



VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN INDIA

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Abstract

United Nations defines ‘violence against women’ as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.” Violence against women is rampant in India, hinders educational attainment and earnings potential, and has significant economic and social costs. COVID-19 has exposed the gender equality fault lines, with increases in the incidence of domestic violence during lockdown. Slut-shaming and victim-blaming are the approaches of most of the society which tries to justify rape or support the rapist and demean the victim. Provoking or shaming the survivor and compelling them to commit suicide because of a rape or abuse is another common reply to these issues and the biggest mistake. This paper highlights different types of violence that women face every day over a period of time.

Key Words: *Women, Rape, Violence, Abduction, Trafficking, Abuse, Infanticide, Dowry.*

1. Introduction

Violence occurs in about 35 per cent of women globally in their lifetime. In a study done in India, on about 10000 women, 26 per cent reported having experienced physical violence from spouses during their lifetime. The prevalence could be as high as 45 per cent as indicated by data from Uttar Pradesh. Latest figures from the National Crime Records Bureau show that a crime was recorded against women every three minutes. Every hour, at least two women are sexually assaulted and every six hours, a young married woman is beaten to death, burnt or driven to suicide. It is appalling to learn that 28.4 per cent of pregnant women suffer domestic violence. As a result of violence, women suffer social isolation, unemployment, income loss, poor self-care and fail to provide childcare, which is a grave concern.

2. Objective

- To show the insecure and vulnerable position of women in India
- To show different types of violence against women in India over time

3. Methodology

This paper is completely based on the secondary data, basically on the data based on National Crime Records Bureau, UN reports, World Bank reports and reports of WHO.

4. Different types of violence against women in India

Global statistics on Violence Against Women (VAW) show that one-in-three women worldwide have experienced intimate partner violence (IPV) in their lifetime (WHO, 2017). As per the UN, 18% of women and girls aged 15 to 49 years who have ever been in a relationship, have experienced physical violence by an intimate partner in the previous 12 months (UNDOCS, 2019). Furthermore, 38% of all murders of women are committed by male intimate partners (WHO, 2017). This figure does not even account for all the other forms of VAW like sexual harassment, kidnapping, and abduction. Here we will discuss about some major violence against women in India over a time period.



4.1 Dowry deaths

A dowry death is the murder or suicide of a married woman caused by a dispute over

Table:1 Number of dowry deaths in India over time

Year	Number of reported dowry deaths
2008	8,172
2009	8,383
2010	8,391
2011	8,618
2012	8,233
2018	7,166

Source: National Crime Record Bureau

Her dowry. In some cases, husbands and in-laws will attempt to extort a greater dowry through continuous harassment and torture which sometimes results in the wife committing suicide, or the exchange of gifts, money, or property upon marriage of a family's daughter. Dowry is illegal in India, but it is still common practice to give expensive gifts to the groom and his relatives at weddings which are hosted by the family of the bride. The majority of these suicides are done through hanging, poisoning or self-immolation. **Table:1** shows that incidents of dowry deaths have decreased 4.5% from 2011 to 2012. In 2018, still over 7000 dowry deaths are recorded each year.

4.2 Rape

India is considered to be one of the world's most dangerous country for sexual violence against women. Rape is one of the most common crimes in India. Criminal Law (Amendment Act), 2013 defines rape as penile and non-penile penetration in bodily orifices of a woman by a man, without the

Table:2 Number of rapes in India over time

Year	Number of reported rape cases
2008	21,467
2009	21,397
2010	22,172
2011	24,206
2012	24,923
2013	34,707
2014	36,735
2015	34,651
2018	33,356

Source: National Crime Record Bureau

Consent of the woman. According to the National Crime Records Bureau, one woman is raped every 20 minutes in India. Rape accounted for 10.9% of reported cases of violence against women in 2016. **Table:2** shows that even in 2018, as many as 33,356 cases were recorded. Although rapes are becoming more frequently reported, many go unreported or have the complaint files withdrawn due to the perception of family honour being compromised. Women frequently do not receive justice for their



rapes, because police often do not give a fair hearing, and/or medical evidence is often unrecorded which makes it easy for offenders to get away with their crimes under the current laws.

4.3 Marital rape

In India, marital rape is not a criminal offense. India is one of fifty countries that have not yet outlawed marital rape. 20% of Indian men admit to forcing their wives or partners to have sex. Marital rape can be classified into one of three types:

- Battering rape: This includes both physical and sexual violence. The majority of marital rape victims experience battering rape.
- Force-only rape: Husbands use the minimum amount of force necessary to coerce his wife.
- Compulsive or obsessive rape: Torture and/or "perverse" sexual acts occur and are often physically violent.

4.4 Insult to modesty

Modesty-related violence against women includes assaults on women with intent to outrage

Table:3 Number of cases of insult to modesty in India over time

Year	Assaults with intent to outrage modesty	Insults to the modesty of women
2008	40,413	12,214
2009	38,711	11,009
2010	40,613	9,961
2011	42,968	8,570
2012	45,351	9,173
2013	70,739	12,589
2014	82,235	9,735
2015	82,422	8,685
2018	89,097	6,992

Source: National Crime Record Bureau

her modesty and insults to the modesty of women. From 2011 to 2012, there was a 5.5% increase in reported assaults on women with intent to outrage her modesty. There was a 7.0% increase in reported insults to the modesty of women. After 2012, both assaults and insult to women have increased drastically though the cases of insults to women have decreased slightly in 2018. Assaults was the second highest reported crime against women across India in 2018.

4.5 Domestic violence

Domestic violence is abuse by one partner against another in an intimate relationship such as dating, marriage, cohabitation or a familial relationship. Domestic violence is also known as domestic abuse, spousal abuse, battering, family violence, dating abuse and intimate partner violence (IPV). Domestic violence can be physical, emotional, verbal, economic and sexual abuse. Domestic violence can be subtle, coercive or violent. 38% of Indian men admit they have physically abused their partners. Domestic abuse or cruelty by husband and/or relatives was the highest reported crime against women across India in 2018.



Table:4 Number of domestic violence in India over time

Year	Reported cruelty by a husband or relative
2008	81,344
2009	89,546
2010	94,041
2011	99,135
2012	106,527
2013	118,866
2014	122,877
2015	113,403
2018	104,165

Source: National Crime Record Bureau

4.6 Human trafficking and forced prostitution

Table:5 Number imported girls from foreign countries and women trafficking in India over time

Year	Imported girls from foreign countries	Violations of the Immoral Traffic Act
2008	67	2,659
2009	48	2,474
2010	36	2,499
2011	80	2,435
2012	59	2,563
2013	31	2,579
2014	13	2,070
2015	6	2,424

Source: National Crime Record Bureau

From 2011 to 2012, there was a 26.3% decrease in girls imported to India from another country. Karnataka had 32 cases, and West Bengal had 12 cases, together accounting for 93.2% of the total cases nationwide. From 2011 to 2012, there was a 5.3% increase in violations of the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act of 1956. Tamil Nadu had 500 incidents, accounting for 19.5% of the total nationwide, and Andhra Pradesh had 472 incidents, accounting for 18.4% of the total nationwide.

4.7 Forced and child marriage

Girls are vulnerable to being forced into marriage at young ages, suffering from a double vulnerability: both for being a child and for being female. Child brides often do not understand the meaning and responsibilities of marriage. Causes of such marriages include the view that girls are a burden for their parents, and the fear of girls losing their chastity before marriage.

4.8 Female infanticide

Female infanticide is the killing of a new born female child or the termination of a female foetus through sex-selective abortion though sex determination is officially illegal in India. In India, there is incentive to have a son, because they offer security to the family in old age and are able to conduct



rituals for deceased parents and ancestors. In contrast, daughters are considered to be a social and economic burden. An example of this is dowry. The fear of not being able to pay an acceptable dowry and becoming socially ostracized can lead to female infanticide specially in poorer families.

4.9 Abduction

Incidents of reported kidnappings and abductions of women increased 7.6% from 2011 to 2012. Uttar Pradesh had 7,910 cases, accounting for 22.2% of the total of cases nationwide.

Table:6 Number of abductions in India over time

Year	Reported abduction
2008	22,939
2009	25,741
2010	29,795
2011	35,565
2012	38,262
2013	51,881
2014	57,311
2015	59,277
2018	*75,333

*kidnapping and abduction

Source: National Crime Records Bureau

Table:6 shows that in 2018, the total number of kidnapping and abduction of women was as high as 75,333.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, violence against women creates a sense of insecurity and fear in the community. The complex issue can be tackled by providing comprehensive care pro-actively. A multi-dimensional and multi-agency team including access to psychosocial support is to be made available to deliver holistic care under one roof in district hospital setting. Also implementing primary prevention programmes such as life skills training programme, gender sensitization and sex education in all schools and colleges will go a long way. **Social programmes to sensitise men and boys on gender-related issues, and community-level platforms like SHGs should be strengthened to provide awareness on safety mechanisms for women, sexual and reproductive health, and family planning choices.**

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