



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

Violence Against Women And Gender Inequality In India

Dr. Bhageerathi N. Naik

M.A.,M.Phil., B.Ed.,Ph.d

Associate Professor,Dept.Political Science

SKVMS Govt. First Grade College, Kundapur

Abstract:

All over the world, women are facing different challenges, among them the increase in violence with increasing in life developments and the accelerating in social change. In spite of numerous numbers of studies imply the impact of socialization and tradition on women subordination, and the advocated ideas of democracy and secularism support women movement and needs as well, women across the world aspirations are still far from achieving the optimum situation. The current paper reviews the role of gender inequality and the associated aspects, and highlighting the principles of the physical differences between women and men that may explain why men play as the principal factor in violence against women.

Keywords: Women; Violence; Gender; Inequality;

Major Findings:

The paper reveals that violence against women is deeply rooted in structural inequalities and societal norms that reinforce gender-based power imbalances.

Key findings include: 1. Cultural and Social Norms: Patriarchal structures and harmful cultural practices normalize violence and reinforce gender inequality.

2. Economic Factors: Economic dependency and financial stress significantly contribute to women's vulnerability to violence.

3. Psychological Factors: Mental health issues and substance abuse are linked to increased risk of violence.

4. Legal and Institutional Factors: Weak legal frameworks and inadequate support services leave women unprotected and without sufficient recourse.

The study concludes that addressing violence against women requires a comprehensive and sustained effort that tackles both immediate and underlying causes. Effective strategies include strengthening legal frameworks, promoting gender equality through education, empowering women economically, implementing community-based interventions, and expanding support services for victims. By adopting these strategies, societies can move closer to eliminating violence against women and fostering environments where all women can live free from fear and discrimination. Continued research, policy.

Introduction:

Gender-based violence against women takes many forms, including physical, sexual, psychological, economic abuse, harmful practices like female genital mutilation and child marriage. Such violence has long-lasting impacts on health and well-being, causing injury, chronic illness, psychological trauma, unintended pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections, and even death. It also disrupts education and economic opportunities, trapping women and girls in cycles of poverty and abuse.

Those facing multiple forms of discrimination – based on ethnicity, disability, age, sexual orientation, or gender identity – are more vulnerable to violence and face greater barriers to justice. An **intersectional approach** is essential to address the structural discrimination and exclusion that perpetuate this violence. Gaps in laws and institutions continue to deny women and girls protection and justice, reinforcing impunity. More efforts are needed to fulfill their right to live free from violence, as guaranteed by international human rights law.

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The subject of violence against women is a complex issue concerning women's lives and aspirations around the world. The increasing violence against women knows no social, economic or national boundaries. Physical and psychological abuse, female genital mutilation, fear from family revenge and dread from manifesting any sign of freedom, suicide by self-burning, polygamy, marrying older for younger, are practices and problems facing the societies in general, and in particular the middle east and other developing countries. These problems have never ended and even minimized or solved yet. It is estimated that one in three women may experience physical or sexual abuse during their lifetime.

Violence against women affects women everywhere. It impacts women's health, hampers their ability to participate fully in society, affects their enjoyment of sexual and reproductive health and rights, and is a source of tremendous physical and psychological suffering for both women and their families.

Recent research has shown that women who have been subjected to violence by their partners have greater chances of having a low birth weight baby, are at much greater risk of depression, and more likely to have an induced abortions. They are also more likely to be living with HIV. International standards recognize violence against women as a form of discrimination and require States to exercise due diligence to prevent, investigate and punish all acts of violence against women perpetrated by any actor, including both State or non State actors. The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women defines "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 women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life." The Declaration requires States to "exercise due diligence to prevent, investigate and, in accordance with national legislation, punish acts of violence against women, whether those acts are perpetrated by the State or by private persons."

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women has recognized gender based violence as a form of discrimination that impairs or nullifies women's enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms such as the right to life; not to be subject to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; to liberty and security of person; to equal protection under the law; and to the highest standard attainable of physical and mental health.

Women's rights movements have been instrumental in ensuring that the international community keeps discussing violence against women as a human rights concern on the global, regional and national agendas. At the International Conference on Population and Development in 1994, States recognized the need to eliminate all forms of violence against women⁴ and committed to "take full measures to eliminate all forms of exploitation, abuse, harassment and violence against women, adolescents and children."⁵ Similarly, the Beijing Platform for Action establishes that women's rights include their right to "sexual and reproductive health, free of coercion, discrimination and violence."⁶ Most recently, the Commission on the Status of Women has recognized the adverse consequences of violence against women on their sexual and reproductive health and rights. The Commission has underscored that protecting and fulfilling reproductive rights "is a necessary condition to achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women in order to enable them to enjoy all their human rights and fundamental freedoms, and to prevent and mitigate violence against women."

In the 1993 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, the UN General Assembly recognized that violence against women¹ is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women.

The World Health Organization defines sex as “the biological and physiological characteristics that define men and women.” Gender is defined as the “socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women.” Gender is chiefly about the characteristics and roles that societies attribute to women and men. Gender is not “predetermined” – it is constructed by societies. Gender inequality occurs when men have a higher status over women and have the ability to control women in different spheres of life.

GENDER INEQUALITY IN PRACTICE:

- There is no country where women and men are equal in all spheres of life. Women and girls are given inferior status and protection before the law, limited and restricted access to services (health, financial, education), unequal access to and control over resources including land, property and income, less food, poverty and marginalization.
- There is compelling evidence that gender is the most significant predictor of poverty and powerlessness.
- This discrimination happens because of the belief that, because of their gender, women are inferior to men, and therefore should not be treated equally. Recognizing these links, the 2000 Millennium Development Goals acknowledge gender equality as a prerequisite to eradicating poverty and promoting development. Governments agreed in the MDGs “to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women as effective ways to combat poverty, hunger and disease and to stimulate development that is truly sustainable.

Achieving gender equality means eradicating all forms of discrimination against women and removing barriers that prevent women from being fully equal with men and realizing their rights. One of the most widespread and pervasive barriers is violence against women.

Violence against women is fundamental violation of women’s and girls’ basic human rights (including the right to life and the right to bodily integrity), and is a barrier to women’s full participation in all spheres of life.

- Violence against women is both a cause and consequence of gender inequality and is an abuse of the power imbalance between women and men. It is a means of social control that maintains unequal power relations between women and men and reinforces women’s subordinate status.
- Violence against women is used to enforce gender roles and norms, assumes that women are inferior to men, and that men have the right to control women. In 1998, the Commission on the Status of Women at its

42nd meeting agreed to “Work to create violence-free societies by implementing participatory educational programmes on human rights, conflict resolution and gender equality, for women and men of all ages, beginning with girls and boys, (Agreed Conclusions CSW 42,1998) barrier to women’s full participation in all spheres of life.

- With up to 70 percent of women experiencing physical or sexual violence from men in their lifetime³, this commitment to ending violence against women is more relevant now than ever.

Gender Issues in India Today:

Gender issues in India today remain deeply embedded and widespread across many spheres of life. Gender-based violence, including domestic abuse and harassment, continues to threaten safety and dignity. Female literacy and school retention are still lower in rural areas, preventing girls from achieving their potential. There is a pronounced employment gap: women often receive unequal pay and face barriers to formal job opportunities. Healthcare inequality also persists, with many girls and women lacking access to essential services, making this a persistent barrier to progress. Furthermore, political underrepresentation and son preference remain problems. These gender issues in India reflect systemic bias that limits equality.

Gender-based violence: Domestic abuse, sexual harassment, and other forms of violence continue to threaten women’s safety and dignity. These acts of violence cause long-term physical and emotional harm, leaving many women with little protection or support.

Inequality in education: Female literacy rates remain lower than those of men, especially in rural areas. This inequality limits opportunities for girls to learn, succeed, and become independent. Without proper education, girls are more vulnerable to child marriage, poverty, and limited career prospects in the future.

Employment gap: Women continue to face unequal pay, restricted job opportunities, and a significant wage gap compared to men. Many also struggle to enter formal employment sectors due to bias and lack of support. This reduces women’s economic independence and weakens overall social and economic progress.

Healthcare inequality: Women’s access to healthcare is still limited, particularly in rural areas. Poor maternal health services, lack of nutrition, and inadequate medical facilities leave women vulnerable. These inequalities in healthcare directly affect women’s survival, growth, and overall quality of life.

Political underrepresentation: Women continue to have poor representation in leadership and decision-making roles. This limits their ability to influence policies and address gender-specific issues effectively.

Patriarchal norms: Traditions such as son preference and child marriage continue to affect girls’ futures unfairly. These practices restrict freedom, reinforce discrimination, and create lifelong disadvantages.

Skewed sex ratios: Discrimination and harmful social practices have led to an imbalanced ratio between men and women, reflecting a deep-rooted cultural preference for boys over girls.

Causes of Violence Against Women:

Violence against women is a pervasive issue, deeply rooted in societal structures and exacerbated by a combination of cultural, economic, psychological, and legal factors. Despite global efforts to address it, many women continue to face violence due to entrenched gender inequality, economic dependency, mental health issues, substance abuse, and inadequate legal protections. The absence of robust support services further compounds the problem, trapping women in cycles of abuse and impunity.

1. Cultural and Social Norms :

A. Patriarchy and Gender Inequality: One of the most profound and pervasive contributors to violence against women is the entrenched patriarchal structure that characterizes many societies worldwide. Patriarchy, a social system where men hold primary power and dominate in roles of political leadership, moral authority, and social privilege, inherently fosters gender inequality. This system reinforces the notion that men are superior to women, often relegating women to subordinate roles. Within this framework, violence against women is frequently normalized and viewed as an acceptable means for men to assert dominance and maintain control over women.

B. Cultural Beliefs: Cultural beliefs and practices deeply rooted in tradition can significantly contribute to the perpetuation of violence against women. In certain societies, harmful practices such as female genital mutilation (FGM) and honor killings are not only tolerated but are also culturally sanctioned. These acts of violence are often justified through appeals to longstanding cultural or religious norms, making them difficult to challenge or eliminate. Garcia-Moreno and Watts (2011) discuss how such practices are deeply embedded within the cultural fabric of certain communities, where they are perpetuated by the belief that they preserve family honor, control female sexuality, or fulfill religious obligations. The cultural validation of these practices creates an environment where violence against women is not only accepted but is also expected under certain circumstances.

2. Economic Factors :

a. Poverty and Financial Dependence:

Economic factors, particularly poverty and financial dependence, play a crucial role in perpetuating violence against women. Women who are economically dependent on their partners often find themselves trapped in abusive relationships with limited options for escape. The lack of financial autonomy can make it nearly impossible for these women to leave their abusers, as they may have no means of supporting themselves or their children independently. Economic deprivation within a household can further exacerbate stress, leading to a heightened risk of violence. Heise (1998) points out that poverty not only limits women's ability to escape abusive situations but also creates an environment where violence is more likely to occur

due to the increased pressures and frustrations associated with financial instability. Additionally, the lack of access to education and employment opportunities leaves many women marginalized, further deepening their economic dependence and vulnerability to violence. This economic marginalization not only reinforces gender inequality but also perpetuates a cycle of violence where women have few, if any, avenues for achieving financial independence and safety.

B. Economic Stress: Economic stress, particularly during periods of unemployment, financial hardship, or economic downturns, is a significant factor that can exacerbate domestic violence. The strain of financial difficulties often leads to increased tension within households, which may manifest as aggressive behavior toward women. Research has consistently shown a strong correlation between economic stress and intimate partner violence. Jewkes (2002) highlights that financial strain is one of the most significant predictors of domestic violence, as men who feel powerless or frustrated due to hardship may resort to violence as a means of exerting control or expressing their anger. The stress associated with unemployment, debt, and poverty can lead to a breakdown in communication and emotional regulation, making violent outbursts more likely. Moreover, in societies where male identity is closely tied to the role of the breadwinner, the inability to fulfill this role due to economic challenges can result in feelings of inadequacy, which may be externalized through violence against female partners.

3. *Legal and Institutional Factors* ak **Legal Protections:**

The inadequacy of legal frameworks and the ineffectiveness of law enforcement responses are critical factors that contribute to the vulnerability of women to violence. In many countries, laws intended to protect women from violence are either insufficient, poorly enforced, or, in some cases, entirely absent. This legal vacuum creates an environment where perpetrators of violence often evade punishment, and victims are left without any meaningful recourse. The lack of robust legal protections not only fails to deter potential abusers but also perpetuates a culture of impunity, where violence against women pport systems to mitigate these risks is normalized and goes unchallenged. UN Women (2020) emphasizes that the absence of stringent laws, coupled with a lack of accountability for violators, significantly undermines efforts to combat gender-based violence. In regions where legal systems are weak or biased, women are further marginalized, as they may face additional barriers such as corruption, discrimination, and a lack of trust in law enforcement agencies. These systemic shortcomings not only fail to protect women but also reinforce societal norms that tolerate or even condone violence.

Pathways to Prevention :

Effective prevention of violence against women requires a multifaceted approach encompassing legal reforms, education, economic empowerment, community-based interventions, and comprehensive support services. Strengthening legal frameworks and ensuring effective law enforcement are crucial for holding perpetrators accountable and protecting victims. Educational programs and public awareness campaigns play a vital role in challenging gender stereotypes, promoting respect and consent, and changing attitudes towards violence. Economic empowerment strategies, including access to education and financial resources, help women gain independence and reduce their vulnerability to abuse. Community-based interventions address cultural and social norms by collaborating with local leaders and engaging men and boys to foster positive change.

1. Legal Reforms and Law Enforcement :

a. Strengthening Legal Frameworks:

Addressing violence against women effectively requires robust legal reforms that criminalize all forms of violence, including domestic violence, sexual violence, and harmful traditional practices. Implementing comprehensive laws is a foundational step in creating a protective legal environment for women. Such legislation must explicitly define and prohibit various forms of violence, establish clear penalties for offenders, and ensure mechanisms for victim protection and support. However, enacting laws alone is insufficient; these reforms must be supported by strong enforcement and judicial systems to ensure that legal protections are realized and that perpetrators are held accountable. violence against women, promoting safety, and fostering equality.

b. Effective Enforcement and Judicial Response:

For legal reforms to be effective, law enforcement agencies and judicial systems must be equipped to implement and uphold these laws effectively. This involves not only the establishment of specialized units or protocols for handling cases of violence against women but also the consistent and fair application of the law. Ensuring that victims receive the protection and justice they deserve requires a coordinated approach among various institutions, including police, courts, and social services.

2. Education and Awareness:

a. Challenging Gender Stereotypes and Promoting Equality:

Educational programs designed to challenge gender stereotypes and promote gender equality are essential for the prevention of violence against women. These initiatives should be comprehensive, targeting both men and women to foster a deeper understanding of gender dynamics and to alter harmful attitudes and behaviors. By addressing and dismantling ingrained gender norms that perpetuate violence,

educational programs can play a pivotal role in preventing abuse and promoting a culture of respect and equality.

b. Public Awareness Campaigns:

Public awareness campaigns are another crucial component violence prevention efforts. These campaigns aim to educate communities about the detrimental effects of violence, the significance of respect and consent in relationships, and the importance of supporting survivors. Jewkes (2002) emphasizes that effective campaigns can shift public perceptions, encourage positive behaviors, and mobilize community action against violence.

3. Economic Empowerment :

a. Reducing Vulnerability Through Economic Empowerment:

Economic empowerment is a crucial strategy for mitigating the risk of violence against women. Women who possess access to education, employment opportunities, and financial resources are significantly better equipped to escape abusive relationships and rebuild their lives. By fostering financial independence, women gain the autonomy needed to make choices that can protect them from violence and provide them with the means to seek support and assistance.

.b Support and Skill Development:

Economic empowerment programs should be designed to equip women with the skills, resources, and opportunities required to achieve financial stability. These programs can include vocational training, entrepreneurship support, and financial literacy education, all aimed at enhancing women's economic prospects. By providing targeted support and creating pathways to employment, these initiatives help women build self-sufficiency and reduce their reliance on potentially abusive partners.

4. Community-Based Interventions :

a. Local-Level Prevention Efforts:

Community-based interventions play a pivotal role in preventing violence against women by addressing the issue directly within local contexts. These interventions should be developed in collaboration with a diverse range of community stakeholders, including local leaders, religious institutions, and grassroots organizations. By engaging these key figures, interventions can more effectively address the cultural and social norms that perpetuate violence. He is (2011) underscores the importance of working within local cultural frameworks to challenge and change harmful practices.

b.Promoting Positive Social Norms:

Effective community programs should focus on promoting positive social norms that reject violence and uphold gender equality. This can involve organizing community workshops, educational campaigns, and public dialogues to raise awareness about the impact of violence and the importance of respectful relationships.

Violence against women is a pervasive issue with profound effects on individuals, families, and society. This paper has examined the intricate causes of such violence, highlighting how deeply rooted cultural norms, economic dependencies, psychological factors, and inadequate legal frameworks contribute to its persistence. Patriarchal structures and harmful cultural practices normalize and perpetuate violence, while economic dependence on abusive partners and weak legal protections further entrench women's vulnerability. Psychological factors like mental health issues and substance abuse also play significant roles in exacerbating violence. Addressing these root causes requires a comprehensive approach. Strengthening legal frameworks and law enforcement is crucial, as robust legal protections and effective enforcement are necessary to hold perpetrators accountable and ensure justice for victims. Training for law enforcement and judicial personnel is essential to handle cases sensitively and competently

Conclusion:

Violence against women is caused by gender inequality – including unequal power relations between women and men, rigid gender roles, norms and hierarchies, and ascribing women lower status in society. Promoting and achieving gender equality is a critical element of the prevention of violence against women.

It is true that men are physically and rationally superior, but women are morally superior. Although females simply do not have the strength or endurance necessary to be effective in doing some functions, but women have both the brain power and skill and in some instances superior abilities to compete with men. Feminist and females particularly in strength and endurance should not be taken into consideration to encourage men to violate woman or retard her role in society.

Women believe that they are not created to be the same as men. Their natural attributes, affections, and personalities are entirely different from a man's. They consist of faithfulness, benevolence, kindness, and charity. While man has an aggressive and competitive nature. However, they believe that men and women are created as complements. They complete one another. Women are waiting for serious investigation and planning to be processed in order to identify the causes of violence and instigate counter-measures to limit the phenomenon. Women are looking for government and judicial leaders to pay attention

to the laws against domestic violence, and work together for real application of the laws on the ground within their different items. They highly believe that accurate application of the laws resulted in safety and stability in the society daily life. Women believe that time is arrived to move from a world based on duality of male/female to world based on unity, moving from life on service to self into a life

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