Hillary :

I'm fine. How are you?

Interviewer

I'm also fine. Are you ready to start the interview?

Hillary :

Yeah, we can start. Okay, great.

Interviewer

So Hi. First of all, I'm Khadija. I'm a master student from Christ University. Thank you so much for taking part in my study. I really appreciate it. I just want to let you know that your audio is being recorded, and I will also share it with my research guide, as well as use it in my dissertation. Is that okay?

Hillary :

Yeah, thanks, yeah, that's okay with me.

Interviewer

Are you okay with me? Video recording you?

Hillary :

No, I'm not okay.

Interviewer

Okay, that's okay. No problem. If you want to withdraw at any point, please let me know during the study or even after, and I will take care of it. Sure. So if you're ready, shall we begin with the introductory questions?

Hillary :

Mm, yes, we can start

Interviewer

what is your pseudonym?

Hillary :

Lily is my pseudonym.

Interviewer

okay. Hillary, how old are you?

Hillary :

I am 22 years old. What is your gender, female,

Interviewer

okay, and where did you relocate from? And where did you move to?

Hillary :

So, I was living in Oman, and now I'm living in Chennai,

Interviewer

okay, but you moved within Chennai, right? Yeah. Okay. And when did you relocate?

Hillary :

I did in 2025, this year, in Jan.

Interviewer

Okay, great. Can you please tell me a reason for relocation?

Hillary :

So basically, I relocated for pursuing my masters. So I moved around. Initially, the plan was to move a earlier, but because I had some personal commitments, so I had to move on, I had to relocate later on.

Interviewer

Okay, so you your reason for relocation is education. Yes. Okay, great. Can you please tell me what was your living arrangement, whether you lived in a PG or apartment or any other arrangement.

Hillary :

Initially, I I lived in a PG because it was close to the university, but because of the facilities there, I didn't really feel comfortable. So once I made a few friends, I decided to move to an apartment. So currently I'm living in an apartment.

Interviewer

Okay, great. Can we start the main questions? If you're ready, yeah, okay. Shall we begin with, what does the concept of safety mean to you?

Hillary :

I think, sorry,

Interviewer

sorry, sorry. I was going to say that this can be either physical safety or even your emotional comfort, whatever helps you feel you're in a space. Okay. So,

Hillary :

as you said, Yes, I think safety is not just a physical aspect. But I think it's both physical and emotion. Sometimes I also think it's a social aspect. So when we look at like physical aspect, I would say being in a, you know, no, I'm having this already, this idea that India is not very safe for females. I feel like a space where we have, you know, with the facilities, for example, like CCC, CCTV camera and all that, and security guards to ensure that we are physically safe in that space, and emotionally safe, I would say that also kind of gives this idea that we're emotionally safe because we have people around the apartment that will keep us safe. So I think that's what I think about safety, and I personally see that in my apartment as well, that, you know, when it comes to like, if I have some, you know, challenges while I'm living at my apartment, I have the of the landlord, she helps me with it, and there are security guards. There's watchman that helps around if I, if I'm, you know, having some issue with, like, some transport or something. There's always facilities there to help me so I feel safe in the apartment. So, yeah, that's what it's that's what I think.

Interviewer

Okay, great. So having a landlord or a watchman really helps you feel secure in your space. Yeah. So would you say that the concept of safety to you is having a living arrangement where you can rely on someone, where you can be safe and feel emotionally secure as well.

Hillary :

Yeah, I agree on that, because, you know, for it is my first time relocating to another country, and India is my first time being alone. So I would say people who know the country really well, who know the areas around really well, but kind of allow me to, you know, feel safe, or kind of get me through the day. So I feel like people like the landlord, the Watchmen, who are more aware of things, of how things really work in the space that you're living in, and I think that will that allows me to feel safe and secure when I'm living the apartment.

Interviewer

Okay, great. Can you please describe your initial perception of safety in this new environment upon relocating. So you mentioned in the beginning you didn't live in an apartment. So what was your first impression of the area, things like the language, transport system, or just your general surroundings? How did all of that make you feel, and how did that impact your safety?

Hillary :

So initially, about moving to Chennai itself. So from what I have been hearing from years, from my family members, and just generally about, you know, how it is, you know, things happen in India where there's, you know, I we hear about rape cases, or we hear about kidnapping or generally, it is not really this we have. I've heard a lot that women going alone in around the city is not really safe, but not during the day, of course, but anytime after like 5pm or 6pm was not, you know, good for for a female to go alone, is what I've heard so And initially, yeah, so I, I felt that and, and the PG that I was living in, it was like, mixed, so It didn't, it was not well separated from the other, from the boys. PG, so, and hearing a lot of stories about how there are, I've heard a lot about hostile incidents where, you know, things happen to girls, or there's like, so there are, like, seeing, hearing all those stories made me feel really scared. And I did notice, while I was in PG, there was a lot of, you know, free mixing with the guys, and there were incidents that took place between them. And yeah, I thought that. I think that was one of the reasons that made me shift to an apartment so that I could feel secure. And yeah,

Interviewer

so your initial perception that was that you didn't really feel safe in the PG that you were in at the beginning. Yeah, can you please tell me a little bit about your initial perception of the general surroundings. Like you mentioned, you knew that going out after a certain time, you didn't feel safe about it. So if you had to summarize your initial perception a few words, how would you describe it?

Hillary :

So initially around my surroundings? So it was that, you know, it was, how would I say this was the PG was not in a residential place. It was very much in a secluded, like, quite far from the city where we there were not much people around. There were not much, like, there was not landmarks around so it didn't and you wouldn't find people really moving around. So you it felt like there was no, nobody really living there. So that seclusion, that kind of kept the quietness,

made it feel very uncomfortable. And so it was really hard for me to like, you know, even during the day, it felt like, oh, it felt like it felt a little creepy staying there. And also, after 6pm usually in the day, I would find people moving around like, you know, it was a bit in the work days, people are moving around. They doing their work and everything, so that we had the we had public during that time. But however, after five and six, it became really quiet. So I felt very scared. I felt very alone, and I felt like, you know, there was no source of like it didn't. I didn't feel secured and safety. So I think this was my initial, you know, perspective on safety in that place.

Interviewer

Okay, so you didn't feel that comfortable in the beginning. Yeah. Okay, so you mentioned now that you were a little bit wary of your surroundings. Now that's been a few months since you've been there, how has your perception of safety changed over time, after you moved so, becoming more familiar with your surroundings, or even figuring out how to get around things like that, making friends. Did that change your perception of safety at all? Or is it still the same? Has it gotten worse? What would you say?

Hillary :

So I would say, definitely it has changed, but not completely changed. So when I say it has changed, as in, so moving to the apartment. Apartment is much closer to the university, and we have so it's close to the university, so that there are landmarks around. So there are, you know, supermarkets around. There's a clinic nearby, and it's just a very crowded area. So there are a lot of people. So it's like a busy city. So you know, everyone is there's a busy city. You know, there's a lot of public around you. So I would definitely say that it's not very like, it doesn't feel alone. It's not quiet, and because of that, you know, busy, noisy area, I feel it comfortable with that place. And I would also say, because it's in a residential area, it's in a city and a residential place, there are a lot of people around and the girls, the people that I live with the apartment, have definitely helped me feel more comfortable over there. Because initially in the PG that I knew I had difficulty with language, I didn't have people really from my community, while in this apartment, I do have people from my community, people, you know, international students, so there's more relatability with the roommates, the people in the apartment. So it definitely makes things easier. And I think over time, just being there at university and meeting new people and learning the language a little bit has definitely helped me to, you know, get things done. Like I don't feel scared when I have to go to the supermarket and, you know, speak with the cashier. I used to feel initially scared because I didn't know how to communicate, and I felt like I was a stranger in being an international student, but initially So, as time passed, I learned languages, I

understood what like the what the behaviors could mean, and yeah, so I felt comfortable. Now, over time, I do feel comfortable, but however, I still after 678, after not six, seven, late at night, at maybe nine or 10. Things do get really quiet over there, so I prefer not to like go outside, because then I do feel really scared at that time. But so when I do feel scared, I def I try my best not to really go out after 10 or 11 years.

Interviewer

Okay, so your perception is still kind of the same, but now you just made better connections so you feel more comfortable with your friends in the apartment. So emotional security is there? Would you say?

Hillary :

Yeah, definitely, I would say that.

Interviewer

Okay. And you mentioned that you came from another country, but in Chennai itself, you're from, sorry, not Chennai in Tamilnadu. You're from Chennai. Yeah, and your college is in Coimbatore in Chennai in sorry, in Tamil Nadu,

Hillary :

yeah, it is in Chennai.

Interviewer

Okay, can you please so the area specifically, there must be certain challenges like getting around, like public transport. So I am not sure about the public transport there, if there's a metro and things like that, but were there any specific challenges or incidents that have made you feel unsafe since then, any issues in public or unfamiliar places, even a language barrier, just anything that you struggled with.

Hillary :

So basically, there was one time where I did take the public bus, and yeah, so in the public bus I went, I went and took my seat, and it was the seat next to me was empty, and there was, there were other seats that were also empty, just note that. But the seat next to me was also empty, and there was a man who came and sat next to me. Initially, I was like, why did this man come and sit next to me when there were so many other seats, they were so free, he could have sat there. And so that time, I felt unsafe, and I thought like, but at the same time, I was thinking, okay, maybe he just sat there out of any thought, but I was feeling really uncomfortable, because I don't really feel comfortable sitting next to a man. So what I decided was that okay, since he's not gonna move away, let me move away. And so I had to move to the I moved to other seat, and when I moved to the other seat, I was in a like, you could say, like face to face angle, where he could see me, and I could see him face to face when I moved to the other seat. So and I did notice him staring at me, and like, I could feel like this person was looking at me the whole time. So I felt really uncomfortable. So I was just really scared that something bad might happen, or, you know, something negative could happen. But I was like, Okay, let's just, you know, deal with it, and let's, you know, try my best to have a calm and composed attitude till I reach home. So I was waiting and waiting and till my stop came, until my even, until myself. I was like, why is this man not getting down? Like, how long is he good? I felt comfortable. I didn't feel comfortable because there were not a lot of people in the bus as well. So I felt really scared. So when my did, my stop did come. So I got out of the bus, and then I also noticed that this man also had gotten out of the bus. So I was like, okay, this person has gotten off at the same stop as me, which felt a little suspicious to me. So, because even before when I got on the bus, I did notice this man staring at me, but I didn't give it much attention, but seeing how he came, sat next to me and just got down at the same stop as we made things more suspicious and made me feel more, you know, scared that maybe there is some intention behind this man or something. So yeah, I was like, since I noticed this man getting out. I was like, okay, maybe I should just, you know, focus on reaching home. And I just kept going. So I just kept moving to my apartment, and I didn't notice this man was looking towards my, towards me. So I was like, Okay, let's ignore and let's just go home. And so I went. I was I reached home. It was just five minutes from the bus stop, and not five minutes like I could see where the man was standing. And yeah, I was there in the apartment. I had reached the apartment gate, and then there was a card next to the apartment in front of the gate. So I was like, Okay, let me just turn and see where this guy is. And, yeah, I turned from the back of the van, and I saw that there was the mom was still looking at me from that side. So I was like, okay, so I did feel really scared, so I just made sure to just go home and stay in my apartment. And, yeah, not worry about it. Yeah, that was one incident, I would say, and other time I would say was once I took a taxi, not talks a taxi. Sorry, a bus. Sorry, auto. I took an auto. And, yeah, it was, it was, I would say, a first few of my experiences where I went initially started. We began using an auto and that time I didn't ignore

the language well, so I didn't know the communication well, so I we were just going on normal route. It was from the not from the apartment to some shopping mall I had gone to, so I didn't know the area as well, like I didn't know the direction really well. So I decided to just use the map and see if this man is going on the right track. But while we were taking he took a wrong turn, and then that made me feel really scared. And yeah, but then things were not like that. There have been times where I did feel scared, but thankfully, nothing bad actually happened to me. Yeah, I would say

Interviewer

that that's a very scary situation, both of the things that you described, especially being by yourself in these situations. How did you feel when all of it was happening? You mentioned you felt very scared, but like, what was going through your head in the moment? If you can recall,

Hillary :

hmm, so yeah, I would say definitely. I felt really scared. I felt very uncomfortable, and I just, I just wanted to get to my destitute destination as quickly as possible. And at the same time, I had a lot of like, not regret. How would I exactly describe it? I would say I felt really lonely at that moment because, you know, I didn't have any support system next to me, or someone who I could really rely rely on, someone, you know, who knows the city well. Because this was at a time when I didn't know my surroundings really well. I didn't know the languages really well. So I was like me. I had some regrets where maybe I should have learned things from before, or had a support system, or somebody I could go with. So I felt really scared, and, you know, and I would say that was the case, but, yeah, I was so through my head, I was just like, okay, but you know, whatever's happened, let's not think negative. When I was just praying and that everything turns out, and thankfully, yeah, it was okay, but yeah, it's those experiences kind of still as are stuck in my mind. And so when I do take a bus or an auto by myself. I do feel I have those I think about those experiences and makes me feel like things could happen again, but I try my best not to be to look at the bright side and that things will be okay, yeah, push

Interviewer

through that After that happened, did it make you reluctant to use public transport again? Were you more cautious next time?

Hillary :

Yeah, I would definitely, definitely say yes. So after that bus incident, and hearing a lot of, you know, stories from my friends, or just generally, the idea behind public transport in Chennai and all I was like, it's better not to use it. So ever since then, I didn't really use it by myself. Maybe if I'm with my friends only then, and if there are both, both, not just girls, but both men, are also there with me, then I would then there have been, there have been a few times where I have used the public bus, but otherwise I just prefer to use the auto and Metro. Metro being the safest, because it also has the separate cabin for the women, right? So I definitely would say I using the bus is like, definitely not my first preference. It's more of the metro than the other two. So, yeah, I have been reluctant with autos. Also been reluctant, but however, over time, I have gotten to know certain auto drivers that I usually use, and I've gotten to have gotten that contact. So I don't if I go into a place, I contact the auto driver beforehand, so I know this. It's a trusted auto driver. So I go in that way, so it's much more safer, and I feel comfortable that way.

Interviewer

Okay, so these are some precautions that you took for next time. So this kind of ties in with my next question, were there any strategies or measures that you use to cope with safety concern in your new environment? So like you mentioned, making sure that you have some friends with you, especially some male figures with you, things like that was it was there any anything else that you adopted to cope with your safety concerns.

Hillary :

So I would say one thing, one thing is, yes, I would take both of your friends that are both friends, both men and women around me, that was something I would do. And I would also take the, you know, transferred when it was a busy time, so that, you know, I didn't feel really alone so more people, you know, people are more focused on their work, and you will not really feel like anybody's gonna do anything to because of all the people around so I would. So I just tried to if I'm supposed, if I'm going out, then, apart from, like, university, if I'm going out, I decided that I would go in busy times, just so even if it's like rushing and cloudy, that would be uncomfortable. But however, I just decided that it's more safer and it feels emotionally I feel very comfortable when it's busy. So I decided that I would go in times when the crowd is, you know, there's a lot of crowd in the public transport. And yeah, I would say, I would say, that is one more thing. And I think these two things are some things that I take precautions. Yeah, okay,

Interviewer

okay, great. Can you please tell me how your living arrangement and the physical layout of your new environment affected your sense of safety? So even in your PV or after you moved to the apartment, how did the physical layout of where your campus was located, how the streets were, if there were any street lights or surveillance cameras, things like that, how did that affect your sense of safety?

Hillary :

So definitely this, I would say the in terms of physical safety. Yes, the so the apartment is basically, like, pretty much, you know, it was generated really well. So we have a lot of facilities. We have the lift. We have, you know, the security camera, like I mentioned, we have the watchman, we have the land landlord lady. So these people are there to kind of, you know, make sure things around us is safe, and our like also mentioned, it's in the city and it's in a residential area, so it doesn't really feel like, oh, we are university students have been apartment where it gives that family vibe, because it's not just University student. We have other people. It's instances residential building. We have other families living so I have neighbors that I can talk to. So it doesn't really feel like, you know, it's something alone. It definitely gives that and I enjoy socializing. So that socializing also. So we have get kids around the building that are playing around the building. So all this kind of gives me the security and gives it family kind of environment, rather than making it very, you know, lonely, yeah. And I would also say the facilities in the building, like it's, you know, there is, like I said, there are kids around. So there is, there is this playground area. So in sometimes, if I also feel bored, then I do go to that place. We have a gym as well. So these things make it more like homely and and I feel safe this way. So I definitely say the physical environment of the place that I am in definitely makes things and the security the facilities that are available and definitely makes things easier and much more comfortable being in the apartment.

Interviewer

Okay, great. This leads to my next question. You mentioned you like socializing and and making new connections really helped your sense of safety. So can you please talk a bit more about that in how your how making new connections has influenced your sense of safety, meeting your classmates, getting closer to them, or even the people that you live with in the apartment. So how did making new social connections influence your sense of safety? Just knowing you have someone to rely on, or someone to call, if anything, it did that help. Yeah. So

Hillary :

like I mentioned, I'm an international student, right. So, it was, you know, the new place, new people, new culture, any cause. Interviewer

New social connections helped your sense of safety,

Hillary :

yeah. So like I mentioned, I'm an international student, so it's a new place, new people, new culture. I mean, even though I am my ethnicity, my presence, are from the Chennai, and I'm from Chennai, but i Everything was new to me. So have over time making new friends. May just getting familiarized with the language, and since there were a lot of I said, it's a residential place, so we had like families, so having aunties to talk around ani's, they knew a lot of things. They would they would teach you, they were they were welcoming. So these things kind of made me feel very comfortable, I would say. And you know, generally, just, you know, university life can be very stressful. So when I had so, when I needed a break, so I could just have be around my friends, be with the people around my community and this give me that balance of that's a stressful life, and at the same time learning about the new things in that country. Yeah,

Interviewer

okay, so that really helped you feel a little bit more at home at this new place.

Hillary :

Yeah? Definitely.

Interviewer

Okay, great. Can you please describe how the stress of relocation may have affected your sense of safety? So maybe before you made these connections, or you met these friends, maybe home sickness or not being that familiar with the place, it can make you feel very vulnerable or just

very overwhelmed. So did that make you feel unsafe in any way or impact how you viewed your safety?

Hillary :

I would definitely there was this home sickness. And you know, because I also before coming before, when I was shifting, there were a lot since knowing about the experiences with other people and incidents, what he heard on the news I had that I was scared that, you know, that things could happen, and I should be really careful with when I go out, who I go out with, and all that was there. But I don't think it necessarily affected like, my sense of safety, because I don't think it really relates to I just, obviously, there's the home sickness you're just leaving out with your parents. But I made friends. Uh, thankfully, I made friends quickly, and just it was able to easily socialize, socialize with everyone. So I would say, my it didn't really affect my sense of safety. I would say,

Interviewer

Okay, that's great. That's really nice. Before you move to the place you moved to. Did you see any new stories on social media or anything like that? That affected how safe you felt before or after moving. So maybe anything about the place or any cases against women that you might have come across on social, on the news, that made you feel safe or maybe unsafe,

Hillary :

sorry? Can you repeat the question?

Interviewer

Did you see any new stories or anything on social media about the place that you moved to that made you feel safe or unsafe? Maybe you saw something positive online that made you feel a little bit better about moving to this place. Or maybe you saw something negative, that something bad had happened to a woman or something like that that made you feel a bit cautious or a little bit more anxious about moving there?

Hillary :

Okay, so moving to the new country itself? Yes, I did feel that unsafety initially, because of hearing the stories on the news or what your the the elderly is in the family would say, generally about how the country is and how unsafe in the world. But, and I think that was there in when I was in the PG, because we had men also and those, they were pretty cool. It was the both the hostels were very close, so I had that. But I think definitely after moving to the apartment, seeing a more, you know, family kind of lifestyle, I would say the homely kind of nature, definitely, you know, shifted my safety in a more positive direction. So I would say social media, necessarily, I would say I don't think that really played a role, because I didn't really have much access of information on social media regarding the place that I was in. Maybe I was not, yeah, I was not really aware of that. Yeah.

Interviewer

Okay, so for my last question, can you please share an experience where cultural differences in your new environment, if there were any influence your sense of safety? So this can be difference in social norms or even language barriers. Sometimes even if it's the same language, a dialect can be different. The way things run are different. So were there any cultural differences or misunderstandings that impacted your sense of safety?

Hillary :

I would say so. Being a Muslim and moving to a country that is not, you know, more, Hindu dominated, it definitely made difficult. It was difficult for me to kind of blend in with people. Initially, I did have like, I had people who were not like, who were who thought of me as, like, you know, a complete outsider, that kind of attitude from other people. So I had that initially, and as well since being an international student, even though English was well known among we would all speak English. But, you know, having the Indian dialect and the International diet was quite different, so people will kind of make fun or mock a little bit, and so that things made made it uncomfortable. However, over time, when I did get friends who had like similarities, and over time, when you have friend connections, and when you talk to people in community and really discuss about the things about the differences, people did understand. And I think that has definitely been okay. Initially, it was difficult. But apart from that, yeah, things have been good. Thanks. Ani,

Interviewer

okay, that's great. So when you were experiencing that, how did you feel and how did you cope with it?

Hillary :

It was definitely like, if any, any new place or anything, any new Yeah, new place, having new friends is really, really important. So initially I felt very left out. I felt like I wouldn't really enjoy being at university. Because, you know, friends definitely make you need life more fun and more exciting. And just, you know, the having a good support group, a good social circle, just makes things easier. And you definitely the university life, the study process itself, feels really fun when you had so initially that was difficult because I didn't have a good social circle because of the, you know, the language differences and the culture religious differences, but over time, yeah, over so that's how I felt. I I also felt that I felt I didn't feel interested going to university. I was anxious. I was, you know, always thinking that, like, Am I doing something wrong? And I was just trying to kind of, you know, blend in or change my dialect and be more authentic with their kind of style, so that, you know, I would be accepted, and, you know, make friends. But yeah, those were my feelings. But I was like, I didn't feel good about changing something when it was not something wrong I was doing. So I just decided to be myself, and yeah, with over time when I and I'm sure other people are this student, my fellow classmates also had that who were international students were also feeling that. So I think over time, when you with the team work, the group presentations or group activities that we had, really communicating with others and expressing what we felt, or just letting the other person or being those things allowed us to and I'm thankful I was just able to be authentic and just be myself. And, yeah, I think that was the thing that helped me cope with it.

Interviewer

Okay, that's great. Thank you so so much for your time. I really appreciate your insights. Please let me know if you have any more questions, or is there anything else you would like to add about the-

Hillary :

topic? I think, nothing much. Thank you. Thank you for having me.

Interviewer

Thank you so so so much. Please let me know if you have any questions or anything like that and thank you so much for your time. No.