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A PUBLIC AWARENESS STUDY ON THE PREVALENCE OF ACID ATTACKS ON WOMEN IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

An acid attack is a crime in which acids or any other harmful as well as corrosive substance are thrown at a person to harm them physically or emotionally. The physical form of hurting is permanent destruction of eyesight, breakage of bones, and disfigurement of face and head whereas the emotional form is lack of public exposure, social contacts, etc. recent report stated that 386 cases were reported from the year 2018 to 2022 and 176 cases in the year of 2023. The government enacted Section 326(A) of The Indian Penal Code,1860 where any person who voluntarily causes permanent or partial damage, burns, or disfigures by using acid, she is punished with a minimum imprisonment of 10 years which may extend to life and a fine is levied as per the victim's medical expenses. The main objective is to study the reasons and effects of acid attacks on women in India. The research question here is Whether Indian laws are efficient in

preventing acid attacks on women in India? The researcher has followed the empirical research method using a convenient sampling method. The sample size of the study is 205. The result observed from the study is that most people are aware of the recent trends of acid attacks and the laws enacted by the government will help in the abolition of acid attacks. The suggestion of this study is to increase the awareness of acid attacks and make people aware of the laws available to protect the victims and punish the accused.

KEYWORDS: Acid, Attack, India, Women, Victims

INTRODUCTION

An acid attack is a crime in which acids or any other harmful as well as corrosive substance are thrown at a person with the intention to harm them physically or emotionally. The physical form of hurting is the permanent destruction of eyesight, breakage of bones, and disfigurement of face and head whereas the emotional form is a lack of public exposure, social contacts, etc. The evolution of acid attacks dates back to the 18th century in England where an acid known as Sulphuric acid (previously known as vitriol) was manufactured to use as a bleach and cleaning agent. People then started using this acid for violent purposes as it was available easily. Acid attacks then became a common weapon during domestic disputes. In the 18th and 19th centuries, women threw acid on men who impregnated them out of marriage, former lovers who left them, or husbands who abused them. Acid attacks were very common in those days but were not associated with any gangs. The highest punishment given during those days was imprisonment for 10 years or more.

The government enacted Section 326(A) of The Indian Penal Code, 1860 where any person who voluntarily causes permanent or partial damage, burns or disfigures by using acid, he/she is punished with a minimum imprisonment of 10 years which may extend to life and a fine is levied as per the victim's medical expenses. The government has also introduced laws for even attempting acid attacks, this comes under Section 326B of the Indian Penal Code, 1860 where the punishment is imprisonment of 5 years which may be extended up to 7 years with a fine. However, compensation is paid to the victims who suffer loss or injury. The compensation is paid as a fine by the accused after court hearings and judgment under Section 357 A of the Criminal Procedure Code. Section 322 of the Indian Penal Code defines the term "voluntarily causing grievous hurt" where hurts must be voluntarily done with the intention to cause hurt. Section 320

of the Indian Penal Code defines the term “grievous hurt they state that the accused can be convicted only if the acid attack affects the victims by creating permanent destruction of eyesight, disfigurement of the face, breakage of bone, etc.

The factors that constitute acid attacks are refusal of love proposal, rejection of marriage proposal, denial of dowry, male-dominated society, peer jealousy, and inexpensive and effortless obtaining of acids. Refusal of a love proposal and rejection of a marriage proposal are closely connected and are the major reasons for acid attacks in India. This reason acid attacks are more common among youngsters and teenagers as they are the ones who are more interested in seeking revenge. Denial of dowry also contributes to acid attacks as men get furious when women’s families refuse to give them. Since our society is a male-dominated one and women mostly never complain about the abuse faced by them, males tend to attack women with acids. Peer jealousy is another common factor constituting acid attacks where one peer is jealous of another and that results in acid attacks. Inexpensive and effortless obtaining of acids is also the major reason for acid attacks as without much spending of money and time acids are sourced from local shops and are used as a weapon to destroy a life.

The National Crime Records Bureau has evaluated that there have been 1483 cases of acid attacks between the years 2014 and 2018 and also stated that acid attacks have increased over the years. It also stated that every day an acid attack case is being recorded. Times of India also stated that acid attacks in India have been increasing and 27 cases were reported in the year 2010. From 2002 to 2010, 153 acid attack cases were reported, 386 cases were reported from the year 2018 to 2022, and 176 cases in the year 2023. The Central Government has also advised the State and Union Territories to review the sale of acids as they are used in many crimes and has also asked to keep a record of the purchase. The dealer has to note down the name, address, the quantity of acids, and the purpose for which the acids are being bought by the person.

A recent report by ‘She the People’, a women’s channel has recorded that India is at the top when it comes to acid attacks and also stated that even though acids are banned in India more cases are being recorded every year. An article also stated that 90% of acid attacks are being reported in developing countries like Colombia, Nepal, and many other countries but India is still the highest number. In southern parts of Asia, the highest acid attack cases are from India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan, and in India, the highest number of cases are recorded in northern parts of the country

like West Bengal and Delhi. There is also a finding that women are the most affected by acid attacks than men as 60% of victims are women and the rest are men. Each and every country has its own laws which govern and protect the victims as well as punish the accused.

OBJECTIVES:

- To study the reasons for Acid Attacks in India.
- To know the effects of Acid Attacks in India.
- To create awareness on the after effects of Acid Attacks in India.
- To suggest remedial measures to curb Acid Attacks in India.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

[\(Shaheema Hameed\)](#) discusses acid attack victims in India who are primarily women while examining the related laws dealing with such issues. While these attacks can be associated with societal and other factors that relegate women to an inferior position in a society of male-dominated patriarchal culture, cases of acid assaults are on the rise in India. Acid attack victims and survivors are at the receiving end of social stigmas that prevent them from achieving fulfilling lives. They are forced to live lives of social exclusion as they are embarrassed, hesitant, and fearful of the outside world. [\(Vidhik Kumar\)](#) states that India has the highest number of acid attack cases than any other country despite the actions taken by the Government of India. The article states the prevalence of acid attacks and the motives behind the acid attacks. This article will discuss the prevalence of acid attacks in India, the motives behind the attacks, consequences on victims, and shortcomings in measures adopted to prevent the crime and provide justice to victims. [\(Lakshya Grover\)](#) has studied that Acid Attack need not be just against women but the statistics show it as a crime against women as the harming a woman's facial features seems as a vengeful act to the culprits due to the beauty definitions of our shallow society. In a country where a whole majority prays to female Gods and regards women as Devis, such acts are done with reasons such as one-sided love, jealousy, etc. [\(Shalini Mittal\)](#) evaluates evidence that indicates that women are often the target of different kinds of gender-based violence, causing them to experience physical and psychological trauma. However, the trauma associated with one such gender-based crime, acid attack, has been less explored and lacks due representation in media and literature. Moreover, trauma has mostly been studied from a clinical perspective. [\(Manorama Pandey\)](#) states that the women in India and across the world face various problems some by society and some by the family itself, male domination not only tries to suppress women but also

women's needs to face various problem in order to fight back the fit condition in the society, Although the condition of women in India is worsened day to day. Women across the nation not only need to face financial problems but also emotional and mental issues. ([Priyanka Biswas et al](#))reports that today's world is witnessing an alarming rate of incidences of acid violence, especially against women. The situation in India is too inexpressible. In most of the reported cases of acid attacks in India, the women become the sufferers for spurning suitors, refusing marriage proposals denying dowry, and so on. The present study aims to recognize the underlying factors and evaluate perception variations among the respondents regarding determinants of acid violence([Shivani Goswami](#))evaluates that acid attacks are mostly committed on weaker sex and says that something stringent needs to be done to curb this evil in our society. The purpose of an acid attack is to deface, injure, and torture the person throughout his/her life. It often leads to long-lasting effects which could be physical, psychological, social, and economic. ([Sajida Awais et al](#))focuses on the perception transformation in the lives of acid victim women who went on air in the media. The study holds huge importance because it tends to demonstrate the role of TV channels in transforming the lives of acid burnt women and motivating them back towards life again. ([Unsa Athar et al](#)) have studied that After an acid attack, many patients suffer from changes in life perspective, behaviour, feelings, social withdrawal, social isolation, and depression. Formal and informal social support is vital for the proper and complete rehabilitation of acid burn victims. The government should form separate public help centres for such patients. ([Arundhuti Das](#))has made a recent report on the causes and impact of the acid attacks on the victims and has also surveyed the age groups being attacked and the common acids used by the attackers. The easy accessibility of inexpensive acid makes the perpetrators use it as an ideal weapon against this heinous crime against women. Illegal sales and purchases of acid are considered non-bailable offenses, still, it is readily accessible in most grocery and hardware stores in urban and rural areas. ([Navpreet Kaur](#))The crime of acid attacks against women in India is becoming more and more common. In such crimes against women, it is always the case that these incidents are either localized or individualized. It is the pathetic status of women that is perpetuated by the system that is responsible for such evils. In India, like in most countries, women are treated as second-class citizens and are never given the opportunity to assert themselves by refusing the so-called love proposals and advances. ([Alok Rawat et al](#))evaluates acid violence survivors who face marginalization from society after the attack. Additionally, acid violence tends to create fear amongst women in society, as some women may feel that they might get attacked if they fail to conform to traditional subordinate gender roles. In order to emancipate and empower women in

society, it is this fear that the law is supposed to address. Deterrence by means of strict laws dealing with crimes against women is one way of addressing the issue. [\(NALSA\)](#) reports that acid attacks are the most pernicious form of violence that is resorted to and is mostly gender specific. The incidents of acid attacks in India are shown mostly against women and they are the result of marriage proposals or sexual advances. Conflicts related to dowry also lead to acid attacks. [\(Minakshi Goswami\)](#) evaluates that acid attackers generally target young girls with the intention of disfiguring the face of the victim. The most common types of acids used to attack victims are hydrochloric, sulphuric, and nitric acids. The main reasons behind the commission of the brutal act of acid throwing are many, namely rejection of love or marriage proposals, refusal to pay dowry, rejection of sexual advances, property or family disputes, or marital disputes like refusal to give divorce. Acid attacks result in severe physical, psychological, and socio-economic consequences and make the life of the victim worse than death. [\(Meghna Bajpai et al\)](#) has studied the increase in cases of acid attacks and the effects on the victims-physically, psychologically, and economically. The paper also states laws that govern and protect the acid attack victims and punish the accused. [\(Chinmaya Kumar Mohapatra et al\)](#) states that an acid attack is more intentional and graver than rape and murder. Most of the women therefore restrict themselves to homes and avoid public appearance. Generally, acids are thrown at the face of the victim so that it would burn and damage skin tissue. Sometimes it may turn the person blind and permanently pocking the face and these victim's social life gets degraded in society. [\(Kalpana Chanderia\)](#) has evaluated that acid attack is a deep-rooted social evil and has also highlighted the deficiency in the role played by the judiciary and police while dealing with the acid attacks. Suggestions that may help in decreasing acid attack cases are also provided in this research paper. [\(Samra Azam et al\)](#) has made a qualitative study that explores the psychological, economic, social, and cultural aspects of acid attacks on women. The study aimed at investigating the causes of acid attacks as well as their consequences which have become a serious threat to society. [\(Mamta Patel\)](#) evaluates that girls are dying or disfigured every day due to acid attacks. Girls have lost their lives while many are struggling with wounds and have survived these vicious attacks by thwarted lovers by those seeking revenge against another family by jealous colleagues. This paper is an attempt to understand the reasons for the attacks and ways used for their disfigurement. [\(Sarala Jayakumar\)](#) Acid attacks on women are increasing day by day, basically on girls between the age of 11-30 years. The most common types of acid utilized in these assaults include sulphuric, nitric, and hydrochloric acid. A woman has to take care of her own personal life and if she is a mother, she has to take care also of her children's lives too. Worse still, if she

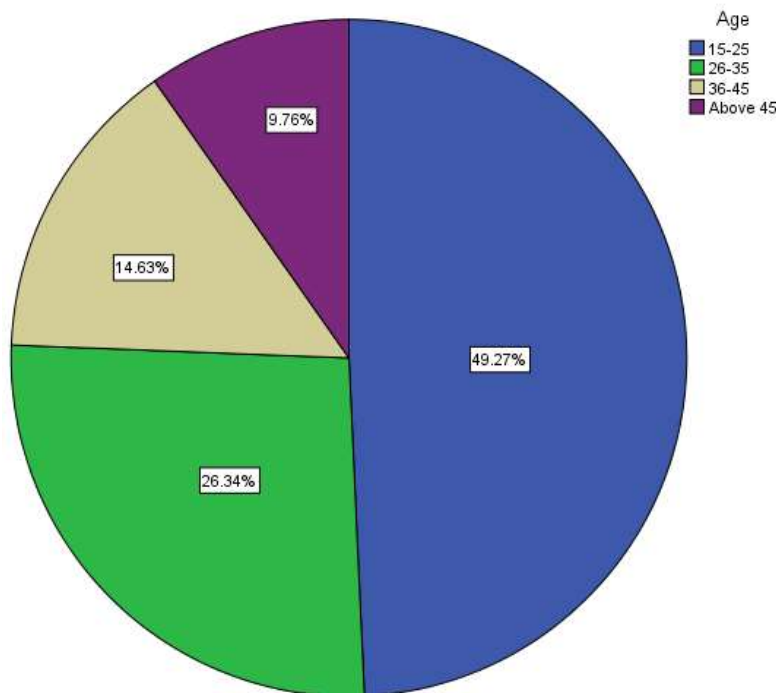
is married, additional stress can be on her shoulders. Yet they will still perform very well in the work environment in some cases better than their male counterparts.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research method followed here is empirical research. A total of 205 samples have been collected out of which all samples have been collected through convenient sampling methods. The sample frame taken here is public areas in and around Chennai, Tamil Nadu like Thandalam, Kuthambakkam, Kilpauk, Kodambakkam, Pallavaram, Nungambakkam and Chetpet. The independent variables are age, gender, educational qualification, and occupation. The dependent variables are acid attacks and awareness of acid attacks. The statistical tools used here are correlation and graphical representation such as pie charts and graphs.

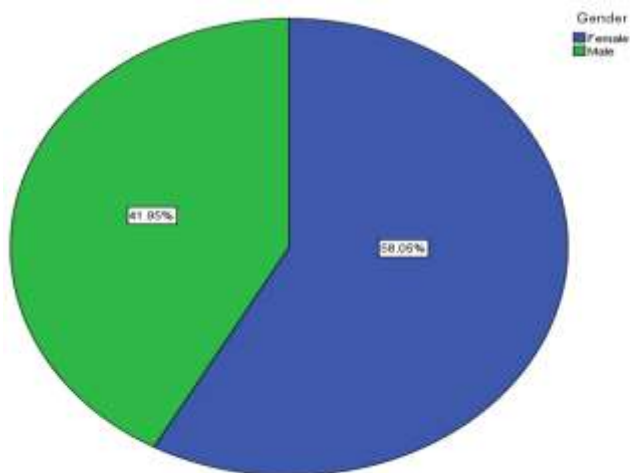
ANALYSIS

Figure 1:



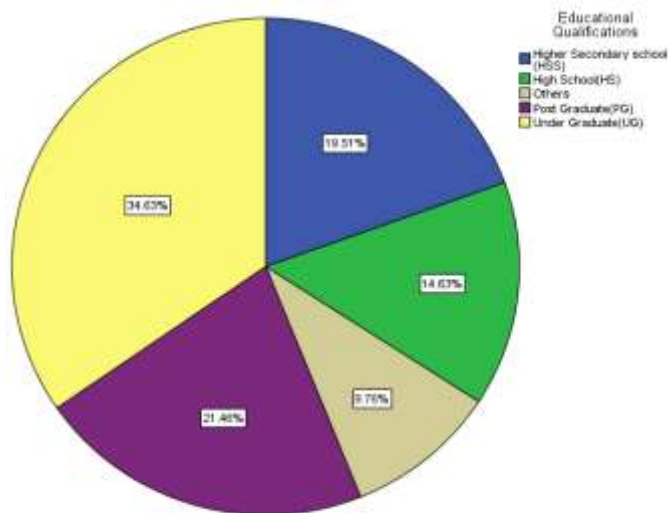
Legend: Fig 1 shows the age distribution of the respondents.

Figure 2:



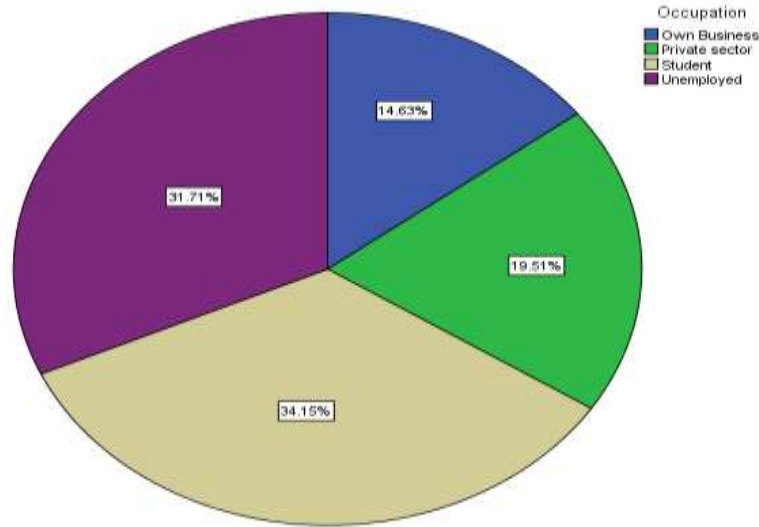
Legend: Fig 2 shows the gender distribution of the respondents.

Figure 3:



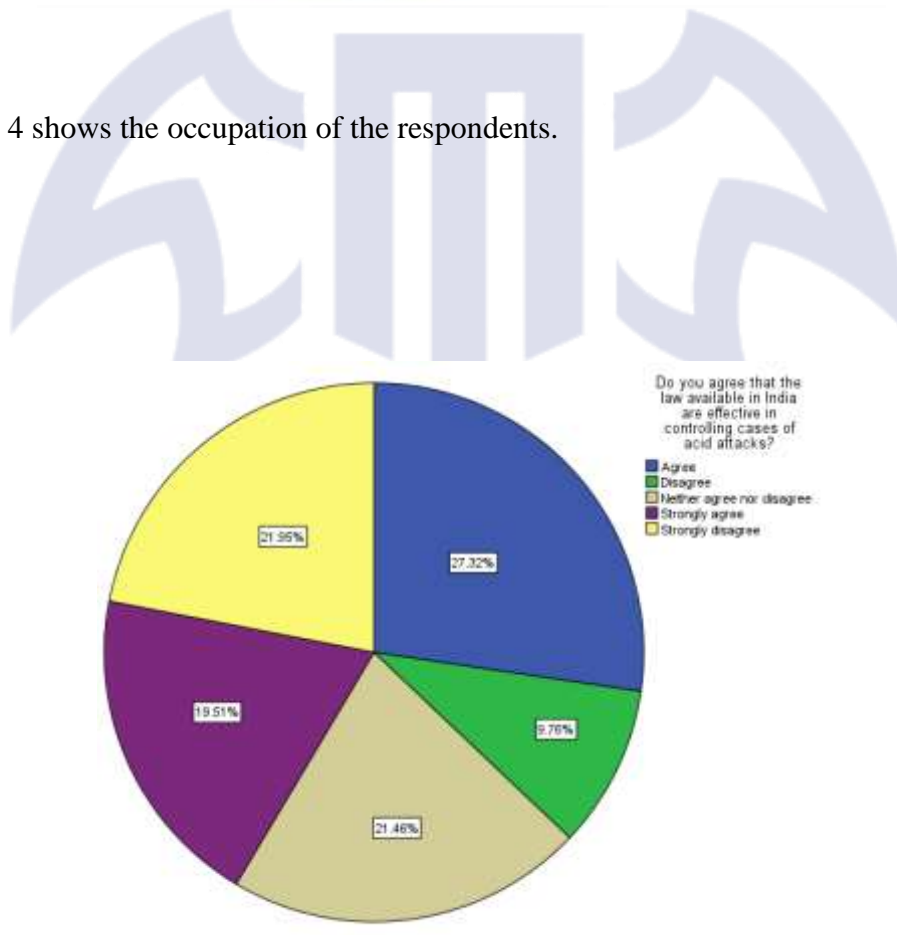
Legend: Fig 3 shows the educational qualifications of the respondents.

Figure 4:



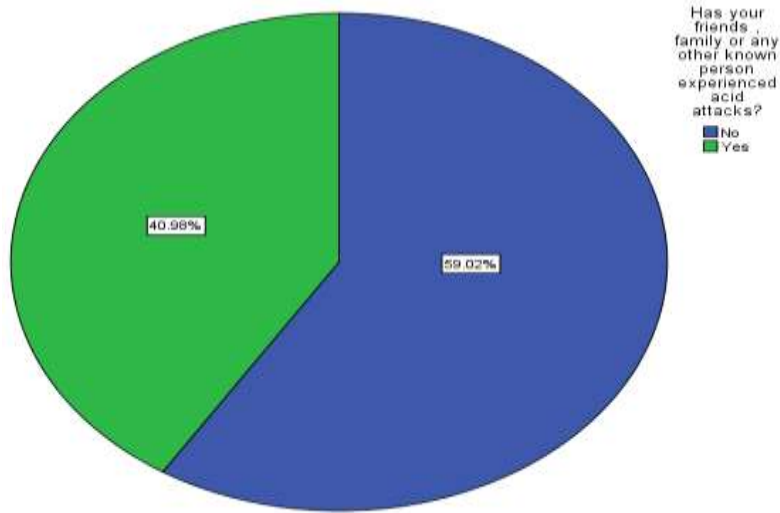
Legend: Fig 4 shows the occupation of the respondents.

Figure 5:



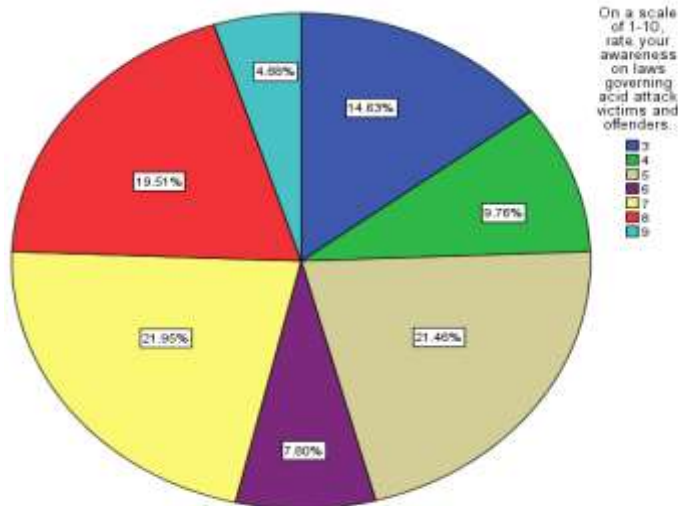
Legend: Fig 5 shows the opinion of respondents on the effectiveness of laws governing acid attacks.

Figure 6:



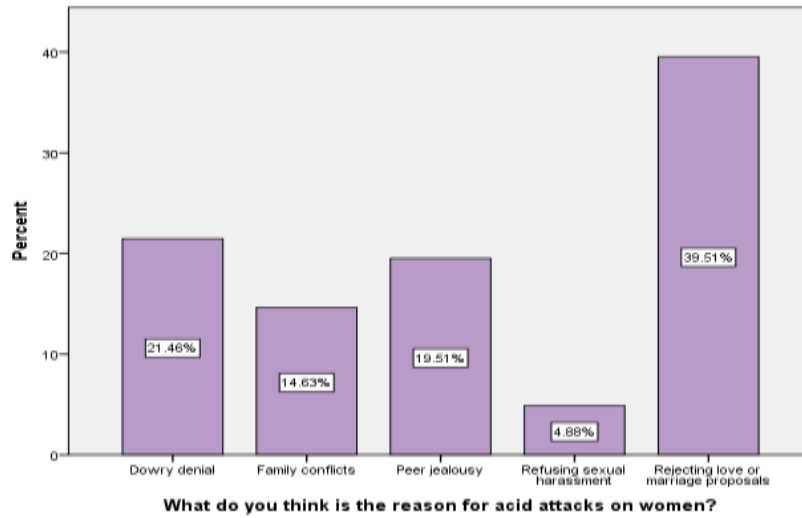
Legend: Fig 6 shows the opinion of respondents whether their family, friends or any other person experienced acid attack.

Figure 7:



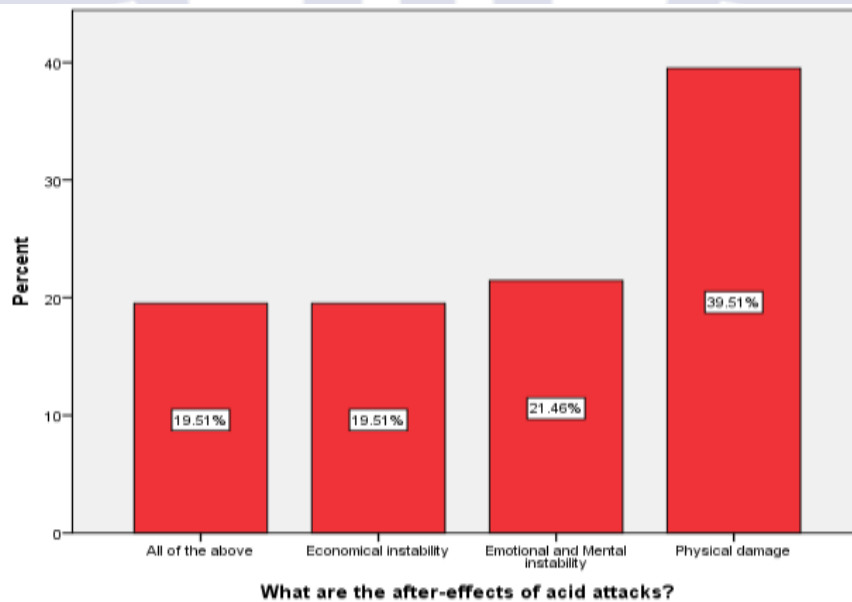
Legend: Fig 7 shows the opinion of respondents on their awareness on laws governing acid attack victims and offenders.

Figure 8:



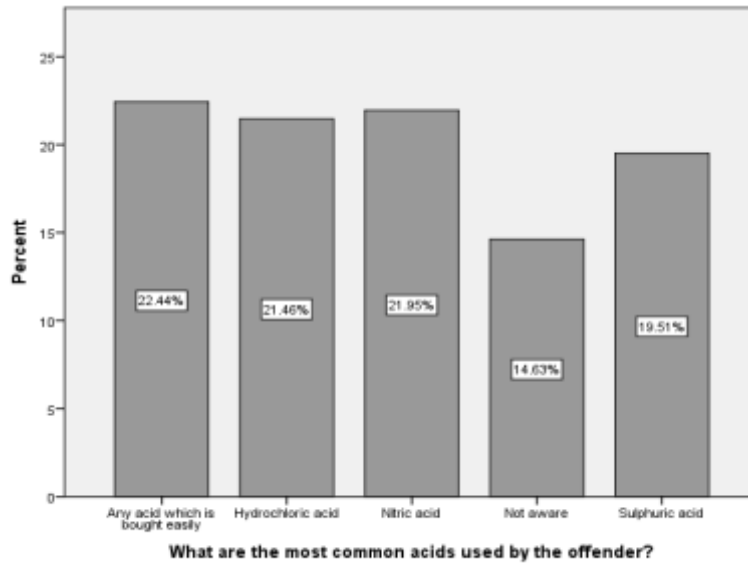
Legend: Fig 8 shows the reasons for acid attacks on women in the opinion of the respondents.

Figure 9:



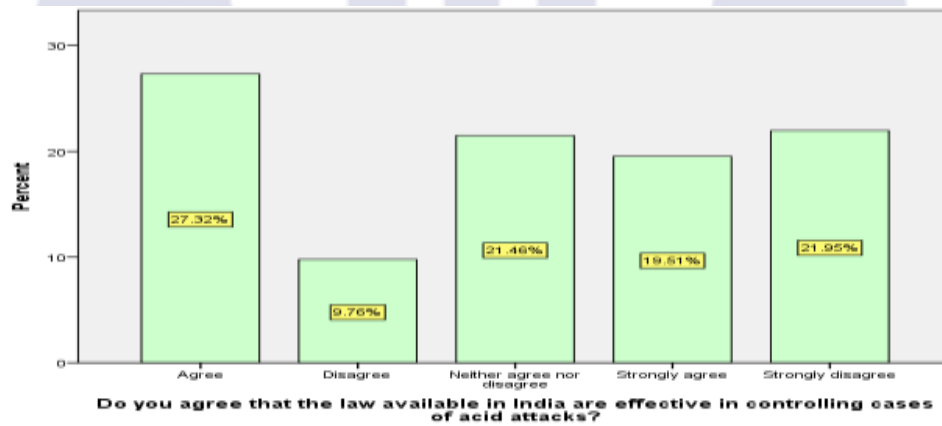
Legend: Fig 9 shows the after-effects of acid attacks in the opinion of the respondents.

Figure 10:



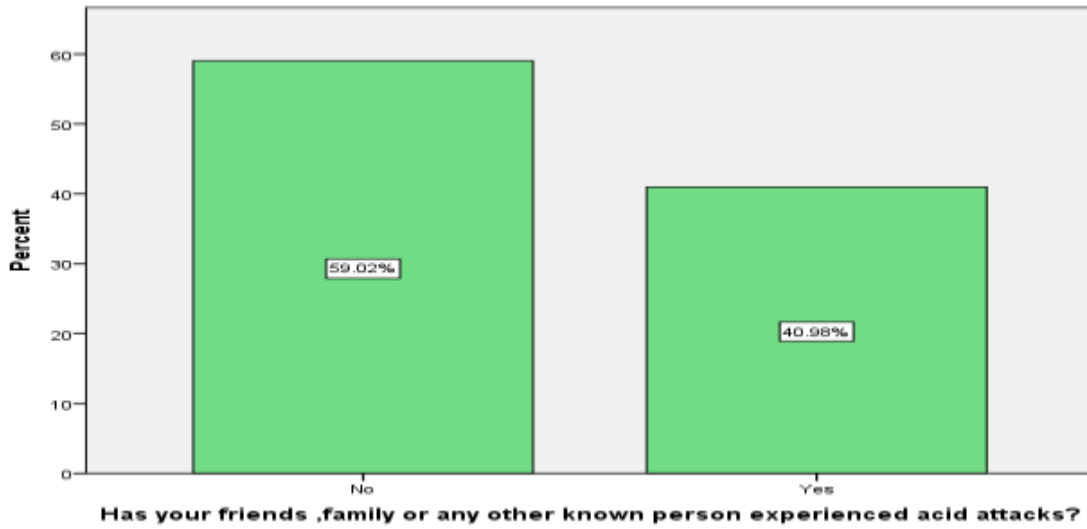
Legend: Fig 10 shows the acids used by the offenders in the opinion of the respondents.

Figure 11:



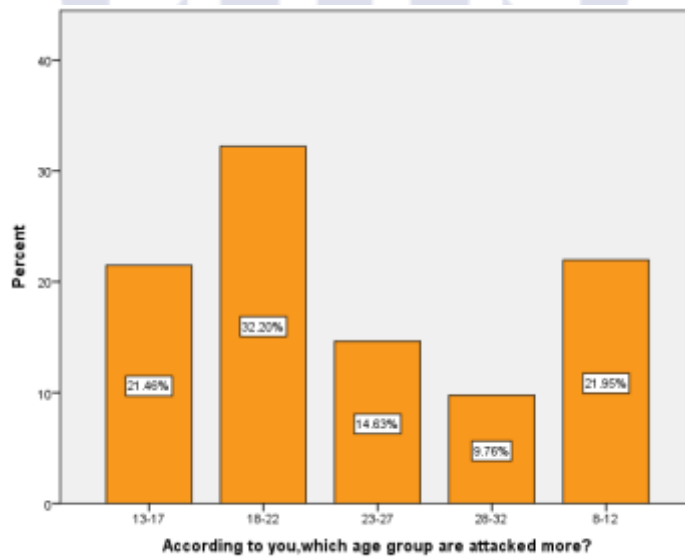
Legend: Fig 11 shows the effectiveness of law available in India in controlling acid attacks in the opinion of the respondents.

Figure 12:



Legend: Fig 12 shows the opinion of respondents whether their family, friends or any other person experienced acid attack.

Figure 13:



Legend: Fig 13 shows the age group which is attacked more in the opinion of the respondents.

Table 1:

Ha: There is a significant relationship between age and the reason for acid attacks on women.

Ho: There is no significant relationship between age and the reasons for acid attacks on women.

Age ^ What do you think is the reason for acid attacks on women? Crosstabulation

Count

	What do you think is the reason for acid attacks on women?						Total
		Dowry denial	Family conflicts	Peer jealousy	Refusing sexual harassment	Rejecting love or marriage proposals	
Age	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
15-25	0	0	0	40	0	61	101
26-35	0	44	0	0	10	0	54
36-45	0	0	30	0	0	0	30
Above 45	0	0	0	0	0	20	20
Total	1	44	30	40	10	81	206

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	638.144 ^a	20	.000
Likelihood Ratio	417.574	20	.000
N of Valid Cases	206		

a. 18 cells (60.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .00.

Legend: Table 1 represents the correlation between age which is an independent variable and the reason for acid attacks on women which is a dependent variable.

RESULTS

Respondents belonging to the age group of 15-25 have been surveyed more regarding acid attacks whereas respondents belonging to the age group of 26-35 years have been less surveyed and respondents belonging to the age group of 36-45 years have less surveyed and respondents belonging to age group above 45 years have the least surveyed (Fig.1). Female respondents have been surveyed more regarding acid attacks whereas male respondents have comparatively shown a lesser preference towards answering the study (Fig.2). The pie chart represents the educational qualifications of the respondents where undergraduates are highly active about acid attacks and high school students were least active among the respondents (Fig.3). The highest number of

respondents belong to the government sector and then private sector whereas the least among the respondents were having their own business (Fig4).

The majority of respondents agreed that laws available in India are effective in controlling cases of acid attacks (Fig.5). The highest response given by the respondents was a no on stating an experience with acid attacks(Fig.6). The pie-chart represents the awareness on laws governing acid attack victims and offenders, most of them have responded that they are aware of the laws available (Fig7). The bar chart reveals the reason for acid attacks on women and the major reason was rejecting love or marriage proposals (Fig8). The complex chart studies the after-effects of child marriage and physical damage was the major after-effect (Fig9). The chart shows the common acids used by the offender and people have responded that any acid which is easily brought from the store is commonly used by the offenders (Fig10). The figure shows the effectiveness of the law governing acid attack cases and many of them have agreed to it (Fig11). The graph shows whether the respondent's family, friends, or any other known member have experienced acid attacks and many have responded with a no which is a positive response in this case (Fig 12). The bar graph studies the age group that is being attacked more and the age group between 18-22 are being attacked more (Fig13). The hypothesis assumed here is that there is a significance between age and the reason for acid attacks on women (Table 1).

DISCUSSION

The study shows that 19.51% population of people strongly agree that the law available in India are effective in controlling cases of acid attacks and 21.95% population strongly disagree that the laws governing cases of acid attacks are not effective in controlling cases of acid attacks(Fig.5).It is also melancholy to state that even in this 21st century 40.98% of the population's family member or friend has been a victim of acid attack and 59.02% of the population has stated that neither their friends nor family member has not been a victim of acid attack(Fig.6).In the year of 2023, India is the number one populated country and yet only 4.88% population of people to whom the survey is taken is strongly aware on the laws governing acid attacks victims and the offenders and 14.63% population are completely not aware on the laws available for the same(Fig.7).The main reason for such grievous behaviour of acid attack done by the offender is due to getting rejected by their love or marriage proposals which accounts to 39.51% and 21.46% is due to dowry denial and this attack is done on married women, 19.51% is because of peer jealousy, 14.63% is to the reason of family conflicts and the least of 4.88% is of refusal of sexual

harassment and this has reduced to the legalisation of prostitution by the Government(Fig.8). This immoral act results in many side-effects and physical damage being 39.51% tops the list which is being followed by emotional ,mental instability and economic instability which are 21.46% and 19.51% respectively(Fig.9).The most common acid used by the offender is Nitric acid and Hydrochloric acid which is 21.95% and 21.46% respectively, these are due to the easy and low priced availability of the acids and this is also followed by the usage of Sulphuric acid 19.51% of respondents have stated(Fig.10).The hypothesis tested here is to find out if there is significant relationship between the age and the reason for acid attacks on women .But it was proved that there is a significant relationship between the age and the reason for acid attacks on women(Table.1).

LIMITATIONS

One of the major limitations of the study is the sample frame. There is a major constraint in the sample frame as it is limited to a small area. Thus, it proves to be difficult to extrapolate it to a larger population. Another limitation is the sample size which cannot be used to assume the thinking of the entire population in a particular country, state, or city. The physical factors have a larger impact, thus, limiting the study.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the analysis, it has been found that most people are aware of acid attacks and the reasons and after-effects of acid attacks. They also show a considerable amount of support towards the abolition of acid attacks. The Government is conducting more awareness camps and making laws more stringent in order to eradicate acid attacks. The suggestion given for this study is to report any acid attack occurring around you to legitimate specialists. Teach your companions, family, and local area about why acid attacks are destructive, and vow to never be a piece of any occasion that advances acid attacks.

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