



Original Article

Increase in violence against women: A sociological study

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Abstract

Violence against women is a terrible, widespread, and chronic social problem today. The incidents of violence against women are increasing in different forms in the world and in India as well. Domestic violence, sexual assault, dowry death, molestation, human trafficking, child marriage, feticide, sexual harassment at work and cyber violence are the various forms of violence against women. Even though women are progressing in the field of education, employment and public life, the issue of their safety stays a serious one. The goal of this research paper is to study the increasing incidents of violence against women from a social perspective. This study shows that patriarchal culture, gender discrimination, economic dependence, illiteracy, poverty, destitution, social constraints and customs, patriarchal ideology, and shortcomings in law enforcement are all crucial factors contributing to the increase in violence against women. The study has used descriptive and analytical method and secondary data has been used. Data from National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), World Health Organization (WHO), Census reports, research books, journals, and government reports have been used. The study has revealed that violence against women is not only a legal issue but is also linked to social systems, cultural values and thinking. Therefore, along with legal measures, social transformation, education, awareness campaigns, and the overall empowerment of women are necessary to prevent violence.

Keywords: Domestic violence, sexual assault, dowry death, molestation, human trafficking, child marriage, honour killing, cyber harassment, poor, Dalit, tribal, minority women

Introduction

In Indian society, the influence of traditions, customs, religion, and culture is significant. While some traditions prove protective for women, many customs restrict women's freedom. Child marriage, the dowry system, son preference, suspicion of a woman's character, and the oppression of women in the name of family honour are examples of this. In modern times, women have made great strides in education, science, administration, politics, and industry. However, along with this progress, the nature of violence has also changed. Today, new forms such as cyber harassment, online stalking, and digital blackmailing have appeared. Studying violence against women is extremely important from a sociological perspective, because this issue is not merely a legal one, but is also connected to social value systems, mentality, and power relations.

This research paper attempts to conduct an in-depth study of the causes, nature, effects, and solutions of violence against women.

1. **Context of the topic-** Just as society is constantly changing, society is always a system that moves towards progress. When any society moves towards progress, the entire credit is given to the women of that society. In today's era, science has progressed, technological progress has been made, the economy has improved, but the incidents of violence against women in society are increasing and there has been no reduction in any of them. "Violence against women is not just a personal or family issue but a widespread social problem. The consequences of this violence are not limited to the victim alone but also affect the family system, social structure, and national development process.

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2. Forms of violence against women- Violence against women is not limited to physical assault only but also includes physical, mental, sexual, economic, and emotional abuse. Domestic violence, dowry harassment, sexual exploitation, molestation, rape, sexual harassment at work, human trafficking, honour killings, and harassment through cyber media are considered its main forms. From a sociological perspective, such violence is caused by abuse of power, a tendency to control and a sexist mentality.

3. Patriarchal Social Structure and Violence - Indian society is primarily structured on a patriarchal system. In this system, the man is considered the head of the family and the decision-maker, while the woman is assigned an obedient and submissive role. Male dominance is exerted over a woman's education, employment, marriage, motherhood, and sexuality. When a woman tries to step outside this framework, violence is used to bring her back under control. Therefore, the patriarchal mindset becomes a major social cause of violence against women.

4. Social and Cultural Factors- Societal customs, traditions, and cultural values often indirectly support violence against women. Practices such as child marriage, dowry system, preference for sons, questioning a woman's character, and imposing restrictions on women in the name of family honour place women in a subordinate position. Sometimes, violence against women is ignored as a 'domestic matter,' which allows the violence to escalate.

5. Economic Reasons and Women's Dependence- Women's economic dependence is also a significant factor contributing to increased violence. Unemployment, low income, lack of property rights, and lack of participation in financial decisions force women to endure violence. Due to a lack of economic independence, many women are unable to raise their voices against injustice. Therefore, economic inequality becomes an important backdrop for violence against women.

6. Lack of education and ignorance: Education is considered a highly effective tool for bringing about social change. However, lack of education creates obstacles in developing awareness of gender equality. In an illiterate or less educated society, there is a tendency to see violence against women as natural or acceptable. Education provides information about laws, rights, and available opportunities; therefore, lack of education is a major factor behind the increase in violence.

7. Changing nature: In the modern era, the form of violence against women is changing. Along with traditional physical violence, psychological harassment, sexual harassment at the workplace and cyber violence are also on the rise. Incidents like threatening women, defaming them, or misusing personal information through social media, mobile phones and the internet are increasing. This is having a serious and far-reaching impact on the mental health of women.

8. Gap between laws and reality: Several legal provisions have been made in India for the safety of women. However, due to the lack of effective implementation of these laws, the desired results are not achieved. The insensitive role of the police system, delays in the judicial process and pressure from society make it difficult for women to get justice. As a

result, despite the existence of laws, atrocities against women have not been completely curbed.

Review of Existing Literature

Extensive research has been done about violence against women in India and abroad. According to a report by the World Health Organization (WHO), about one-third of women worldwide experience physical or sexual violence at some point in their lives. The United Nations has recognized violence against women as a violation of human rights. Sylvia Walby (1990) in her analysis of patriarchy explained that violence against women is a result of power relations. B. R. Ambedkar emphasized gender equality and said that national progress is impossible without social justice. In the Indian context, according to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) report, crimes registered against women are increasing every year. Domestic violence appears to be the most prevalent. Irawati Karve, in her study of the Indian family system, highlighted the subordinate position of women. A review of the available literature suggests that violence against women is not an individual phenomenon but a complex social problem arising from inequalities, traditions, and structural factors in the social system.

Objectives of the study:

1. To explain the concept of violence against women.
2. To study the various forms of violence against women.
3. To explore the social, economic, and cultural factors of violence.
4. To study the social and psychological consequences of violence against women.
5. To develop effective measures to prevent violence.

Hypotheses

1. The patriarchal social system contributes to the increase in violence against women.
2. Economic dependence and unemployment lead to women tolerating violence.
3. Lack of education and social ignorance increase the incidence of violence.
4. Weak enforcement of laws does not prevent violence.

Methodology

This research has adopted a descriptive and analytical method. The study primarily uses secondary data. This includes government reports, NCRB statistics, research articles, books, periodicals, and reliable websites.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is essential to understand the types of violence against women, its extent, and the changing patterns over time. Based on available secondary data, this study reviews the social reality of violence against women. An examination of data obtained from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations reports and various research studies shows that the incidence of violence against women is steadily increasing.

According to the NCRB report, crimes against women are reported in India every year, and domestic violence accounts for the highest share of them. Physical, mental, and

economic abuse by husbands or family members is widespread. Notably, many incidents of domestic violence go unreported because social stigma, fear, economic dependence, and family pressure make it difficult for women to file complaints. Therefore, the actual incidence of violence is likely to be much higher.

The situation about sexual violence is also alarming. There has been an increase in incidents of rape, sexual harassment, molestation, and child sexual abuse. Sexual harassment in public places and workplaces is more often reported in urban areas, while in rural areas, these cases are often suppressed due to social pressure. The patriarchal mindset still prevalent in society leads to blaming the victim, which creates obstacles in the justice process.

Dowry deaths and dowry-related harassment are serious problems in Indian society. After marriage, women are subjected to financial pressure and harassment for dowry, and often this abuse escalates to physical violence or even death. Although dowry is prohibited by law, social customs and notions of prestige perpetuate this problem. According to statistics, there are some fluctuations in the number of dowry deaths, but the problem has not been completely eradicated.

Differences are seen in violence in rural and urban areas. In rural areas, traditional customs, illiteracy, poverty, and social control lead to incidents of domestic violence, child marriage, forced marriage, and honour killings. Women are considered symbols of family honour, and violence is used to control their behaviour. In urban areas, however, due to the increasing freedom of women, sexual harassment at the workplace, cyber harassment, stalking, and psychological violence are more prevalent.

With the increasing use of modern technology, new forms of violence against women have begun to appear. There is an increase in cyber violence, such as threatening women, tarnishing their image, sending obscene or insulting messages, and misusing their personal information through social media, mobile phones, and the internet. Due to the laws related to cybercrimes and the limitations in their implementation, women face many obstacles in seeking justice.

The nature of violence against women varies according to class, caste, religion, and economic status. Poor, Dalit, tribal, and minority women face double exploitation. They suffer violence not only because they are women but also because of their social vulnerability. Working women, domestic workers, and women in the unorganized sector experience higher rates of economic exploitation and sexual harassment.

Despite the availability of laws, their ineffective implementation is a major issue. The Domestic Violence Act, the Sexual Harassment Prevention Act, and amended laws about rape exist, but the approach of the police system, delays in investigation, and judicial processes delay justice for women. As a result, many women are forced to endure violence.

The analysis of all these facts makes it clear that violence against women is not merely a criminal problem but a reflection of social structure, mindset, and power

relations. Social inequality, gender discrimination, and patriarchal value systems fuel violence against women. Therefore, finding a solution to this problem requires not only limiting ourselves to the legal framework but also adopting a broader perspective of social transformation.

Conclusion

Violence against women is a clear manifestation of the failure of society. This study shows that several social, economic, and cultural factors are at play behind the increase in violence against women. Patriarchal mindset, gender discrimination, illiteracy, poverty, and economic dependence are the factors that lead to the exploitation of women.

Although laws exist, their ineffective implementation creates obstacles in providing justice to women. The impact of violence against women is not limited to the women concerned but also affects the family, society, and national development.

Therefore, it is necessary to view violence against women not merely as a women's issue but as a social problem. Social transformation, value education, awareness of gender equality, and the overall empowerment of women can be the long-term solutions to this problem.

Recommendations

1. Providing education based on gender equality from the school level.
2. Increasing opportunities for economic self-reliance for women.
3. Ensuring effective implementation of laws.
4. Conducting awareness and social enlightenment campaigns.
5. Strengthening women's support and counselling centres.

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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