



## Domestic Violence against Women: An Analysis

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### Abstract

*Violence against women is partly a result of gender relations that assumes men to be superior to women. Given the subordinate status of women, much of gender violence is considered normal and enjoys social sanction. Violence includes physical aggression, sexual abuse, and psychological violence. In extreme, but not unknown cases, death is the result. These expressions of violence take place in a man-woman relationship within the family, state and society. , the problem of violence against women is a result of a long standing power imbalance between men and women. This is not a present problem rather it has its deep roots inserted since few decades. The government and voluntary organizations are making efforts towards ending violence against women which will be impossible if a common man is not supportive. This paper is an overview about domestic violence and here we have made an attempt to analyze the statistical data on violence against women.*

**Keywords:** Physical aggression, psychological violence, sexual abuse, brutality, harassment, trafficking.

### Introduction

Women throughout the world have been accorded lower status than men. Traditionally, women were expected to be married off and settle down in life. Rights of power, position and authority over women were accorded to men. Women were given a very subordinate role and status, as the socio-economic and external conditions prevailing in ancient times were not favorable for the free movement of women. In the 21st century even though women are educated and equally participating in employment with men, still the social conventions, traditions and restrictions controlling the life of women directly or indirectly.

Violence against women is a serious problem concerning human rights violation. In last two decades violence against women has emerged as the most burning issue throughout the globe. Day to day violence is taking a lift in spite of all the necessary actions taken by the government agencies. As we all know women are vulnerable targets to extreme forms of aggression such as incest, rape, dowry deaths, trafficking etc. one of the most heinous incidents which is on air recently is the gang rape of 23 year old medical student in Delhi. In the South Asian Region, violence against women begins long before they are born and continues throughout their lives. The lives of unborn girls are terminated through sex selective abortions. Every sixth death of a female infant in India, Bangladesh and Pakistan is due to neglect and discrimination. In the Region, females face restrictions in mobility, usually have less to eat than their male counterparts, are denied proper education and health care, are often forced into early arranged marriages, have few opportunities of employment and are underrepresented in the governments<sup>1</sup>. (Wahed and Bhuiya, 2007). Violence against women is any act of gender-based violence which result in, physical, sexual or

arbitrary deprivation of liberty in public or private life and violation of human rights of women in violation of human rights of women in situations of armed conflicts<sup>2</sup>.

Present study is an approach to analyze violence against women specially concentrating on Domestic Violence, factors contributing towards violence against women, causes, the statistical data which includes crimes committed against women in India and some important measures to prevent this monster.

### Violence against Women

'Violence' is an act carried out with the intention or perceived intention of physically hurting another person. 'Gender Violence' is defined as "any act involving use of force or coercion with intent of perpetuating promoting hierarchical gender relations". Violence against women has been clearly defined as a form of discrimination in numerous documents. The World Human Rights Conference in Vienna, first recognized gender-based violence as a human rights violation in 1993. United Nations declaration, 1993, defined violence against women as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to a woman, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life". Heise and Germain<sup>3</sup> quote the forms of violence experienced by women throughout their life span. i. Pre birth: Sex- selective abortions, battering during pregnancy, coerced pregnancy. ii. Infancy: Female Infanticide, emotional and physical abuse, differential access to food and medical care. iii. Girlhood: child marriage, genital mutilation, sexual abuse by strangers and family members, differential access to food and medical care and education. iv. Adolescence: Violence during courtship, economically coerced

sex (eg. For school fees.), sexual harassment, trafficking, sexual abuse in the workplace, rape. v. Reproductive Age: Physical, psychological and sexual abuse by intimate male partners and relatives, forced pregnancies, sexual abuse in the workplace, sexual harassment, rape. vi. Elderly: abuse of widows including property grabbing, accusation of witchcraft, physical and psychological violence by younger family members, differential access to food and medical care.

Violence against women is partly a result of gender relations that assumes men to be superior to women. Given the subordinate status of women, much of gender violence is considered normal and enjoys social sanction. Manifestations of violence include physical aggression, such as blows of varying intensity, burns, attempted hanging, sexual abuse and rape, psychological violence through insults, humiliation, coercion, blackmail, economic or emotional threats, and control over speech and actions. In extreme, but not unknown cases, death is the result. These expressions of violence take place in a man-woman relationship within the family, state and society<sup>2</sup>.

## **Domestic Violence**

Domestic violence includes harassment, maltreatment, brutality or cruelty and even the threat of assault - intimidation. It includes physical injury, as well as "willfully or knowingly placing or attempting to place a spouse in fear of injury and compelling the spouse by force or threat to engage in any conduct or act, sexual or otherwise, from which the spouse has a right to abstain". Confining or detaining the spouse against one's will or damaging property are also considered as acts of violence<sup>2</sup>. Domestic violence includes not only inter-spousal violence, but also violence perpetrated by other family members. Generally, an important part of the power relationship between spouses and their families relates to dowry and its ramifications<sup>4</sup>.

There are certain rights guaranteed to women under article 14, 15 and 21 of Indian Constitution based on which an act was introduced titled Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005<sup>5</sup>. According to this act Domestic violence means any act, omission or commission or conduct of the respondent shall constitute violence if it, i. Harms or injures or endangers the healthy safety, life, limb or well-being, whether mental or physical of aggrieved person or tends to do so and includes causing physical abuse, sexual abuse, verbal and emotional abuse and economic abuse; or ii. Harasses, harms, injuries or endangers the aggrieved person with a view to coerce her or any other person related to her to meet any unlawful demand for any dowry or other property or valuable security; or iii. Has the effect of threatening the aggrieved person or nay person related to her by any conduct mentioned in clause (a) or clause (b); or iv. Otherwise injures or causes harm, whether physical or mental, to be aggrieved person.

The forms of violence commonly found are slapping, tearing hair, pushing and pulling, kicking, hitting with an object,

attempting to strangle and threatening. Forms of psychological abuse were also found to exist, for instance, verbal abuse, sarcastic remarks in the presence of outsiders, imposing severe restrictions on freedom of movement, totally ignoring the wife in decision-making processes, making frequent complaints against her to her parents, friends, neighbors, and kin much to the embarrassment of the wife.

## **Forms of Domestic Violence**

Violence committed by family members within the family is the most serious of all types of violence. Family violence refers to physical, psychological abuse of women by husband or his relatives. This is of course violation of trust and abuse of power in relationship where a woman should have the right of absolute safety. More than 20% of woman in South Asian countries have reported of being abused by the man with whom they live.

Rape and Sexual Abuse is another brutal form of violence. It is commonly believed that women if married are safe in our society. But if the monster prevails in her family itself it would be rather very difficult for her to escape. Rape or sexual abuse can be committed by the relatives, family friends on helpless women. Demanding giving and accepting Dowry is illegal in India. The practice, however, still prevails in many sections of the society. The issue of dowry is probably the most common sources of domestic violence in India, where the husband along with his parents and relative tortures his wife for money. Incidents of murder or attempted murder for dowry-related reasons are regular items in the country's daily papers. Women are also victim of Mental or Psychological Torture. Using abusive words by family members in front of others causes mental illness among women because it is generally accepted that women are soft then men in this aspect. A close correlation between domestic violence and suicide has been established based on studies in India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. Suicide is 12 times as likely to have been attempted by a woman who has been abused than by one with whom they live.

Torture during Pregnancy is one of the in humane tortures ever. Women need special care and attention and nutritious food during pregnancy. Researches indicate that 30% of the abuse starts during pregnancy and it may get worsen during pregnancy or after the birth of the child. Tortures during pregnancy can put the unborn baby and the mother in danger. It may increase the chance of miscarriage, infection, pre mature birth and sometimes death of the baby Denials of facilities are nothing but a stress for the women to survive to deliver the baby.

Forced Prostitution or other kinds of commercial exploitation by male husband or parents is another kind of violence against women reported worldwide. Women are tricked or forced by their husbands and relatives for money for prostitution. A practice exists in India where young women and girls<sup>6</sup> are donated to serve a temple and very often end up being prostituted. Murder is the cruelest form of women violence.

The murder of women by their husband and in laws is related to escalation of dowry demands and with more general harassment and severe beating of women. Sometimes women are killed by their husbands due to sudden raise of anger<sup>8</sup>.

According to Heise's<sup>3</sup> research the following factors are responsible for increasing the domestic violence in present society.

**Cultural:** i. Gender-specific socialization, ii. Cultural definitions of appropriate sex roles, iii. Expectations of roles within relationships, iv. Belief in the inherent superiority of males, v Values that give men proprietary rights over women and girls, vi Notion of the family as the private sphere and under male control, vii. Customs of marriage (bride price/dowry), viii Acceptability of violence as a means to resolve conflict

**Economic:** i. Women's economic dependence on men, ii. Limited access to cash and credit, iii. Discriminatory laws regarding inheritance, property rights, use of, iv. communal lands, and maintenance after divorce or widowhood, v. Limited access to employment in formal and informal sectors, vi. Limited access to education and training for women

**Legal:** i. Lesser legal status of women either by written law and/or by practice, ii. Laws regarding divorce, child custody, maintenance and inheritance, iii. Legal definitions of rape and domestic abuse, iv. Low levels of legal literacy among women, v. Insensitive treatment of women and girls by police and judiciary

**Political:** i. Under-representation of women in power, politics, the media and in the legal and medical professions, ii. Domestic violence not taken seriously, iii. Notions of family being private and beyond control of the state, iv. Risk of challenge to status quo/religious laws, v. Limited organization of women as a

political force, vi. Limited participation of women in organized political system.

Table depicts the crime statistics registered under different kinds of violence and crime laws. It is also seen that 90% of trafficking that happens is within the country, and around 40% of the prostitutes are children

**Discussion**

Table no 2 deals with Incidence of Violence against women during 2006- 10 and percentage variation in 2010 over 2009. In this table we can notice that violence against women such as rape, kidnapping and abduction, dowry deaths, torture, molestation, immoral trafficking, indecent representation of women have substantially increased in 2010 compared to 2009. This is a huge thing to get worried. But we cannot conclude saying that crimes against women have increased in all aspects, because Importation of girls, sati prevention, sexual harassment and dowry prohibition have registered lower no of cases in 2010 compared to 2009 which leads to some personal satisfaction that women are getting safer. No of cases relating to Rape and Kidnapping and Abduction have increased in the year 2010 compared to 2009 i.e. there is a percentage variation of 3.6 % ans 15.7 % respectively in 2010 over 2009. Whereas Sexual Harassment and Importation of Girls have registered lower no of cases i.e. there is a percentage variation of -9.5% and -25.0 % respectively in 2010 over 2009. Negligible percentage variation of 0.1% of Dowry deaths have occurred. This is due to the awareness among the people regarding the laws relating to dowry.

**Cause and Effects:** Lack of education and awareness are the most common reasons for violence against women. Children who are subjected to abuse are likely to behave similarly as adults. Socio-economic status, substance and alcohol abuse also leads to violence against women in India. Sometimes children who witness one parent abusing the other tend to abuse later in life.

**Table-1**

Type of Violence	Cases Registered on Crimes against Women during the Years					Percentage Variation in 2010 over 2009
	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	
Rape	19348	20737	21467	21397	22172	3.6
Kidnapping and Abduction	17414	20416	22939	25741	29795	15.7
Dowry Death	7618	8093	8172	8383	8391	0.1
Torture	63128	75930	81344	89546	94041	5.0
Molestation	36617	38734	40413	38711	40613	4.0
Sexual Harassment	9956	10950	12214	11009	9961	-9.5
Sati Prevention Act, 1987	--	--	01	--	--	--
Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act 1956	4541	3568	2659	2474	2499	1.0
Indecent Representation of Women Prohibition Act, 1986	1562	1200	1025	845	895	5.9
Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961	4504	5623	5555	5650	5182	-8.3
Total	164765	185312	195856	203804	213585	4.8

(Source: Crime in India)

Physical effects – injury, loss of speech, aches and pain, burns , substance abuse, gynecological issues, sexually transmitted diseases, unintended pregnancy resulting in abortion, and the list just goes on. Mental and emotional health problems – withdrawal, unsocial behavior, multiple sexual partners, insomnia, depression and several others can also result. Apart from this, when the knowledge of abuse reaches others in the community, abused women are often shunned and forced to live in isolation.

**Suggestions:** i. Special women police stations staffed with multi disciplinary female teams equipped to respond to the different needs of victim, have been set up in several countries, are an attempt to make police stations accessible for women. ii. The judiciary must become more gender sensitive. iii. Curriculum that teaches non-violence, human rights and gender issues should be included in elementary and secondary school, universities, colleges and other training institutes. Teaching about women contributors in history class, promoting girl participants in sports are some important steps in promoting gender equality. iv. The judiciary must strongly reinforce the message that violence against women is a serious crime and the abuser will be held accountable. v. The police must be well positioned to provide assistance to victims. vi. NGO's like women organizations which work in partnership with government must be promoted because they provide education and awareness programs. The range of their services must be strengthened. vii. Strategies must be formed at pre- complaint and complaint level.

## Conclusion

It is clear that violence against women is endemic in India. The reason is women in the country are highly vulnerable because of poor quality of life indicated by rampant poverty, lack of education, high under five mortality, poor health status, high fertility rate and high maternal mortality rate. Also contributing to the violence against women is societal mindset about women that has not changed much. Violence is perpetrated on women both inside and outside her home. The government and voluntary organizations are making efforts towards ending or minimizing violence against women. The efforts of the government are in the shape of enacting relevant legislations, issuing orders and launching various women welfare schemes. But their implementation remains tardy, as the lower level government functionaries are not gender sensitive. On the other

hand the voluntary organizations are taking both preventive as well as reactionary measures. But efforts of the voluntary organizations suffer from paucity of funds and infrastructure. Education of the girl child is the first step towards a better society with fewer incidents of violence. Campaigns aimed at men and boys to increase awareness and change attitudes about gender inequality are also effective tools. As individuals and responsible citizens, we need to spread awareness and report any act of violence against women around us.

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