- [3] Yee, A. (2013). Reforms Urged To Tackle Violence Against Women In India. Lancet, 381, 1445-1446.
- [4] Sen, G. (1984). Subordination And Sexual Control: A Comparative View Of The Control Of Women. Review Of Radical Political Economics, 16, 133-142.
- [5] Cook, S. L., Gidycz, C. A., Koss, M. P., & Murphy, M. (2011). Emerging Issues In The Measurement Of Rape Victimization. Violence Against Women, 17, 201-218. Doi:10.1177/1077801210397741
- [6] An Overview Of Crimes Against Women In India (Lawx.In)
- [7] Ram Ahuja. (1998). Violence Against Women, Rawat Publication, Jaipur.
- [8] Sharma, O.C. (1994). Crime Against Women, Ashish Publishing House, New Delhi.
- [9] Sushma Sood (2006). Violence Against Women, Bomstein, New Delhi
- [10] Red Brigade Trust, A Non-Governmental Organization Located In Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, India. It Focuses On Empowering Women Through Self-Defence Education.