

Research Paper

## Exploring Victimization in Dating Relationships in Urban Areas of India

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### ABSTRACT

This study examines the prevalence of victimization in dating relationships for both sexes among the male and female populations in urban areas of India. The total number of respondents was 150. Of these, 79 were female respondents, which translates to 52.7%, and 71 male respondents, representing 47.3%. This ensured that the response would indeed represent an equal distribution among the genders for further analysis. Over two-thirds or 111 out of 150 of the respondents were 18-25 years old, and 39 respondents were in the age bracket of 26-34 years, hence most people under targeting were in the early stages of adulthood. The research used purposive random sampling. Using descriptive statistics, results indicated that female students' mean scored 19.97, while male students had a mean score of 23.74, and males responded with a high degree of variability than females since their standard deviation stood at 9.44 while the opposite sex 6.19. Independent samples T-test: The meanings of the two genders were significantly different ( $t = -2.87, p = 0.0049$ ), indicating that the degree of victimization in dating relationships is significantly related to gender. All these results prove to be highly significant for understanding the gendered experience of victimization within the urban Indian dating context and where more research and intervention are required.

**Keywords:** *Victimization, Dating Relationships, Urban India*

Dating relationships, which were commonly seen only in the Western countries till date, are now gaining much ground in the Indian cities, especially among the younger generation. But along with the increasing dating relationships come the associated increasing concern over dating violence—that usually falls under the category of IPV, which may take on harmful forms that include physical, emotional, or sexual maltreatment.

These have been a change in cultural norms and greater social liberty that have led to the acceptance of dating in urban India. Such acceptance focuses critical attention on the problem of violence within these relationships. How frequent it is, and in what patterns of abuse, needs to be studied in the context of a society where traditional values still play a large role side by side with modern lifestyles. Even though dating is becoming more

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approved fast, it is hard for conversations about violence in such relationships to arise given that most societies guard the embarrassment and stigma surrounding these social practices.

Victimization is defined as the act of being harmed or made to suffer by another individual or group of people due to acts like abuse, bullying, harassment, discrimination, or violence.

Victimization, in the context of dating relationships, means one of the partners inflicted harmful, abusive, or manipulative behaviors from the other. This can be a wide set of actions that cause harm to someone physically, emotionally, psychologically, or sexually.

This paper intends to explore and comprehend the level of Victimization that exists in dating relationships in urban areas of India. It tries to seek an understanding regarding the prevalence, nature, and impact of victimization mainly across the three domains:

- **Physical Violence** This is an intentional act involving physical force directed to harming or causing injury. Such actions involve punching, slapping, pushing, choking or weapons use.
- **Psychological (or Emotional) Violence:** Any act that causes the victim emotional suffering or control with fear, intimidation, or humiliation is considered a form of psychological or emotional violence. Examples include verbal attacks, threats, humiliation, isolation from friends and family, constant criticism, or gaslighting the victim into doubting his or her reality.

**Dating** This research findings put in information the level of adult victimization between 18- to 34-year-old adults, with a specific consideration of gender comparison. A careful perusal of available survey data revealed vast important observations.

The mean scores for both females and males call for attention to the difference in central tendency of the measured variable. Women had a mean of 19.97, and men showed 23.74.

The standard deviation values show that the variability is much larger in the case of the male group (9.44) as compared to the female group (6.19).

Sample sizes are almost equal: 78 females and 72 males. Therefore, the data will be very representative of both genders.

### ***Significance of the study***

Victimization in India is a topic that covers a broad range of areas. This study explores a specific and relatively under-explored area within this broader topic. Here's a breakdown of why this study is important:

- **Understanding Prevalence and Patterns:** There is a need for research on physical violence in dating relationships in terms of quantifying how common this issue is in urban India. This would help quantify the scope and guide the policymakers on dealing with the same.
- **Cultural and Legal Context Dating Violence in India,** there is legal protection against domestic violence; however, dating violence has largely remained underreported as it continues to fall within cultural taboos. The findings of my project will make clear how unmarried individuals are swept outside the curriculum of awareness and protection and the consequences this will have for policy reform and community-based interventions.

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- Forging Consent and Autonomy: Sexual violence in dating relationships is most often conflated with a lack of consent or violation. Accordingly, my findings will unpack ways in which public opinion towards dating and sexuality in India tends to obscure that clarity of understanding and reporting sexual violence in dating.
- Reduction of Stigma: Discussions on sexual violation in India are closely associated with stigma, especially when the incidents occur outside of marriage. A study on victimization in dating relationships can be the healing touch that breaks the silence around this issue and incites a discussion that challenges harmful stereotypes without any fear to survivors seeking help.
- Hidden form of abuse: Psychologically violent abuses such as emotional manipulation, verbal abuse and control would sometimes be disregarded but were just as harmful as cases of physical or sexual violence. Findings from my research would shed more light on the neglected form of victimization and its impact on mental health, self-esteem, and overall well-being of those involved in dating relationships.
- Cultural and Societal Influences: In the Indian context, more importantly in the urban scenario, expectations and pressures make way for more cases of psychological abuse. Awareness of these factors may help in designing better programs of education in healthy relationship behaviors and development of emotional intelligence in young people.

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Research was conducted on title "Physical Dating Violence Victimization in College Women in Chile". This paper explores the rate of physical dating violence among female undergraduate university students in Chile. The results are relatively high at 21% for non-injury attacks and stand at 5% involving injuries. The most significant risk factors that showed up are sexual abuse during childhood, witnessing their parents' violence against each other, low educational background of the parents, living away from family homes, and early initiation into sexual activities. Maternal employment and religious participation are also protective factors. Findings include strong associations between sexual/reproductive risk behaviors, including coercive condom nonuse, as well as the relevance of gender norm and relationship skills-based prevention interventions. (Lehrer, E. 2010)

Research was conducted on title "Adolescent Dating Violence Victimization and Psychological Well-being.". The results of this study provide preliminary evidence that boys' and girls' reporting of victimization experiences of dating violence are associated with the reporting of psychological well-being. Dating violence made a significant contribution to the explanation of posttraumatic stress and dissociation for girls, even when controls were considered for demographic, family of origin, and social desirability variables. For boys, dating violence was significantly associated with anxiety, depression, and posttraumatic stress. In total, boys reported less dating violence than girls; when the boys who experienced dating violence were compared to the girls who experienced dating violence, few differences existed between the two groups; the boys reported lower posttraumatic stress symptoms than the girls. (Haynie, D. L. 2003)

Research was conducted on title "Young Adults' Perception ofBreadcrumbing Victimization in Dating Relationships". The study looks into breadcrumbing, a manipulative form of dating behavior, and its effects through focus group discussions with nine participants. The themes that emerged to explain breadcrumbing were intermittent flirting, pretence,

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inconsistency, avoiding closeness in the emotional sense, and commitment ambiguity. Effects included severe psychological effects and consequences, such as issues with trust (100% of the respondents), anxiety (67%), emotional withdrawal (56%), and symptoms of depression (22%). Good coping mechanisms imply therapy, social support, and a focus on personal growth. (Vivek Khattar et al., 2023)

A study was conducted on "Dating and relationship violence among 16–19-year-olds in England and Wales: a cross-sectional study of victimization". Two categories were identified by DRV for females, and three by the males. Amongst the females, controlling behaviors were reported by 46.1%, and amongst the males, 49.9% experienced controlling behaviors, 27.1% reported threatening behaviors, and 5.8% reported online sexual violence. Male and female students who had ever sent a sexually explicit image at least once were 2-8 times more likely to report DRV victimization. DRV victimization was not associated consistently with age, spending money per week, educational attainment, or meeting partners online. (Young, H. (2017)

### *Addressing Specific Needs*

- **Established Trend:** Emerging Trend; The increasing awareness and research on dating violence, alongside its multi-dimensional impacts worldwide, both of which were recognized - physical, emotional, and sexual. It was observed from studies that: Physical dating violence is prevalent among a majority of cases. For example, as high as 21 percent was reported in non-injury violence, as well as 5 percent in injury-related violence, in Chile.
- **Principal Gap Identified:** Many studies focus on particular regions or populations, such as Chile, England/Wales, or Western contexts. Indian cities are the unexplored field concerning dating violence particularly on the issue of: The intersection of physical, emotional and sexual abuse; and the effects of urban living, connectivity, digital, and other cultural practices.
- **Limited Generalizability.** The results gathered from previous studies cannot be considered completely generalizable to the urban Indian setting due to: Different cultural beliefs and attitudes towards courtship, family roles, and the female gender. Reporting bias, stigma, and awareness of the abuse issues also vary.
- **Teacher Well-being and Student Learning:** It may indirectly result in: Teacher well-being: Dating violence victims are often seen by teachers. Educating teachers on recognition of traits of victimization plus support prevents students from experiencing long-term trauma. Students' learning: Dealing with victimization can be helpful for psychological wellbeing as it reduces absenteeism and boosts performance.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### *Research Objectives*

- To investigate the extent of Victimization in the urban regions of India among females in dating relationships.
- To investigate the extent of Victimization in the urban regions of India among males in dating relationships.

### *Hypothesis*

- There is a difference between male and female level of Victimization in dating relationships in the urban areas of India.

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### *Participants*

To alleviate these apprehensions, this research has been conducted in the urban regions of India. A sample size of 150 adults was chosen for the research who falls in the age group of 18 to 34 years. Sampling Technique, a purposive random sampling technique has been chosen to be followed for the research on Victimization in Dating Relationships in Urban Areas of India: It includes:

### **Instruments**

The respondents were accorded a structured questionnaire to help them air their views on victimization in dating relationships, sources, and effects on their well-being. Thus, the questionnaire was adjusted to give quantitative data, both from the physical, emotional, as well as sexual aspects of victimization in dating relationships.

### *Description and Scoring of the Scale*

One of the self-report measures for the assessment of both physical, psychological, and sexual victimization in intimate relationships is the Victimization Assessment Scale (VAS). The scale has 15 items divided into these three domains, each measured on a 5-point Likert scale with potential response options ranging from "Never" (1) through "Always" (5). This scale should help measure the frequency of victimization experiences, thereby giving an overview of both overt and covert forms of abuse.

### **Domains Assessed**

- **Physical Victimization:** 5 items that measure experiences of physical aggression (hitting, pushing, or slapping).
- **Psychological Victimization:** 5 items that measure humiliation, intimidation, and emotional abuse through threats and verbal aggression.
- **Sexual Victimization:** 5 items that assess coercion and sexual activities that are forced upon the victim through unwanted sexual advances or intercourse or force to engage in any form of sex.

### **Scoring Mechanism:**

- Scores for every item vary between 1=Never to 5=Always
- The domain-specific score is obtained by adding responses to the related items.
- The total score across all 15 questions gives the total score. The greater the total score, the greater the intensity of victimization.

### **Scale Range:**

- For the domain-specific: 5 to 25
- For the total: 15 to 75

Higher scores reflect higher victimization within a given domain or globally.

### *Reliability and Validity*

- **Reliability:** The scale has demonstrated good internal consistency with an overall Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) coefficient of  $r = 0.91$ ,  $p < .01$ . A one-week test-retest reliability coefficient yielded  $r = 0.89$ ,  $p < .01$ , and which indicates excellent temporal stability.
- **Validity:** The construct validity was established in relation to similar measures of abuse. The scale was in moderately positive correlation with validated scales of

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intimate partner violence,  $r = 0.72$ ,  $p < .01$ , indicating that it indeed measures what is intended while covering unique facets of victimization.

### Administration

The scale is self-reporting and typically requires 10 minutes to complete. Respondents are given clear instructions and assurances of confidentiality to enhance honest reporting. The scale can be used for the assessment of patterns of victimization in a clinical and research setting and, of course, for outcome evaluation of any intervention.

### Statistical Analysis

This study used jamovi software. Summary of central tendency measures was made in terms of mean, median, and mode as well as variability that is standard deviation. Differences were tested using an independent t-test.

### Interpretation

This study aims to quantify the Victimization in dating relationships among both males and females in the urban areas of India based on a comparative study of gender. It aims to explore the nature of victimization in the dating relationship over three primary domains, namely, physical, psychological, and sexual abuse.

*Table 1 Demographics of respondents (gender)*

Gender	Count of Gender
Female	79
Male	71
Total	150

Table 1 depicts the gender distribution of 150 adults aged 18-34 years, with 79 females and 71 males.

*Table 2 Demographics of respondents (Age group)*

Age Group	Count
18-25	111
26-34	39
Total	150

Table 2 shows how the study's participants were divided into age categories. This distribution shows that most participants (74%) are between the ages of 18 and 25, with the remaining 26% aged 26 and 34.

*Table 3 Descriptive statistics of all variables*

Descriptives	Female	Male
Mean	19.97	23.74
Standard deviation	6.187	9.439
N	78	72

Table 3 displays descriptive statistics for the males and females in dating relationship in urban areas of India among adults aged 18-34. The mean is 19.97 with a standard deviation of 6.187 for the females, and for the males mean is 23.74 with a standard deviation of 9.439 assuming a sample size of 150 for both the variables. These data give information about the

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average levels and variability of victimization among participants, allowing for future investigation of their relationship and possible variances between genders.

**Table 4 Results of Independent Sample T-Test comparing Male and Female responses across physical, psychological, and sexual dimensions, and total scores.**

**Table 4 (T-Test)**

Independent Samples T-Test		Statistic	df	p
PHYSICAL-Q1	Student's t	-1.461 *	148	0.146
PHYSICAL-Q2	Student's t	1.110	148	0.269
PHYSICAL-Q3	Student's t	-1.924 *	148	0.056
PHYSICAL-Q4	Student's t	-3.959 *	148	< .001
PHYSICAL-Q5	Student's t	-4.342 *	148	< .001
PSYCHOLOGICAL-Q1	Student's t	-2.602 *	148	0.010
PSYCHOLOGICAL-Q2	Student's t	-2.015 *	148	0.046
PSYCHOLOGICAL-Q3	Student's t	-0.819	148	0.414
PSYCHOLOGICAL-Q4	Student's t	-1.071	148	0.286
PSYCHOLOGICAL-Q5	Student's t	-0.533	148	0.595
SEXUAL-Q1	Student's t	-0.126	148	0.900
SEXUAL-Q2	Student's t	-2.795 *	148	0.006
SEXUAL-Q3	Student's t	-3.027 *	148	0.003
SEXUAL-Q4	Student's t	-1.595 *	148	0.113
SEXUAL-Q5	Student's t	-1.024 *	148	0.308
TOTAL_SCORE	Student's t	-2.908	148	0.004

Note.  $H_0: \mu_{\text{Female}} = \mu_{\text{Male}}$

\* Levene's test is significant ( $p < .05$ ), suggesting a violation of the assumption of equal variances

- **Null Hypothesis ( $H_0$ ):** There is no difference in the mean scores between males and females.
- **Alternative Hypothesis ( $H_1$ ):** There is a difference in the mean scores between males and females.

**Test Used:** Independent Samples t-test.

### Assumptions:

The data in each group is approximately normally distributed.

The variances of the two groups are equal.

### Results

#### Independent Samples T-test:

**t-statistic:** -2.87

**p-value:** 0.0049

The p-value ( $p < 0.05$ ) indicates that the difference in means between males and females is statistically significant. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) and conclude that there is a significant difference between the two groups.

### DISCUSSION

This study investigates the level of victimization of males and females in dating relationship in urban areas in India. The Demographic composition of respondents by gender is relatively balanced: 79 female respondents and 71 male respondents, out of a total of 150 respondents. This gender distribution will make a varied evaluation of the research topic from both males and females. The results showed that the ages of most respondents fell between 18 to 25 years old, consisting of 111 respondents, which constitutes a great proportion of the sample. A smaller proportion consists of 39 respondents aged between 26 to 34 years.

This demographic breakdown shows that the age range 18-25 years is heavily emphasized and could therefore be reflecting the target population or the nature of the study in question, and therefore, it is pointing towards applicability of the research to younger people. In the descriptive statistics shown below, the means for females and males were 19.97 and 23.74 respectively showing a difference between males and females concerning the average value of the variable under measurement. The standard deviations are, respectively higher for males 9.44 compared to females, which is 6.19. The sample sizes are almost equal with 78 females and 72 males, so a good balance between genders. These statistics give an initial overview of the gender differences that will be explored further in the analysis. Independent samples T-test: comparison of means.

The two groups here were males and females. The t-statistics obtained were -2.87 while the p-value was 0.0049. Being less than the threshold of 0.05 for the level of significance, we get reason to reject the null hypothesis. This goes on to suggest that there is a statistically significant difference between these two groups in a way that gender explains this difference.

#### *Limitations and Future Research*

While this study provides valuable insights, it is limited due to the use of purposive random sampling may have introduced selection bias, limiting the generalizability of findings to the broader urban population. For future research, expanding the sample size and including rural and semi-urban areas would provide a more comprehensive view.

### CONCLUSION

This research findings put in information the level of adult victimization between 18- to 34-year-old adults, with a specific consideration of gender comparison. A careful perusal of available survey data revealed vast important observations. The mean scores for both females and males call for attention to the difference in central tendency of the measured variable. Women had a mean of 19.97, and men showed 23.74.

The standard deviation values show that the variability is much larger in the case of the male group (9.44) as compared to the female group (6.19).

Sample sizes are almost equal: 78 females and 72 males. Therefore, the data will be very representative of both genders. Thus, the above hypothesis that the male and female groups are different as far as the degree of Victimization in dating relationships in the urban areas of India is concerned is accepted.

This means that there is a statistical difference between the two groups; meaning gender explains differences very significantly.

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The hypothesis of the study stated that “*There is a difference between male and female level of Victimization in dating relationships in the urban areas of India.*”

Based on the findings, this hypothesis is accepted, as there is a significant difference between male and female level of Victimization in dating relationships in the urban areas of India.”

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### Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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