



Understanding Violence Against Women

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Abstract

Violence against women and girls is a major health and human right issue. At least one in five of the world's female population has been physically or sexually abused by a man or men once in their life. Many including pregnant women and young girls, are subjected to severe, sustained or repeated assaults. Worldwide it has been assessed that violence against women is as serious a cause of death and incapacity among women of reproductive age as cancer, and a greater cause of ill-health than traffic accidents and malaria combined. The abuse of women is effectively combined. The abuse of women is effectively condoned in almost every society of the world. Prosecution and conviction of men who beat or rape women or girls is rare when compared to assaults. Violence therefore operated as a means to maintain and reinforce women's subordination.

I. INTRODUCTION

Women's rights are human rights. One in every three women in the world is subjected to physical or sexual violence, the majority of which is perpetrated by an intimate partner. Violence against women and girls is a violation of human rights, and the immediate and longterm physical, sexual, and mental effects, including death, can be catastrophic.

Women's general well-being is significantly impacted by violence, which prevents them from fully participating in society. Many women are not given the proper education or care they need because of gender-based discrimination and inequities that still exist around the world. Their experiences go unnoticed and unheard. They are forced into prostitution and their lives are threatened by violence, including violence in their own homes. Cyber-crime and female victimization are on the rise, posing a serious threat to women's safety. Women, on the other hand, make up half of the world's population, making development difficult for any country if women's rights are ignored.

A FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

A study of violence presented in the world report on violence and health divides violence into three broad categories according to who commits the violent act: self-directed violence, interpersonal violence, and collective violence. It further captures the nature of the violent acts that can be physical, sexual, or psychological.

This study provides a complete picture of the current state of violence in society, and it is significant to both women and men of various ages. Women are subjected to all forms of violence however, interpersonal violence that is violence inflicted by another person or a small group of people, is the most universal kind of violence against women, happening in all countries. Family/intimate relationship violence and community violence are the two subcategories of violence. Family/partner violence covers violence between family members (often taking place in the house), while community violence describes violence between persons who are unknown and who may or may not know each other, and it often takes place outside the home.

This study will focus on the different types of interpersonal violence that affect young girls, adolescents, and women of reproductive age and beyond, as well as how the types of violence evolve over the time. The rationale behind this limitation is that family/partner violence is the most common kind of violence among women, whereas communal violence is more common among men.

The nature of the violence

The nature of the violence Violent acts—irrespective of whether they are self-directed, interpersonal, or collective—are commonly categorized as physical, sexual, or psychological.

1) Physical violence - Physical violence occurs when one person transgresses the body space of the other without their consent, either by subjecting her to blows, pulling or shoving, or by confining her, causing physical injury with some



type of object (lethal or not), or forcing her to have some type of sexual intercourse.

According to the survey, 27 per cent of women have been subjected to physical violence since the age 15 in India. Mostly women from rural area experiences more physical violence than women from urban area. Domestic violence cases, where women reported physical abuse in rural and urban areas, were at 29 per cent and 23 percent, respectively.

2) Sexual violence - Sexual violence refers to any sexual act or assault to obtain a sexual act, or unwanted sexual comments or acts to traffic, that are directed against a person's sexuality using coercion by anyone, regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including at home and at work place.

Rape is the term that is commonly used for the first type of sexual violence mentioned above (forced/coerced intercourse). Rape is defined as non-consensual sexual penetration of any part of the victim's body with a sexual organ, or of the victim's anal or genital entrance with any object or any other part of the body. The invasion is carried out by force, or by threat of force or coercion, such as fear of violence, duress, incarceration, psychological oppression, or power abuse, against such person or another person, or by exploiting a coercive environment, or against a person incapable of providing their consent.

Marital Rape: Sexual intercourse forced on a woman by her husband, knowingly against her will. *According to National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data, India reported a total 32,033 rape cases in 2019, 11 percent were from the Dalit community. Every fourth rape victim in India is a child, according to NCRB statistics.*

3) Psychological Violence - Psychological, mental, or emotional violence Acts such as barring a woman from visiting her relatives and friends, persistent humiliation, economic constraints, violence or threats against valued things, and other forms of controlling behaviour. This form of violence is more difficult to define across cultures and countries as it can take different forms. Emotional abuse was defined in a study from Vietnam as activities such as a husband forcing his wife to have sex the day before she goes to worship in a pagoda, thus causing her to breach the taboo of being pure, clean, and chaste. Acts like bringing girlfriends home, being kept out of the house, or refusing sex were more generally referred as emotional violence in African studies.

According to a survey performed by UNICEF and Gallup in early 2021 with 20,000 children and adults in 21 countries, youngsters in India appear

hesitant to seek help for mental stress. In India, only 41% of young people aged 15 to 24 say getting help for mental health problems is beneficial, compared to an average of 83 percent in 21 nations. In fact, India was the only one of the 21 countries where only a small percentage of young people believed that those suffering from mental illness should seek help from others. In every other country, the majority of young people (ranging from 56 to 95 per cent) believed that talking to someone about their mental health problems was the best approach to deal with them. The survey findings, which are included in The State of the World's Children 2021, also revealed that 1 in 7 (15 to 24-year-olds) in India reported feeling depressed or having little interest in doing things on a regular basis. The proportion ranged from almost one in three in Cameroon, one in seven in India and Bangladesh, to as low as one in ten in Ethiopia and Japan. Across 21 countries, the median was one in five young people.

INTERPERSONAL VIOLENCE

Interpersonal violence, often referred to as intimate partner violence, domestic violence or battering, is a pattern of behaviour used to establish power and control over another person through fear and intimidation, often including the threat or use of violence. Various types of violence will be described following the life course perspective that is, starting with young girls, where some types of violence are culturally specific and others are universal.

Types of violence striking young girls and adolescents

→ Child abuse and neglect

In every country, some children are abused and neglected by their parents and other caregivers. Physical, sexual, and psychological abuse, as well as neglect, are examples of this type of violence. The result could be fatal, with head injuries, abdomen injuries, and intentional asphyxia being the most prevalent causes of death. 12 Non-fatal outcomes have been described as a variety of forms of abuse and neglect that require medical attention and intervention by social services.

Gender and age are important factors in determining the kind of violence exercised. Young children and boys are more vulnerable to physical abuse, but older girls who have entered puberty and adolescence are more vulnerable to sexual abuse, neglect, and prostitution. It has been reported that women use physical punishment on their children more frequently than men, yet when the result is fatal, men are more likely to be the culprits. Young



girls are also more likely to be sexually abused by men. Child abuse has been linked to parental stress, poor impulse control, and social isolation, as well as factors like poverty and a lack of social capital.

Incest is the term used to describe rape or sexual assault committed by close blood relatives, and it usually refers to when a father or brother sexually exploits their young daughter or sister. In the past 10–15 years, the awareness of child sexual abuse, including incest, has increased as girls and young women have been encouraged to reveal this kind of family violence. The problem of mothers sexually assaulting their sons exists as well, though it is less widespread. This type of violence exists in a wide range of countries and cultures, however it has primarily been concerned and described in high-income countries.

→ **Gender based abuse of infants and female children**

As a result of long-standing cultural traditions favouring males, there is a social preference for boys in several regions of the world, resulting in the neglect of females. Sex selective abortions of females, in which the gender of the baby is determined using ultrasound technology, malnourishment of girls, and even infanticide—the purposeful killing of female new born soon after birth—are all examples of this. The female to male ratio is lower than predicted in nations where this is widespread (China, Taiwan, South Korea, India, Pakistan, and several Sub-Saharan African countries), indicating a deviation from the natural flow of events.

This was highlighted as a severe public health issue affecting both men and women during the United Nations Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. There was concern that it would lead to women becoming a commodity to a trade (trafficking), as well as an increase in prostitution and a possibility of a large number of men relocating to other regions in pursuit of a wife, creating a refugee crisis and poverty.

Women who have been sexually or physically abused have a 16% greater chance of having a low-birth-weight baby and are two times more likely to abort a pregnancy. Additionally, intimate partner violence (IPV) is the primary and leading cause of injury-related fatalities and femicide among pregnant women.

According to a study, mothers who had been subjected to IPV had a considerably higher rate of infant death than mothers who had not been abused. Furthermore, it was found this significant rate of infant mortality only applied to girl babies, and the rates for boy babies were found to be insignificant.

Furthermore, when compared to their peers, children under the age of five had higher mortality rates if their mother was abused, and, similar to the new born mortality rate assessment, female mortality rates were statistically significant (high) but male rates were not.

→ **Female genital mutilation**

Female genital mutilation (FGM), is defined by WHO as the partial or total removal of the external genitalia or other harm to the female genital organs whether for cultural, religious, or other non-therapeutic reasons. The terms female genital cutting (FGC) and female circumcision have also been used to describe this procedure. FGM is performed at different times in a girls' life depending on the setting. According to the WHO, between 100 and 140 million girls and women have been subjected to some form of FGM. The majority of persons infected live in 28 African countries, while there are few in the Middle East, and it also affects immigrant communities in certain Western European countries.

Types of violence striking women of reproductive age and beyond

Intimate partner violence

An intimate male partner is one of the most common sorts of violence against women that occurs in all societies and among both rich and poor women. The term "intimate partner violence" refers to abuse that occurs between husband and wife, or other current or past cohabiting partners; some also include boyfriends and girlfriends. Other terms that are often used to describe intimate partner violence include: domestic violence, battering, wife/ spouse/partner abuse. The preferred phrase is intimate partner violence since it is more descriptive of the type of relationship in which the subjects are involved however, it says nothing about the direction of the violence. Despite the fact that this is one of the most common types of violence against women, the term intimate partner violence needs to be made clarified by adding "against women" to exactly describe the phenomenon.

Physical, sexual, psychological, or any combination of these forms of intimate partner abuse can be used against women. According to studies from the United States and Mexico, 40%– 52% of women who have experienced physical violence from an intimate relationship have also been sexually pressured by that partner.

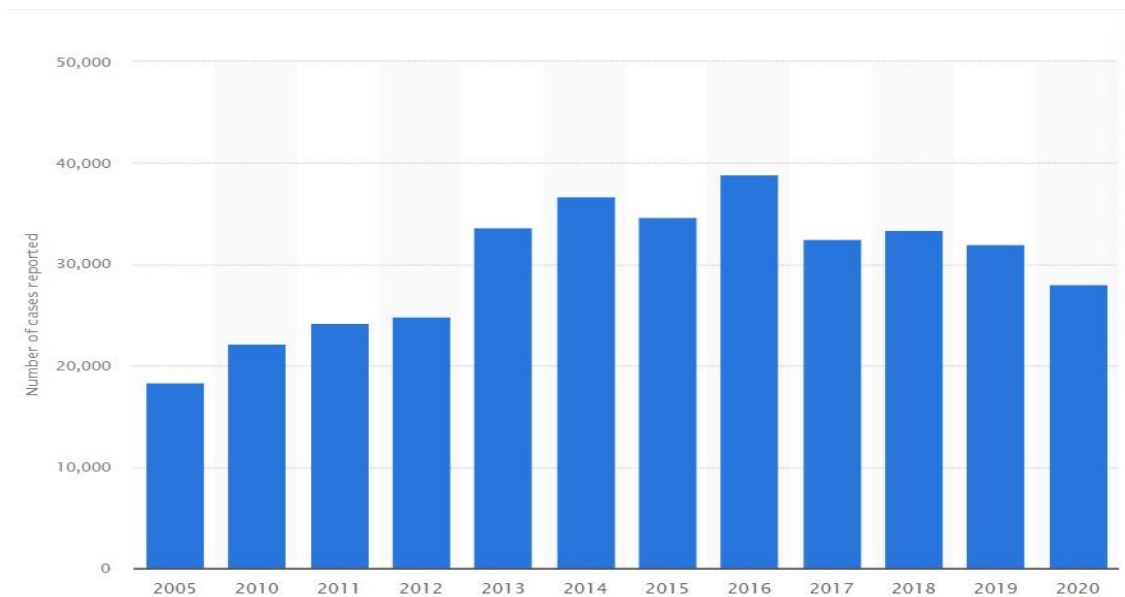
→ **Rape**

Many myths regarding rape, or having sex against one's will, are founded on prejudices about what



constitutes acceptable sexual behaviour for men and women. Most people identify rape with a violent attack by a stranger, however rape is almost often committed by someone the victim knows. There is also an assumption that rape leaves obvious signs of injury, which isn't always true. Only around one third of rape victims sustain visible physical

injuries. Physical violence or pressure in the form of blackmail or threats might occur concurrently with the rape, or is the violence perpetrated while the woman is asleep or under the influence of alcohol or other drugs, unable to defend herself. Rape is often not reported to the police and existing statistics greatly underestimate the magnitude of the problem.



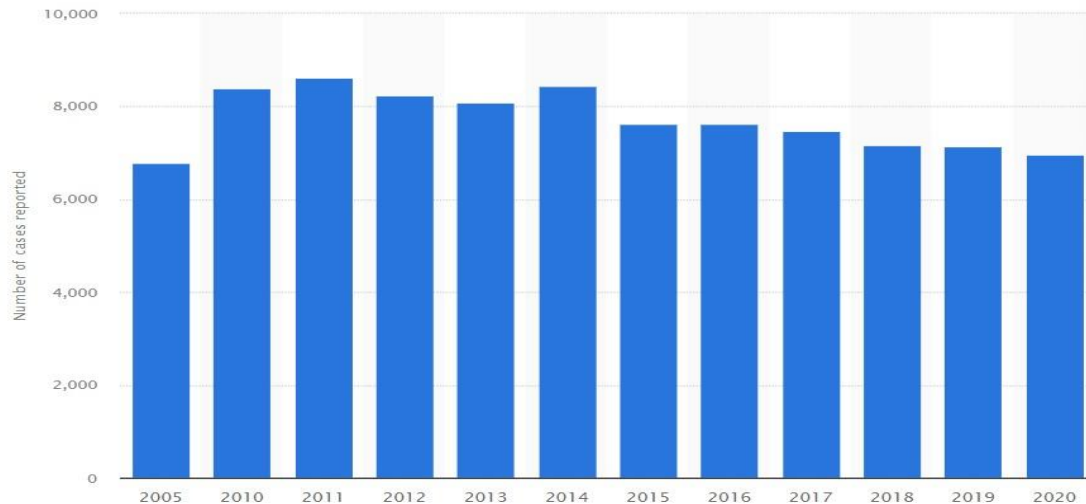
In 2020, the total number of rape cases reported in India amounted to over 28 thousand. In comparison to the previous year, there was a drop in rape cases. Despite the fact that many rapes go unreported in the country, it is an issue that continues to make headlines, with some resulting in public protests. Although reports of rape have increased in recent years, it was still associated with shame for the victim, rather than the perpetrator.

→ Dowry related violence

Dowry is the payment to be made to the groom's family to marry away a daughter, and it takes different forms in different cultures. The size of the dowry, on the other hand, is a typical source of conflict between the families, with the groom's family wanting more than the bride's family can provide, leading to bride harassment and dowry-related murders, notably in certain parts of India and other southern Asian countries. This violence is perpetrated not just by the husband, but also by his close family members (mother, brothers, sisters).



Total number of reported dowry death cases in India from 2005 to 2020



In 2020, reported dowry death cases in India amounted to nearly seven thousand. This was a gradual reduction from the 2014, in which this number was approximately 8.5 thousand. The dowry system in India incorporates payments in the form of capital, goods, real estate among others, made to the bridegroom from the family of the bride as a condition for marriage.

→ **Acid Throwing**

In some Asian countries such as Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan, the disfiguring of women by throwing acid or burning them are forms of violence rooted in gender inequality, but the immediate motive for this is often conflicts concerning marriage and dowry. While this is not one of the most prevalent forms of violence against women, its consequences are devastating for those women subjected to it.

Acid Attacks in India, 2010 to 2019*

Year	Number of Cases Reported
2010	80
2011	83
2012	106
2013	122
2014	309
2015	222
2016	167
2017	244
2018	228
2019	240

These figures do not reflect the full scope of acid attacks in India because 60% of incidents are never reported. Many victims are hesitant to disclose because they feel shame and stigma, and many rural regions lack the resources to deal with the crime. The actual number of annual incidents in India is believed to be around 1000.

While several incidents of acid attacks against males have been reported in India, the crime is generally perceived as a form of violence against women by men because women are victims in more than 80% of cases and the perpetrators are male in 84% of cases. The majority of victims is between 18-22 years of age, and over 84.48 % are committed in urban areas. In more than 76 % of cases acid attacks are committed by someone known to the victim, and in the vicinity of their residence (Acid Survivors Trust International).

→ **Honour Killing**

This is the murder of a woman, generally by a brother, father, or other male family member, because she has allegedly brought shame to her family. The concept of male dignity and female chastity, which is prevalent in many Eastern Mediterranean countries, lies at the basis of this problem. It suggests that a man's honour is tied to the women in his family's perceived sexual purity. If a woman has sex outside of marriage or is raped, she is regarded to be betraying the family honour. In some cultures, killing the woman/girl is the only method to restore family honour. This type of abuse against women and girls is also practised within immigrant families in Western European countries. It is



generally referred to as “honour” killings, a rather misleading term as the connection with honour is difficult to understand in most cultures. The term “murder in the name of honour” has been given.

II. CONCLUSION

Violence against women is a serious violation of women's human rights, and it is of particular concern to the public health sector because of the significant contributions that public health workers could make if properly trained, given their proximity to victims and potential familiarity with the community and its residents. As a result, local health services and communities could play a key role in promoting public awareness to prevent this violence. Debating this topic openly is one method to diminish society's tolerance for violence against women. There is still a lack of understanding about which treatments are most effective in preventing gender-based violence.

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