

Technology-Driven Policing for Women's Safety: Assessing the Impact of SHE Team on Reducing Gender- Based Violence in Telangana

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Abstract—Gender-based violence (GBV) is a critical societal health issue in India, and technology-driven policing is one of the possible ways to address it. This paper examines the impact of Telangana's SHE (Security for Her Ensured) Teams that were established in October 2014 on GBV reduction through technology and community policing. In this paper, secondary data from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), reports from Telangana Police, and the research work have been used to review the performance of the SHE Teams in the enforcement of eve-teasing, harassment, and violence against women. Since its establishment, the SHE Teams have responded to over 66,617 petitions, and there is a dramatic decrease in the rate of harassment cases. Technology has been used to help improve accessibility and response time through WhatsApp helplines, mobile applications, and QR code reporting systems. However, Telangana's crime rate against women (124.9 per lakh population) is still higher than the national average (66.4), indicating perpetual problems. This research contributes to the literature on technology-induced policing efficacy in patriarchal contexts and comes up with policy recommendations on the way to scale up gender-sensitive law enforcement intervention in the Indian context.

Index Terms—Community policing, Crime prevention, Telangana, India, Gender based violence, Women's safety, Policing through technology, SHE Teams.

I. INTRODUCTION

Gender-based violence against women is a global issue, with one-third of all women in the world affected in their lifetime (World Health Organization, 2013). This is particularly the case in India, where the

number of crimes against women reported has skyrocketed by 87% to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) between 2011 (228,650) and 2021 (428,278). This terrifying trend makes the need for technology-enabled innovative solutions for the safety and security of women even more crucial.

The Socio-cultural setting of India has certain issues that pose a challenge when it comes to the fight against GBV. One factor that contributes to the likelihood of violence against women is the existence of a patriarchal culture with poor public safety infrastructure and limited police capacity despite the existence of the legislative frameworks of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, and the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013. Naturally, research indicates that every second Indian woman justifies spousal violence and every second Indian male believes that women have to endure violence, not forgetting about the preservation of family unity (National Family Health Survey, 2019-21). It is against this background that the state of Telangana, on October 24, 2014, established an unprecedented system - the SHE (Security for Her Ensured) Teams. The program is a gender-sensitive policing paradigm shift and is an integration of technology and community participation in ensuring that women are not harassed and violated in the community. It was first initiated with 10 teams in Hyderabad, but has since then spread like wildfire across the state, and currently, 331 teams are operating in the state as the first end-to-end technology-based women safety program in India.

The current research assesses the effectiveness of the SHE Teams in the prevention of GBV in Telangana, which were introduced systematically through the evaluation of the statistics of the crimes under consideration, operational statistics, and the literature. The research answers three extremely significant questions: (1) How effective is the application of technology-integrated policing in terms of addressing the problem of women's safety? (2) Did SHE Teams make any difference to the crime rate and reporting patterns in Telangana? (3) What are the leftover issues of intervention, and what policy suggestions do you adhere to?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Gender-Based Violence in India

In the academic literature, GBV has been established as a multidimensional phenomenon that is structurally founded on inequalities. It is found that the crime rates committed against women in India have escalated by 31 percent between 337,922 cases in 2014 and the 445,526 cases in 2022 (NCRB, 2022). Telangana is a state of high risk where domestic violence has a prevalence rate of 40.2, which is the highest in the country (National Family Health Survey-5). By using spatial analysis, it is observed that Telangana is a large hotspot for crimes against women, apart from states such as Delhi, Haryana, and Rajasthan (Pooja et al., 2024). The problem of the underreporting of GBV is important. Studies have shown that the majority of the violence against women goes unreported because of stigma, lack of trust in the police, and fear of social consequences (Sukhtankar et al., 2022). Statistics based on reported incidents indicate that only a small portion of the actual number of incidents are reported, therefore justifying the need for interventions that must tackle both crime prevention and reporting obstacles.

Technology-Driven Policing Interventions

Gender-targeted police reforms around the world have been mixed in their results. Research on all women police stations in Brazil and India shows the possible marginalization, as women are denied access to the better-resourced mainstream police stations (Santos, 2005; Jassal, 2020). However, research has shown that the use of dedicated women's help desks with integration of technology has a significant impact on

case registration rates (Sukhtankar et al., 2022). In Madhya Pradesh, where women's help desks were established at some of the stations, the number of registered civil cases was around 1.5 per month as compared to practically zero in the control stations - showing significant improvements in the responsiveness of the police. There is potential in safety interventions with the use of technology. Mobile safety applications, Artificial Intelligence (AI) based surveillance, and digital reporting mechanisms are some of the potential solutions; however, issues of data privacy, reliability, and police integration continue to persist (ResearchGate, 2023). The Emergency Response Support System (ERSS) in India is one such example of a national-scale initiative to combine location-based services with computer-aided dispatch and mobile applications.

SHE Teams: A Pioneering Model

SHE Teams function using a unique model that is a combination of covert surveillance, technology integration, and counseling. In order to combat harassment, the organization has different teams of women who dress in civilian clothing and patrol known hot spots-bus stations, train stations, universities, and other public areas-using hidden cameras to record harassment. Offenders are caught red-handed with either evidence-based prosecution or counsel interventions, depending upon the severity of the offense (Lakshmi et al., 2023). The technology infrastructure has several channels of reporting, direct complaints and email, Facebook, WhatsApp - 9490617444, Twitter, dial 100, Hawk Eye mobile application, and QR codes placed strategically around public spaces. The multi-channel approach removes accessibility barriers and the associated stigma of police station visits. The SHE Team Application Software, implemented in 2021, received 6157 petitions, which is evidence of systematic digital case management (Telangana Police, 2024).

III. METHODOLOGY

This study uses the descriptive analytical method using secondary data taken from various authoritative sources. Primary sources of data are:

- National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) annual reports (2014-2023) giving statistics of crime, district, and state-wise

- Telangana State Police Women Safety Wing operational reports and dashboards
- Peer-reviewed scholarly articles from Google Scholar and Web of Science databases
- Government policy documents and official media releases

The period under analysis is from 2014-2024, which accompanies the birth and transformation of the SHE Team. The indicators studied are quantitative, such as the number of crimes per lakh females in the population, registration of cases, number of petitions, and conviction rates. Qualitative analysis includes the results from empirical studies on brand awareness and public opinion related to SHE Teams (Lakshmi et al., 2023). Limitations are the use of official statistics, which underestimate actual crime because of underreporting, as well as the lack of longitudinal controlled trials on the specific impact of SHE Teams from other concomitant policies.

IV. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Operational Performance of SHE Teams

Since their inception, SHE Teams have been proven to have significant operational reach. As of October 2024, the program has received 66,617 petitions using a variety of channels (Table 1). The data related to enforcement shows a graduated response to offending, with counseling as the first response for first offenders and minor offenders.

Table 1. SHE Teams Enforcement Actions (2014-2017)

Year	Persons Counseled	Petty Cases Booked	Persons Warned
2014	74	39	19
2015	284	115	72
2016	550	141	389
2017	625	83	515

Source: Lakshmi et al. (2023), Academy of Marketing Studies Journal

The data shows exponential growth in intervention volume, with counseled persons growing from 74 in 2014 to 625 in November 2017. This growth is the result of both the expansion of the operational capacity and the rise in public awareness of the services of SHE Teams.

Technology adoption has created a lot of diversity in reporting channels. Table 2 shows the various multi-modal systems of receipt of petitions, where

WhatsApp has taken over as the main channel of receipt (2,240 complaints in 2014-2017), followed by complaints by direct contact (3,608) and Dial 100 (1,549).

Table 2. Petition Receipt Channels (2014-2017)

Direct	Email	WhatsApp	Dial 100	Total
3,608	1,332	2,240	1,549	9,443

Source: Lakshmi et al. (2023)

Crime Statistics and Comparative Analysis

The crime statistics in Telangana include a complex picture despite the operations of SHE Teams. According to data from the National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB) for 2022, Telangana was reported to have a crime rate of 124.9 per lakh female population, which is almost double the national average of 66.4 (Table 3). This makes Telangana the second-highest state in the country, next to Delhi (133.6).

Table 3. Crime Against Women: Top States by Rate (2022-2023)

State	Crime Rate (2022)	Crime Rate (2023)
Delhi	144.4	133.6
Telangana	117.0	124.9
Rajasthan	115.1	114.8
Odisha	103.3	112.4
National Average	66.4	66.2

Source: National Crime Records Bureau (2022, 2023); Telangana NavaNirmana Sena (2024)

A high rate of crime, though a surprise, needs to be interpreted carefully. This could indicate a higher reporting rate due to public awareness and the perceived receptive attitude of police, encouraged by SHE Teams, as opposed to a real increase in crime. Research shows that gender-specific interventions could substantially increase case registration levels - civil case registration rose from zero to 1.5 per month per station in Madhya Pradesh's Women's Help Desks (Sukhtankar et al., 2022). This may be the reason for the statistics for Telangana. Importantly, the number of cases of harassment in Hyderabad dropped from 1,521 in September 2014 to 1,296 by the end of the year, which is a 14.8% drop after the initial months of the intervention. Media reports tell us that harassment cases will be reduced by 20% by 2016, so it does seem to show measurable deterrent effects.

Awareness and Perception of the Public

In empirical research conducted by Lakshmi et al. (2023), 1046 respondents from Hyderabad were surveyed to evaluate the brand awareness and effectiveness of SHE Teams. The study used exploratory factor analysis and found four awareness categories such as digital media awareness, psychological awareness, event awareness, and print media awareness. Findings showed that digital media awareness ($b=0.530$, $p<0.001$), psychological awareness ($b=0.652$, $p<0.001$), and event awareness ($b=0.742$, $p<0.001$) had significant effects on public attitudes towards SHE Teams. However, print media awareness was not a significant effect ($b=0.543$, $p>0.001$).

In turn, public attitude had a positive effect on perceived effectiveness ($b=0.728$, $p<0.001$). Respondents reported that SHE Teams decreased stalking, phone harassment, lewd comments, social media harassment, and inappropriate touching. The study showed that 89.1% of respondents felt that AI-enabled chatbots could aid GBV victims, and 71.3% thought that the most effective technological contribution was improving the integration with the police.

V. DISCUSSION

The results are paradoxical: high operational effectiveness and chronic high criminality. This paradox has been established as an accurate representation of several dynamics inherent to technology-enabled gender-sensitive policing in the patriarchal context.

First, SHE Teams have proven to increase accessibility and responsiveness. The multi-channel reporting system breaks down the stigma, mobility constraints, and time limitations traditionally preventing women from seeking police stations. WhatsApp's dominance as a communication medium for reporting (23.7% of all petitions) demonstrates the effectiveness of women's communication preferences in this handbook. With more than 40,000 placements in metro stations, buses, and hospitals, the QR code mechanism can be thought of as a novel low-barrier reporting infrastructure.

Second, a counseling-based approach addresses the underlying factors of the behavior of harassment. According to 1533 counseling sessions, taking place

during the 2014-2017-time frame, as compared to petty cases and smaller-scale prosecution (378), the program is focused on behavioral correction rather than punishment. This is in line with the studies that indicate that counseling interventions reduce recidivism when applied alongside community interventions and family engagement.

Third, the crime rate is high, which can actually be an indicator of the success of the interventions. It is probable that reporting confidence has also increased due to better access to technology platforms and visible policing, and it has led to the arrest of crimes that could not be reported before. Sukhtankar et al. (2022) support this interpretation because they demonstrated that special women's services considerably enhance case registration. Reporting and police accountability may also be the real success, rather than decreasing the crime rate. But there are still major challenges involved. Telangana's domestic violence prevalence (40.2%) is much higher than India's average (31.2%), suggesting that SHE Teams' public space approach to violence is insufficient to improve private sphere violence. Domestic violence makes up 31.4% of all crimes against women in the country, yet it is not in the scope of the program, which includes eve-teasing, stalking, and harassment in public spaces. This limitation can be seen as part of broader structural limitations to Indian policing, where domestic violence is largely outside of proactive intervention mandates.

Moreover, the conviction rates are still low. While the SHE Teams improve the registration, there are bottlenecks in downstream judicial processing. Nationally, rape conviction rates were as low as 27-28% in 2018-2022, with a general GBV conviction rate of 28.35%. High acquittal rates (61.7%) and case pendency (91.09%) weaken deterrent effects to the extent that the long-term impact of SHE Teams may be limited.

Although cutting-edge, technology integration is facing sustainability issues. Issues related to data privacy, digital literacy in rural areas, and the lack of resources for managing multiple platforms are all issues that will need to be addressed. The study by Lakshmi et al. (2023) indicated that only 60.8% of respondents were in the age group of 19-24, which implies the possibility of digital divides between younger and older women and the impact of this on access to digital technology for older women.

VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study shows that SHE Teams are a revolutionary technology-driven policing model that has quantifiable effects on availability, reporting, and public confidence. Responsible for the development of multi-channel digital infrastructure and processing more than 66,617 petitions, the program overcomes key challenges of gender-sensitive law enforcement. The data collected from the public perception confirmed positive perceptions on the effectiveness of SHE Teams, and the factor of technology integration was surfacing as a contributing factor to their success. However, sustained high crime rates and high prevalence of domestic violence suggest that structural inequalities that are at the root of GBV are too entrenched to be permanently alleviated through technology-focused interventions only. The success of the program in the public space will need to be supplemented by broadening the scope for which the program is implemented, reforming the legal system, and changing society.

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are as follows:

- Even widen the scope of SHE Teams by drawing them into domestic violence based on integrated coordination with Bharosa Centers and One-Stop Centers.
- Increase judicial capacity by harmonizing the fast-track courts in GBV cases and gender sensitization training for judges.
- Improve technology infrastructure with AI-based predictive analytics to determine points of harassment and how to best allocate resources.
- Address digital literacy gaps - conducting community outreach in rural areas (with an equitable access to reporting mechanisms);
- Conduct high-quality longitudinal impact studies to separate the contribution of SHE Teams from other concurrent interventions
- Replicate successful models nationally and at the state level, taking cultural norms and values into account, as shown by the six-state replication.
- Mainstreaming of Gender issues: It is very important to link community policing with larger gender equality programs, challenging patriarchal

norms through educational and awareness activities.

Future research should use quasi-experimental designs that compare the results to states in India that were not given similar interventions (control states), and that control for confounding factors, such as urbanization levels, economic development, and when control states underwent similar policy changes along with Telangana. A longitudinal study tracking individual women's experience with SHE Teams would be beneficial for gaining helpful insight into the effectiveness of the program from the beneficiary's perspective.

Overall, SHE Teams provide the anecdotal evidence of the possible power of gender-oriented police, supported by technology, community outreach, and easy reporting, on the safety of women. Moreover, law enforcement cannot significantly help in minimizing GBV, unless it is carried on in a holistic approach, not just in the sense of law enforcement but also in that of judicial effectiveness, social perceptions, or gender disproportionate arrangements. The basic social transformation cannot be substituted by technology, which is an enabler.

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