

**1090 WOMEN'S POWERLINE: ADDING POWER TO WOMEN IN UP****SHIRIN ABBAS, DR (COL) AK SINGH**

**Abstract:** Though 1090 is a National Women's Helpline, in the state of Uttar Pradesh it has been developed as Women's Powerline—a tool to empower women across the state. With the UP Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav and his wife Dimple Yadav taking special interest in the project, the Powerline has become a hugely important empowerment tool for women in the state. The paper is based on primary data collected through the Database of the Women's Powerline and through primary interviews with personnel posted in the Powerline Headquarters based in Lucknow.

Any female being harassed by unwanted calls/ unsolicited messages or threats on her phone number can dial 1090 and register a complaint. After verifying the same, the Powerline registers her complaint. The culprit is hauled up and warned by the counsellors that his number is now under electronic surveillance and if he does not desist, stern action will be taken. The quick action and reaction of the Powerline staff has generally ensured that there is a non-repeat of the act in most cases. The caller's number remains under electronic surveillance for 3 years and any repeat of the act can result in serious repercussions.

The paper presents a case study of the 1090 Powerline in the state, and is also part of a case study for the research scholar's Ph D which will be submitted in December 2015.

**Keywords:** Gender Studies, Mass Communication, Media, MSBC (Mobiles for Social & Behavioural Change), Women's Powerline 1090

**Introduction:** Background & motivation: According to data from the National Crime Records Bureau—the government agency that keeps track of the country's crime rate—cases of violent abuse of women have steadily increased since 2009. By 2013, the number of such cases has increased by over 50 percent. That means that over 848 women are harassed, raped or killed after abduction every single day. Some are sold off to traffickers.

Delhi is the worst offender in such cases. India's capital city is the epicentre of almost thrice the amount of sexual crimes against women than the national average. Even at the time the Nirbhaya case came to light, almost 670 women in the country were being sexually harassed (and much worse) daily. Of course, those were just the reported numbers—the actual cases of violence against women were much higher. But what has been alarming is the steady growth in such cases. Though Andhra Pradesh in south India and Uttar Pradesh in the north register more than one-fifth of the total crimes against women, Delhi has by far the worst crime rate. It has

also recorded the highest increase in percentage of rape cases across the country.

In 2013, almost 34,000 women were raped. That's a 35.2 percent rise from 2012, with the highest rate of increase in Delhi. A sizeable portion of the rape survivors—over 13 percent—are under the age of 14 years. If you count all the women who are raped by the time they turn 18, that's almost 40 percent of the entire demographic of women rape survivors. Worse, almost all of these women are raped by their neighbours, parents, a close family member or other relatives. Rapes in 15 out of India's 35 states and

Awareness of 1090	Males %	Females%	Total %
Yes	61	54	60
No	39	46	40

		Gender of respondent		Total
		Male	Female	
Have you heard about women's Powerline 1090?	Yes	250	48	298
	No	161	41	202
Total		411	89	500

Union Territories are only committed by people known to the survivor. Delhi in the north, Assam and Tripura in the northeast, and Rajasthan in the west are the most unsafe states for women in India. [1]

While 1090 is a National Helpline for the safety of women, in the state of Uttar Pradesh, with the UP Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav and his wife Dimple Yadav taking special interest in the project, it has been rechristened as the Women's Powerline and has become a hugely important empowerment tool for women in the state which has amongst the highest recorded crimes against women.

It is in this background that the researcher introduced questions on certain parameters identifying knowledge and awareness of the National Women's Helpline 1090 which, in the state of Uttar Pradesh, has been developed as Women's Powerline—a tool to empower women across the state. Not just this but a comparative analysis was made

with Mahilashakti Women's Helpline also active in the state and running with the help of international NGO UNICEF. Over 500 respondents from four most backward districts of Central Uttar Pradesh spanning eight villages were queried through an Interview Schedule that questioned their knowledge and awareness of the Women's Powerline.

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**Functioning and Methodology:** Any female being harassed by unwanted calls/ unsolicited messages or threats on her phone number can dial 1090 and register a complaint. After verifying the same, the Powerline registers her complaint. The culprit is hauled up and warned by the counsellors that his number is now under electronic surveillance and if he does not desist, stern action is taken. The quick action and reaction of the Powerline staff has generally ensured that there is a non-repeat of the act in most cases. The caller's number remains under electronic surveillance for 3 years and any repeat of the act can result in serious repercussions. [2]. At end of day on 29th November 2015 the statistics on 1090 in UP were as follows: A total of 443535 complaints had been received out of which 425121 were related to the helpline 1090 and thus 18414 remaining. Of these 331878 complaints had been solved of which 331542 were related directly to 1090 and rest to other issues were 336. About 11657 complaints remained of which 93579 were related to 1090 while others

**Findings:** As per primary data collected from over 500 respondents (411 male and 89 female) from four districts of Rae Bareilly, Sitapur, Gonda and Barabanki to assess their knowledge and usage of the state run helpline 1090 and using SPSS the following results were received.

Knowledge regarding 1090 and other similar services in UP accessed through Helplines

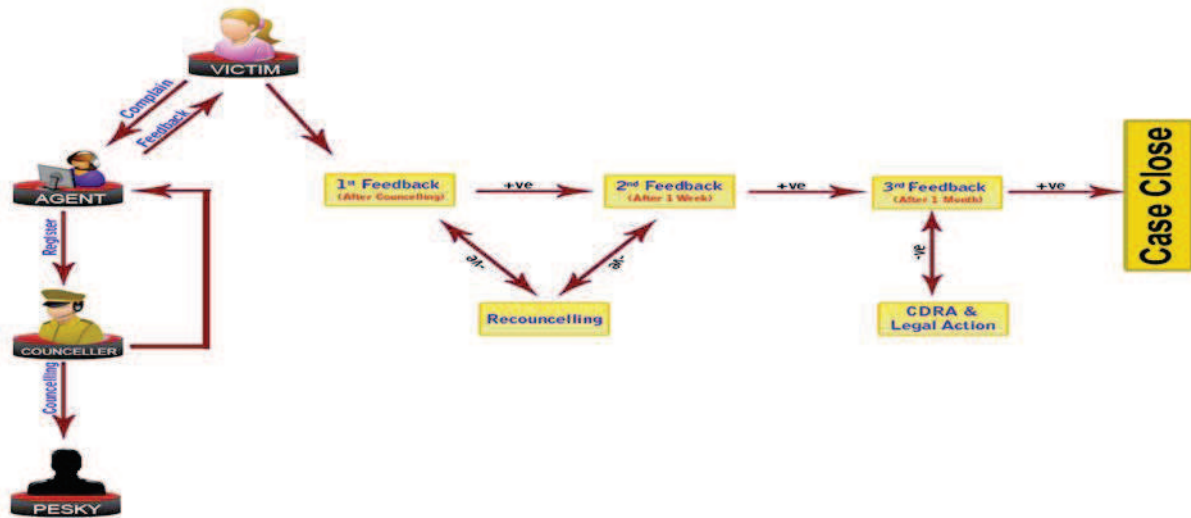
As per collected data analysis, 61% males and 54 % females from the 500 interviewed respondents were aware of the functioning of Women's Powerline 1090 in Uttar Pradesh which, considering the fact that the same has been operational only for around three years in the state, it surely is a phenomenal achievement.

Most of those interviewed, especially men, were very clear of the purpose of the helpline and responded that they knew it as the "Ladkiyon/Mahilaon wali (Ladies) helpline" or the

"*Chhed Chhad* " (Eve Teasing) Helpline and were aware that any woman could complain on the same regarding issues concerning them, especially related to eve teasing, violence or harassment, sexual or otherwise. This in a state like Uttar Pradesh notorious for the Muzaffarnagar sisters' murders and where crimes against women are abysmally high, is a big achievement indeed and can serve as a major deterrent. When we compare this data with that for Mahilashakti, another helpline supposedly being run in the state at the behest of international NGO UNICEF, the full impact of the achievement becomes clear. Compared to the knowledge of 1090 which stands at between 50-61% varying between men and women, the awareness of Mahila Shakti is almost non-existent standing at only 2% in both men and women.

The difference in usage is a clear indicator how efforts made by the state government to develop and empower women in the state are bearing fruits due, largely to the dedication of the core team behind the initiative and the personal interest taken by the powers that be.

**How 1090 Works:** As one can see there is 360 degree monitoring of the offender and it continues for three years. "The concept is to create a digital cage of the offender. That way we have all his records in our possession, bank details, mobile numbers, address, ID, place of work, home, family etc. First time offenders are cautioned that in case they repeat the offence it will lead to stern action. This alone is a very strong deterrent in most cases," explains IG Navniet Sikera, the Supercop who was responsible for setting up the Powerline in the state. SP Raghvendra Singh Rathore, having taken over the 1090 Powerline from Sikera, proud father of a daughter himself, says he personally monitors the work at the Powerline at its plush office in Gomtinagar. The Powerline has seen



some prominent visitors, like Bollywood actor Aamir Khan who showcased the same on his television reality show, Satyamev Jayate as well.

**Power Angels:** Not only has the helpline been immensely successful, the 1090 Powerline team has not allowed itself to rest on its laurels but has moved on, developing young collegians as Power Angels in the state to guide students and prevent cases of eve teasing and sexual harassment of female students.

'Power Angels' as a concept, is indigenous to Women Power Line 1090, and aims to foster a police- citizen partnership to create safer public spaces for women. The Power Angels will be appointed as special police officers who will be entrusted with the task of acting as a link between the police and the society, of enabling better communication between the police and women from various rural and urban areas, spread awareness regarding women's concerns and build up an atmosphere of trust and cooperation.

Power Angels, have been set up to act as the face of 1090 in society. The idea is to empower and motivate women and girls, to speak up against harassment, register a strong voice and not find themselves at the receiving end of societal victimization, alienation or pressures that restrain them from registering their dissent. By appointing Power Angels we aim to generate this informal support system from within their surroundings comprising of women and girls

just like them. It is therefore essential for the Power Angels to be dedicated towards the cause of women and 1090, and effectively manifest themselves as friends and confidantes of the girls so as to be able to constructively engage, motivate, help, and also connect them to 1090.

- To spread awareness about 1090 in the college/university premises and outside.
- To educate women and girls about the functioning of 1090 and generate a confidence among them to approach 1090 in times of need.
- To establish an amiable and trustworthy relationship with girls and women so as to be able to share their concerns and motivate them.
- To be friendly and approachable at all times, for women and girls, who might want to seek help from them.
- To help connect a victim with 1090 and be with

Awareness of Mahila Shakti	Males %	Females%	Total %
Yes	2	2	2
No	98	98	98

Q : Have you heard about Mahila Shakti women's empowerment helpline UP				
		Gender of respondent		Total
		Male	Female	
Have you heard about Mahila Shakti women's empowerment helpline in UP	Yes	7	2	9
	No	404	87	491
Total		411	89	500

her as a friend throughout, to keep her morale high.

- To educate and build trust of the families and peer group of victims about 1090, motivate and counsel them to stand strong with the victim instead of pressurizing her otherwise. To immediately inform 1090 about any unpleasant behaviour or instances against women, happening around them.
- To constantly update 1090 about any suggestions and feedback.

**Conclusion:** Thus it can clearly be seen how effective the 1090 Powerline is proving to be as a tool to stem crime against women.. A recent visit by National Commission for Protection of Child Rights Chairperson recently while on a visit to the state capital, reviewed the progress of the helpline and has recommended its adoption as a national model for women empowerment.

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