MEERA TRANSCRIPT

I: INTERVIEWER

P: PARTICIPANT

[0:00]
I: Hello. I'm Khadija. I'm a master's student from Christ University. Thank you so much for taking part in my study about women's safety perceptions following relocation. Have you had the chance to read the consent form?

P: Yes, yes, Khadija, thank you so much.

I: Do you consent to being audio recorded?

P: Yes.

I: Are you okay with my research guide and me having access to this data and using it for my dissertation?

P: Yes.

I: Okay, thank you so much. Before we start, we'll begin with some basic questions. Can you please pick a fake name for yourself that I can use in my research?

P: Meera.

I: Okay. How old are you?

P: 23.

I: And what is your gender?

P: Woman.

I: And where did you relocate from? And where did you move to?

P: From Kerala to Bangalore.

I: Okay. And what was your reason for relocation?

P: For my master's degree.

I: Okay, so for education. And what is your current living arrangement?

[0:58]
P: It's a PG.

I: If you're ready, can we start with the main questions?

P: Yeah, okay.

[1:02]
I: Can you please tell me, what does the concept of safety mean to you? This can be physical safety or emotional security—like having somebody you know, familiarity, etc. What helps you feel secure in a new environment?

P: Okay, so for me, safety, it's not all about physical, but also emotional, mental, and physical. It's about moving in and out without fear—be it your own space or public. Just not being fearful, not thinking "What will happen to me?" I should be able to go out anytime and do anything. That's very important, right? As a human living on this Earth, that's important. So that is safety for me.

[2:06]
I: Can you please tell me what helps you feel safe and what makes you feel unsafe?

P: I feel safe when I'm with people I trust—close people. But when I'm alone in public places, I feel unsafe because it's all strangers. Even though I feel we should feel safe even alone, from childhood we've always had people around. So, that matters too.

[2:55]
I: So having some company helps you. You moved here, right? What was your initial perception of safety when you first came? Maybe you didn't have close friends initially. What was your first impression of the area?

P: When I came here, our teacher said it's not a safe place. They warned us not to go out after 9 PM and to always be with someone. I was new and didn't know anything. So I stayed in, tried to understand the surroundings first. I've never been alone anywhere in Bangalore. I perceive Bangalore as very unsafe. But then again, no place is truly safe, even home. Still, since it's a big city, we need to be more aware.

[4:19]
I: So when you first came, you didn't feel it was a safe area?

P: Yeah, because it’s a local and industrial area. A lot of workers come and go. It’s not like a proper developed city. And the name "Nagasandra" even sounded creepy to me. But still, it’s fine.

[4:58]
I: You mentioned how your teacher said it’s not a safe area. Hearing that from an authority figure, how did that make you feel?

P: Very bad. Because they know what’s happened before. It made me more cautious. Initially, I thought outskirts would be safer, but it's on a highway. Heavy vehicles pass through and incidents have occurred. So it made me rethink.

[7:01]
I: Can you share some incidents your professor mentioned and how they made you feel?

P: One I remember clearly is about a boy who went out alone around 9 PM and got molested. Also, trans persons face issues here. That made me feel even boys aren’t safe. So no one is really safe. Even friends can’t always be trusted—it’s a very diverse space, with people from all over.

[8:03]
I: You mentioned feeling the need to be more safe. Can you describe any strategies you use to cope or feel safer?

P: First, I don’t go out alone. I ask a friend to come along. I also turn on live location and share it with a close friend or family. I think I should consider carrying pepper spray too.

[8:51]
I: Do these things help you feel safer? How does it feel to always go in groups or avoid being alone?

P: Even with these things, we’re not truly safe. But it gives a sense of confidence. If we feel restless or underconfident, people can notice. So the preparation makes you feel more shielded.

[9:39]
I: Now that you've been here a while, has your perception of safety changed?

P: I still believe nowhere is truly safe. But over time, I've become more familiar with the place. It's comforting that most people around are students, especially from Christ, so there's a "we" feeling. Still, I try to be cautious and avoid going out late unless it's a big group.

[11:17]
I: You mentioned a sense of belonging and the "we" feeling. Can you tell me how making social connections has helped your sense of safety?

P: My class has five boys, and they're really caring. They check in, ask if I reached safely. That makes me feel I have someone to rely on. It gives more confidence. Most girls in my class feel the same—they're a good support system.

[12:40]
I: It must have taken time to make these friends. In the beginning, when you didn't have them, how did you navigate safety?

P: I usually blend well with people. Within a week, we had a group. Initially, I didn't go out much because I was still figuring people out. Even if they're friends, you can't fully trust them right away. But I went with the flow.

[13:54]
I: Were there any specific challenges or incidents that made you feel unsafe—like public transport, metro, language barriers?

P: Language was a big one. In Kerala, I know how people react, but here everything is different—culture, mentality. Even booking an Uber is scary. I've seen Instagram reels where girls were slapped over ride confusion. I'm afraid that could happen. I don't know the language well enough to handle such things, so I avoid going alone.

[15:19]
I: You mentioned seeing a video online. Have you seen anything else—either that made you feel unsafe or reassured?

P: Metro made me feel safe at first—it's developed, with security and ladies' coaches. But yesterday I saw a fully covered metro. From inside you can see out, but not vice versa. That felt unsafe. Also, I saw a poster in an auto about a molestation case during a cab ride. These things make me feel like you're never fully safe.

[17:44]
I: Can you share if cultural differences here impacted your sense of safety?

P: I haven't interacted much with the public. But being from outside, locals might see us as temporary or outsiders. I prefer not to get too involved. Better to do what we came here for and go back. They might take advantage of us.

[19:04]
I: Any major culture shock?

P: Not really. Just food. I'm tired of dal and pulses every day, but they eat it daily. That's the only shock.

[19:29]
I: How has the stress of relocation impacted your safety—missing home, unfamiliar rooms or food?

P: Not much. I'm an adult and open to exposure. This was my decision, so I knew what I was getting into. Being around close people and a good institution helped a lot. I don't feel like I'm the only one—it's shared experience.

[20:53]
I: So having friends helped with homesickness and safety?

P: Yeah, true. It's a different city, and that support system really matters.

[21:21]
I: How has the physical layout of your area—campus and PG—impacted your safety?

P: When I first came, I wondered why they chose this industrial area. I had my interview at central campus, so this was a shock. I chose this PG because it was close to college. Even though the back side feels creepy, being so close to college feels safer. I don't have to travel much, and everyone around is a student. That helps.

[22:59]
I: So your college and PG location helped your sense of safety?

P: Yes. I heard there are areas without girls' hostels. So where you stay matters a lot.

[23:28]
I: What about infrastructure—streetlights, cameras? Do they impact your sense of safety?

P: I haven't seen CCTVs on roads, but there are streetlights. In front of my PG, there's no light. I always think they should fix it—it's a residential area. CCTVs would help. It's not just about here, but any area with many students and youth.

[24:17]
I: Thank you so much. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

P: Just be confident. Go with the flow. Even your own home isn't always safe. It's about mindset and willpower. Even men aren't safe. Just take care of yourself.