IJCRT.ORG

ISSN: 2320-2882



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

An Overview Of The Prevalence Of Gender-Based Violence In India

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Abstract

Gender-based violence represents a significant issue in India, affecting a large number of women and girls. The repercussions of gender-based violence extend beyond the individual victims, influencing families, communities and society as a whole. Women who experience violence often face enduring physical and mental health issues. The economic consequences are also considerable, as survivours may find themselves unable to work or may need extensive medical care. Additionally, gender-based violence perpetuates gender inequality, hindering social and economic advancement. There is a pressing need to focus on strategies to prevent gender-based violence and achieve gender equality. This paper intends to examine the prevalence of gender-based violence in India, investigate the factors that contribute to such violence, and identify strategies for preventing violence against women.

Index Terms: Gender-based violence, gender inequality, individual victims, social and economic progress, strategies

1.1. INTRODUCTION

Gender-based violence (GBV) is defined as any action that leads to or has the potential to lead to physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women. This encompasses threats of violence, coercion or the arbitrary restriction of freedom, occurring in both public and private settings. Such violence includes a wide array of behaviours that can take place within the family, at the workplace, or in other environments, including but not limited to physical assault, sexual abuse, domestic violence, and violence related to dowries (UNICEF 2020). Gender-based violence refers violence directed at an individual due to their biological sex, gender identity or expression, or perceived conformity to societal norms regarding masculinity or femininity. This form of violence is a widespread and systemic violation of human rights, with women and girls being the primary victims. GBV encompasses various forms of abuse, including physical, sexual and psychological harm, as well as threats, coercion, arbitrary detention, and economic deprivation, occurring in both public and private settings. Instances of GBV include, but are not limited to, intimate partner violence, Child marriage, forced marriage, early consummation of marriage, honour killings, economic exploitation, female infanticide, child sexual abuse and exploitation, human trafficking, sexual coercion, harassment, neglect, violence against widows, violence against widows, elder abuse, and arbitrary detention. Furthermore, GBV is deeply entrenched in inequitable power dynamics, structural inequalities, and rigid social and cultural norms (Danish Mon, 2024).

Gender-based violence (GBV), often viewed primarily as violence against women, is frequently regarded as a means of oppressing women both broadly and within personal relationships. This type of violence typically stems from the perpetrator's feelings of entitlement, superiority misogyny, or similar attitudes and may be driven by aggression a desire for revenge, or competition. As a result, women often feel threatened, rendering them vulnerable and weak. They are compelled into subordinate roles, making them more susceptible compared to men. Statistics indicate that at least one in three women globally experiences physical violence, sexual coercion, or other forms of abuse during her lifetime, with many instances involving an abuser known to her. (Anupama Goel, 2020). In this context, the present study focuses on violence against women and girls, aiming to identify that influence them in order to find out the strategies for their prevention.

1.2. Aim

This paper seeks to investigate the elements influencing gender-based violence and identify the preventive strategies for violence against women.

1.3. Objectives

- 1. To examine the occurrence of gender-based violence in India
- 2. To provide an overview of gender-based violence in order to identify causes of violence against women and girls.

1.4. Methodology

This paper primarily serves as a review article, drawing upon various research studies. The secondary data has been sourced from various government reports and organizations through websites.

2. PREVALENCE OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Gender-based violence is a pervasive global issue that significantly affects the health and wellbeing of women. According to a report by the World Health Organization (WHO) on global estimates of intimate partner and non-partner sexual violence, around 35 percent of women worldwide have reported experiencing either physical or sexual violence from an intimate partner or non-partner (WHO, 2021). The National Family Health Survey 2019-21 indicates that 29.3 percent of married Indian women aged 18-49 have experienced domestic violence at some point. The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) documents thousands of incidents each year ,with many cases remaining unreported. The NCRB's report indicates that there were 125,000 recorded instances of domestic violence, 33,000 cases of sexual assault, and 7,000 dowry-related fatalities. The true prevalence is likely much higher, as many incidents go unreported. Among the states, Maharashtra has seen the most significant increase in such crimes, rising by 10-15 percent since 2021, while Mumbai ranks among the cities with the highest reports of sexual harassment and human trafficking involving women. (NFHS-5) The National Records in crimes against women Bureau (NCRB) has noted a rise with 444,256 cases documented in 2022, compared to 4428,278 in 2021. Crimes against women and children rise in Andhra Pradesh in 2022. The State registers 25,503 cases of crime against women in 2022, as against 17,752 in 2021 and 17,089 in 2020; when it comes to cybercrimes, the State stands fifth in the country with 2,341 cases. (NCRB 2022)..The World Health Organization (WHO) has consistently identified violence against women and girls as a significant global public health concern. Promoting gender equality and empowering women and girls is also a key focus of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal -5.

3. AN OVERVIEW OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

This paper was intended to review the research studies aimed at exploring the prevalence of gender-based violence and the factors influencing such violence and the strategies for its prevention. While studying "Gender-based Violence in New Delhi, India: forecast" based on secondary data analysis, by Nidhi Dwivedi and Sandeep Sachdeva (2016), identified several cognizable offences, including rape, attempted rape, kidnapping and abduction, dowry-related deaths, assaults on women aimed at violating their modesty, insults to women's modesty, cruelty inflicted by husbands or their relatives, the trafficking of girls, incitement to suicide among women, and the indecent portrayal of women. Despite certain limitations, the study concludes that the issue of women's safety is likely to remain a significant concern in the near future.

Children particularly girls, are experiencing violence from an early age, which negatively affects their personality development and exacerbates gender inequality. While examining research titled "Understanding Children's experiences of Violence In Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, India: Evidence from young Lives" by Virginia Morrow and Renu Singh (2016), the narratives of children regarding violence in Andhra Pradesh, India, understandable how various individual, family, community, institutional and societal levels shape these experiences. The indicate that a significant number of children encounter violence, primarily in the form of physical families, schools, and to a lesser punishment and emotional abuse, within their communities. The research highlights that children's experiences of violence evolve with age and that there are pronounced gender differences in this process. Additionally, the study indicates that a child's rejection of violence does not necessarily translate into changed behaviour in adulthood, underscoring the necessity for interventions aimed at preventing and addressing violence as children mature.

Gender discrimination is a significant factor that emerges from patriarchal norms and leads to domestic violence, which adversely affects children. In this context, Jade G. Bonganciso and Bharti Kumari (2021) in their work titled "Impact of Gender-Based Violence on Developing Children's Personalities" identify gender-based violence as a significant social issue within Indian Society, primarily stemming from gender discrimination. The patriarchal structure prevalent in India exacerbates violence against women. The study explores the various forms of gender-based violence and their effects on children's development in India. These forms include domestic violence affecting both men and women, sexual violence against women and children, as well as kidnapping and rape, all of which can profoundly influence children's perspectives and personalities. Children exposed to gender based violence often suffer emotional harm leading to issues such as depression, anger, introversion and anti social behaviour. The study concluded that gender-based violence is a crucial factor impacting the health and mental health of children in India. The number of "gender-based violence" is increasing in the country and along with that the percentage of mental health disorders among children is also increasing. Domestic violence and sexual violence against children are the most impactful violence on children. Witnessing and experiencing these types of violence changes the perspective of children and enhances negative feelings. In most cases in India, children become aggressive and anxious because of witnessing domestic violence and sexual violence at home. Providing a healthy environment to children is immensely important for the development of positive personalities among them.

Violence against women and girls is considered a violation of human rights ,as every individual is entitled to live free form of discrimination. "A cross-sectional study on gender-based violence among adolescents attending government colleges in the urban area of Tirupathi, Andhra Pradesh" by Priyadarshini S and Sowmya Pallavi R (2023) highlighted that gender-based violence (GBV) is among the most widespread human rights violations globally, with women and girls, particularly adolescents, being the most vulnerable. In India, there is a significant lack of age-stratified data on GBV affecting adolescents. It is estimated that approximately one in three women worldwide may encounter physical or sexual violence at some point in their lives. The study assessed the prevalence of GBV among college students in urban Tirupati revealed that around three fourth of participants had experienced at least one form of GBV. The predominant type of violence reported was physical, followed by psychological violence. Both males and females experienced physical, sexual and psychological violence, with females being more frequently victimized,

although the prevalence was slightly higher among them. Surva Bali and Sembagamuthu Sembiah (2024) in their research titled "Gender-based Violence and its Predictors: A Cross-sectional Study among the Adolescents of Madhya Pradesh" highlighted that gender-based violence (GBV) is a significant global public health issue. The diverse socio-cultural and regional landscape of India complicates the collection of precise and comprehensive data on GBV. The study investigated prevalence and predictors of GBV among adolescents. Conducted as a community based cross sectional study, it involved adolescents aged 10 to 19 years across six districts in Madhya Pradesh, India from December 2017 to 2019. The findings indicated that 10.4% of adolescents had experienced GBV. The multi-variable logistic regression analysis revealed that girls were at a greater risk of encountering GBV. Additional significant factors linked to GBV included being older adolescents (15-19 years), belonging to Scheduled Caste or tribal communities, endorsing the justification of wife beating. GBV represents a critical public health challenge among adolescents, with one in ten experiencing such violence. It is vital to promote awareness of gender equality from early childhood and within Furthermore, the implementation of violence prevention policies and strategies in educational institutions, workplaces and communities is essential.

Education and financial independence safeguard women against violence by reducing their reliance on men, who are often viewed as the stronger gender. The gender division of labour rooted in patriarchal beliefs, has historically compelled women to depend on men, thereby contributing to the violence they experience. In this connection, B.R.Sharma and Manisha Gupta (2013) in their work "Gender-based Violence in India" elucidate that factors such as religion, traditional customs, and long-standing biases have relegated Indian women to a subordinate and vulnerable status across various aspects of life. The low levels of educational participation, lack of financial autonomy, and prevailing societal prejudices have led to women's reliance on men and authoritative institutions, including family, community and society at large. Many women remain unaware of their rights, and even those who are informed often face significant barriers in accessing justice. Recently, issues concerning women's rights have gained traction in various forums, with 'violence against women' receiving increasing global attention and support. However, despite the establishment of laws, the development of reformative legal frame works, the provision of legal assistance for those in need the utilization of Public Interest Litigation, and the establishment of Family Courts and counseling centers, women in India still face considerable challenges in transforming their Constitutional rights into tangible realities.

Violence against women and girls affect their empowerment. If they are aware of their rights, they can safeguard themselves against violence. In the research titled "Prevalence of gender-based violence among related to having a girl child, Women's reaction and empowerment Postpartum OPD in a selected medical college, West Bengal" by Soujita Mukherjee (2020), highlighted that gender-based violence remains a significant global issue, particularly in developing nations. The survey aimed at evaluating the prevalence of gender-based violence associated with having a girl child, as well as the reactions of women and their empowerment levels. The results indicated that 22.83% of women experienced gender-based violence, with emotional violence affecting 59% and sexual violence impacting 57%. A substantial majority, 91.35%, of women did not reject the idea of having a girl child, while only 8.64% held an in different attitude. Regarding women's empowerment 64.19% reported feeling empowered; however, their decision-making capabilities in political (38.8%), economic (19.75%), and educational (12.96%) spheres were notably limited. The study found a statistically significant relationship between gender-based violence and women's empowerment. The study concluded that gender-based violence continues to be a pressing issue in society and the country. The findings underscore the importance of raising awareness about violence and women's rights. The study titled "Gender-based violence in India: Long - Term Trends", by John Gordon Simister & Parnika S Mehta (2010) observed several notable trends. While some indicators point to a growing liberation of Indian women, others reveal a deterioration in their circumstances, particularly in the form of increased violence against them. This rise in violence may be a transient phenomenon, as India undergoes a shift towards a more modern society. Evidence suggests that certain instances of gender-based violence may be a reaction from men to the evolving 'modern' perspectives held by Indian women.

Gender-based violence has been entrenched from ancient history to the present day. Despite the decades of transition, there has been no alteration in the extent of violence of course various forms of violence have emerged. In the research study titled "Exploring the Evolution of Gender-Based Violence in India and its Contributing Actors" by Angel E Reji and Susanne Zwingel (2024) highlight that violence against women is a global concern. Among the various manifestations of this violence, dowry-related domestic abuse and rape are particularly prevalent, especially in the Indian media landscape. Despite nearly five decades of feminist activism aimed at combating violence and the subjugation of women, significant progress remains elusive. Historically, from the era of the Indus Valley Civilization to contemporary India, the status of women has deteriorated, largely due to escalating violence. Although laws and regulations designed to safeguard women from such violence have been enacted, they often prove inadequate. A combination of societal influences, insufficient legal protections, and heightened media portrayals of violence contributes to a culture in which such acts are normalized.

Gender and gender roles are regarded as primary factors contributing to violence against women and girls, as they are perceived as the weaker segment of society due to their gender and their reliance on men stemming from traditional gender roles. Pooja Rani and Dr.M.S.Khan (2015), in their research titled "A Study of Gender Violence in India" assert that gender violence is perpetrated against women specifically due to their gender. This form of violence is characterized imbalances, where men are typically the aggressors and women the victims. In India ,gender-based violence manifests in various forms, including street harassment, workplace harassment, ICT-related violence, political violence, sexual abuse, physical violence, dowry-related abuse, and honour killings. Such violence is prevalent in many developing countries. The study highlights that gender-based violence is particularly pronounced in India, influenced by traditional cultural practices and social norms delineate roles for males and females. The repercussions of this violence are detrimental not only to women's well-being but also to society as a whole. Without a shift in societal attitudes towards gender roles, overcoming this issue will remain a change. Bushra Sabri and Anna Marie Young (2021) in their work on "Contextual factors associated with gender-based violence and related homicides perpetrated by partners and in-laws: A study of women survivors in India" stated that Gender based violence (GBV) is a significant public health concern for women globally, including countries such as India. Using a qualitative method, the researchers examined factors associated with GBV and GBV-related homicides committed by both the societal/cultural (dowry), community (inadequate resources), and in-laws. Factors at relationship (in-law abuse) and individual (internalized helplessness) levels were identified by analysis. In order to lower the risk of GBV and GBV related homicides, the findings emphasize the necessity of culturally relevant risk assessment and safety planning processes, as well as policies and initiatives at various ecological levels.

technological advancements and social networking leads The misuse to to crimes against women and girls. The report titled "Technology-facilitated Gender-based Violence in Asia: India" was prepared for review by the United States Agency for International Development. Compiled by NORC at the university of Chicago and the International Centre for Research on Women (ICRW), the document highlights the growing focus on technology-facilitated gender-based violence (GBV) within research and advocacy in India. Experts in the field and GBV organizations view technology-facilitated GBV in India as an extension of offline violence, where the inequalities that render women and girls susceptible to physical harm also manifest in the digital realm. As the gender and class digital divides widen, so too do the risks of on line harassment for women and girls. Although India has implemented various initiatives, laws and policies aimed at tackling different facets of this issue, challenges in execution remain. Furthermore, to comprehensively address technology facilitated GBV in India, it is essential to analyze experiences through an intersectional framework that considers class, caste, gender, sexuality, religion, education and access to technology.

Empowering women strengthens their rights, thereby fostering confidence among them and enabling them to resist domestic violence and remain vigilant against violence from external sources. In the research titled "Nexus Between Women Empowerment and Gender-based Violence in India: A Pragmatic Insight" by Govind Singh Rajpal and Tanushree Gupta (2024), assert that women empowerment involves fostering an environment where women can make independent choices that benefit both themselves and society. This process enhances women's social, economic, political and legal authority

ensuring equal rights and instilling the confidence necessary for self-assertion. Over recent decades, India has increasingly prioritized women's empowerment as a strategy to mitigate domestic violence. The study investigated the existence of regional disparities, differences between urban and rural areas and the impact of women empowerment on gender violence. The findings reveal a regional variation in both gender violence and women's empowerment, with notable discrepancies between urban and rural settings. Additionally, the research indicates an inverse relationship between per-capita net state domestic product and women's literacy rates with gender-based violence, while highlighting positive correlation between women empowerment and gender-based violence. Pranab Dahal and Sunil Kumar Joshi (2022), in their research titled "A Qualitative Study on Gender" elucidate that gender inequality and violence interrelated issues that influence one another in complex ways. In Nepal, women encounter various forms of inequality and violence, stemming from a range of factors, predominantly the socially constructed lower status assigned to them. Power hierarchies contribute to the subordination and victimization of women in the country. The study seeks to delve into the participant's perceptions and experiences to assess extent of inequality faced by women and to understand how violence arises as a consequence. Additionally, it investigates the factors contributing to sex trafficking as a specific manifestation of the broader issues of inequality and violence.

Domestic violence is a means employed by male counterparts to assert their dominance over women. The study on "Prevalence of intimate partner violence among Indian women and their determinants: a crosssectional study from national family health survey- 5", by Sayantani Manna, Damini Singh (2024) defines intimate partner violence (IPV) as a breach of human rights stemming from gender inequality. This issue has emerged as a significant concern in both developing and developed nations, posing a barrier to sustainable development. The study investigates the prevalence of IPV and its various forms in relation to women's empowerment status, while also indentifying the socio-demographic factor associated with IPV. It was found that approximately one-fourth of empowered women experienced IPV, with two-thirds of those affected encountering physical violence. In comparison to highly empowered women, those empowerment levels were three-fourth percent more likely to suffer from emotional abuse. The research that a partner's alcohol consumption significantly contributes to various forms of violence, including sexual violence. Overall, less empowered women are more likely to experience all types o IPV than their more empowered counterparts. The study emphasizes the need for increased efforts by the government and other stakeholders to enhance women's empowerment through improved education, autonomy, and decision-making capabilities.

Government intervention to curb violence against women serves as the primary preventive strategy to halt such violence. Devika Oberai and Ujval Mohan (2023), in their study titled "Efficient State Intervention can help prevent Gender-Based Violence in India" while referring United Nations data indicating that over the past decade, approximately one in three women worldwide has faced physical and or sexual violence. Women in India are similarly vulnerable to gender-based violence (GBV), a situation worsened by deeply rooted patriarchal norms and the limited capacity of the state to intervene effectively. Notably, India has established robust legislative measures aimed at deterring GBV and offering support to survivours. In addition to imposing severe penalties for sexual assault and harassment under the Indian Penal Code, specific gender-responsive laws have been enacted to tackle issues such as intimate partner and familial violence (PWDVA 2005), Workplace sexual harassment (POSH 2013), and female foeticide (PCPNDT 1994). Furthermore, the government has taken proactive steps to develop policies that create one-stop crisis centers (OSCs), allocate funds for enhancing safety in public areas (Nirbhaya Fund) and establish women's shelter homes (Swadhar Greh).

Nikhat Shaikh and Ankita K (2024) in their study on "Empowering Survivours of gender-based violence: Insights from NGO-led one stop centres" stated that women around the world face discrimination and inequality due to socio-cultural systems. These gender-based disparities have enduring negative impacts on both individuals and communities. Furthermore, violence against women and girls remains wide spread, influenced by various interconnected factors. In India, numerous forms of daily aggression directed at women and girls are often ignored and generally accepted as societal norms. Sreepama Chattopadhyay and Juhi Sidharth (2022) in their work "Gender Norms Domestic Violence and the Southern Indian Puzzle" assert that domestic violence represents one of the most widespread forms of gender-based violence. According to UN Women 2021, approximately one in three women worldwide

report experiencing abuse at the hands of a current or former partner during their lifetime. Domestic violence not only constitutes a violation of women's human rights but also leads to significant long term effects on their physical mental, sexual and reproductive health as well as their capacity to purse meaningful employment and opportunities. The perpetration of violence against women within their homes and by intimate partners exemplifies the extreme patriarchal control exerted over them. This issue is not confined to India; the recent National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5,2019) reveals concerning statistics regarding societal attitudes towards domestic violence and gender roles.

Education and employment serve as essential tools for the prevention of violence against women. The study on "The Role of Education in the Prevention of Gender-Based Violence" by Purabi Talukdar (2024) highlighted that gender-based violence is across-sectional problem that affects millions of people across the world, there are higher societal, economic, and health risks associated with sexual violence. Education is one of the most effective tools in the fight against Gender Violence as it makes people aware of it, receives other people's treatment, and promotes Gender Violence. Some of the educational interventions that found useful in the prevention of gender-based violence include; One of the approaches to educating the students is the subject of Comprehensive Sexual Education which is implemented as part of the educative curriculum and enables students to understand aspects concerning consent, relationship as well as roles of gender. Not only do these programs increase awareness, but allow youths to find out how to be polite with other people, or tolerate other people. There is a necessity to make sure that Gender-Based Violence prevention is included in the framework of education and effectively implemented since this will help a lot to build less dangerous spaces for personal development. The aspects of Sexual Neutrality are relevant in the Curriculum particularly where rights for all gender should be taught by interacting at such young ages. The teachers who have taken courses on gender-based violence are in a position to guarantee that schools are secure for victims of gender-based violence and at the same time, ensure that the perpetrators face justice. Besides classroom learning, the parents, leaders, and other stakeholders of the community contribute to educational enlightenment by undertaking or partaking in the fight against Gender-Based Violence by creating awareness through campaigns. Gnanaselvam and Joseph (2023) in their study titled "Prevention of Gender-Based Violence and Harassment at workplace in India" highlight the necessity of safeguarding individuals in the workplace from sexual harassment through legal protections, awareness initiatives led by employers, and support services provided by healthcare professionals and community members. They advocate for regular audits and monitoring of sexual harassment cases and the effectiveness of internal Committees (ICs) and Local Committees (LCs). Furthermore, they stress the importance of fostering positive work environment through ongoing training and awareness programmes, implementing clear remedial actions, and ensuring the right to freedom of association.

4. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In conclusion, gender-based violence (GBV) represents one of the most prevalent violations of human rights worldwide, with women and girls, especially adolescents, being the most at risk. It is estimated that around one in three women globally may experience physical or sexual violence at some stage in their lives. In India, gender-based violence is particularly severe, shaped by traditional cultural practices and social norms that define roles for men and women. The effects of this violence are harmful not only to the well-being of women but also to society as a whole. Without a transformation in societal attitudes towards gender roles, addressing this issue will remain a challenge. The identified recognizable offenses against women and girls include rape, attempted to rape, kidnapping and abduction, dowry-related deaths, assaults on women aimed at violating their modesty insults to women's dignity, cruelty inflicted by husbands or their relatives, trafficking incitement to suicide among women, and the indecent portrayal of women. A considerable number of children face violence, primarily in the form of physical punishment and emotional abuse, within their families, schools and to a lesser extent, their communities. Domestic violence affects both men and women, while sexual violence against women and children, as well as kidnapping and rape, can significantly shape children's views and personalities. The low levels of educational engagement, lack of financial independence, and existing societal biases have resulted in women's dependence on men and authoritative institutions, including family community and society at large. A significant

number of women remain unaware of their rights and even those who are informed frequently encounter substantial obstacles in accessing justice. To mitigate the risk of gender-based violence and related homicides, it is essential to implement culturally appropriate risk assessment and safety planning processes, alongside policies and initiatives across various ecological levels. There is a pressing need for enhanced efforts from the government and other stakeholders to empower women through improved education, autonomy and decision-making skills ,which can reduce the likelihood of intimate partner violence. Women in India face similar vulnerabilities to GBV a situation exacerbated by entrenched patriarchal norms and the state's limited capacity for effective intervention. Importantly . India has enacted strong legislative measures designed to deter GBV and provide support to survivours. The findings of the research studies highlight the critical need to raise awareness about violence and women's rights. Promoting gender equality awareness from early childhood and within family environments is crucial. Additionally, the implementation of violence prevention policies and strategies in educational institutions, workplaces and communities is vital. Education serves as one of the most powerful tools in combating gender violence, as it raises awareness, fosters understanding of interpersonal treatment, and promotes gender equality.

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