

Violence against Women: Forms, Causes and Effects

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Abstract

The term “gender violence” includes all types of violence against women, men, adolescents, children, gay and transgender people. Gender is the powerful predictor of sexual assault, rape and relationship violence. This type of violence is influenced by gender relations. To address this violence, we have to consider the causes which have impact on gender violence. These incidents of violence are predominantly against women and often perpetrated by men.

Violence against women is a universal problem occurring in every social group and culture. It has been understood as “Gender based violence” because it stems from women’s subordinate status in society. It includes intimate partner violence including marital rape, dowry or bride price related violence, sexual abuse of female children, early marriage, forced marriage, commercial sexual exploitation, sexual harassment and intimidation in school, trafficking of girls and women and female foeticide. It is a violation of human rights and a complex problem with multiple causes. Therefore it becomes imperative to know what the reasons behind this violence are and what the results are of impact of such violence, as it not only affects individual victims but also their families, friends and communities. The elimination of gender violence has become a mandate of all governments. Our understanding of the causes and effects of this violence is, thus, increasing day by day. This paper deals with the forms, causes and effects of gender violence.

KEYWORDS: Gender violence, sexual harassment, gender discrimination.

1. Introduction

Gender violence, especially against women, has become such a widespread phenomenon. Violence against women takes many forms including intimate partner violence, honor killings, sexual violence, forced and early marriages, trafficking etc. The media, the films & society in general, make our children adults before their time. Studies from different countries show that the percentage of women (from 15 to 49 years old) experienced physical and sexual violence by an intimate partner in their life time, varies from 15% to 71%. Violence against women is grounded in social norms and gender based discrimination that perpetuate such violence. Social conventions, traditions and restrictions play a great role in violence against women and control the life of women directly or indirectly. Globally 38% of murders of women are committed by a male intimate partner (WHO report, 2017). Violence against women and girls is a serious problem concerning human rights violation. Violence against women has emerged as the most burning issue in last two decades throughout the globe. Day to day violence is increasing in spite of all the necessary actions taken by the various government agencies & the public concerned. What can we do to mind sets that forcibly kidnap the fairer sex, from home, school?

The present paper is an effort to explore violence against women specially concentrating on domestic violence, causes/factors contributing towards violence against women, the statistical data which includes crimes committed against women in India and some recommendations to prevent this spreading malady.

2. Research Objective: To explore the forms, causes and effects of violence against women.

3. Research Methodology: This present study is entirely based on secondary data. Secondary data has been collected from relevant sources and government reports. The present paper is informative in nature. For analysis of secondary data, descriptive analysis are carried out.

4. Literature Review

As we know that women are vulnerable targets to extreme forms of aggression such as rape incest, dowry deaths, trafficking etc. Violence against women and girls begins long before they are born and continues throughout their lives. The lives of unborn girls are wind up through sex selective abortions. Every sixth death of a female infant in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan is due to discrimination and neglect. Females face restrictions in mobility, are denied proper education and health care, usually have less to eat than their male counterparts, are often forced into early arranged marriages, have few opportunities of employment and are underrepresented in the governments (Wahed and Bhuiya, 2007).

Violence against women is any act of gender-based violence which results in, physical, sexual or arbitrary deprivation of liberty in public or private life and violation of human rights of women in violation of human rights of women in situations of armed conflicts (Waghamode et al,2012).

Violence against women and girls is present across the world cutting across boundaries of class, culture, income, education, ethnicity and age. When the domestic violence occurs, the abuse is effectively condoned by the tacit silence and the indifference by the instruments of the state and the law-enforcing machinery. One in three women have been beaten, coerced into sex or abused in their lifetime by a member of her own family internationally (Heise et al.1999). Domestic violence is the most ignored and frequent relatively hidden form of violence against women and girls. Though reliable statistics are hard to come but previous studies estimated that, from country to country, between 20 and 50 per cent of women and girls have experienced physical violence at the hands of family member or an intimate partner. Wife beating is not only widespread, but male justify it with plethora of contexts. Domestic Violence is usually perpetrated by males who are, or who have been, in positions of trust and intimacy and power -husbands, boyfriends, fathers, fathers-in-law, stepfathers, brothers, uncles, sons, or other relatives. In most cases, many of the victims of violence in domestic sphere has either refused to name the perpetrator of the assault or attributed the injuries to other reasons (Dagaet al., 1999).

Violence against women is present in most societies but it often goes unrecognised, accepted as part of the order of things. Information about the extent of violence against women from scientifically sound studies is still relatively scant. However, domestic violence has been documented for all countries & socio-economic environments. Available evidence suggests that it is much more far-reaching than was

previously believed. In different parts of the world, 16% to 52% of women suffer physical violence from their male partners, & at least 1 in 5 women suffer rape or attempted rape in their lifetimes. It is also well known that rape & sexual torture are systematically used as weapons of war. (WHO, 1999).

Violence against women and girls is one of the most widespread and systematic human rights violations. It is grounded in gendered social structures rather than individual and random acts. It cuts across educational and geographic boundaries, age, socio-economic, affects all societies; and is a major obstacle to ending gender inequality and discrimination globally. (UN General Assembly, 2006).

'Violence' is an act carried out with the perceived intention of physically hurting another person. Gender Violence is defined as "any act involving use of force with intent of perpetuating promoting hierarchical gender relations". Violence against women has been described and defined as a form of discrimination in numerous documents. In 1993, Gender-based violence as a human rights violation has been first recognized in the World Human Rights Conference at Vienna. United Nations declaration (1993) defined violence against women as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm to a woman, including threats of such acts, arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life". (Waghmode, 2012).

5. Forms of Violence against Women

Violence against women has many manifestations, including forms that may be more common in specific regions, settings and countries. Violence against women displays itself as physical, sexual, emotional and economic. The most common forms include sexual violence (including rape), domestic and intimate partner violence, and sexual harassment, emotional and psychological violence. Other forms around the world include: sexual exploitation, sexual trafficking, and harmful practices, such as female genital mutilation/cutting, forced and child marriage.

Less documented forms, include: 1. crimes committed in the name of "honour" (2). femicide (3). prenatal sex selection (4). female infanticide (5). economic abuse (6). political violence (7). elder abuse (8). dowry-related violence (9). Acid-throwing (UN, 2013).

Heise and Germain gave the following forms of violence experienced by women throughout their life span:

- 1- Pre-birth: Sex- selective abortions, battering during pregnancy, coerced pregnancy.
- 2- Infancy: Female Infanticide, emotional and physical abuse, differential access to food and medical care.
- 3- Girlhood: child marriage, genital mutilation, sexual abuse by strangers and family members, differential access to food and medical care and education.
4. Adolescence: sexual harassment, economically coerced sex (eg. school fees.), Violence during courtship, trafficking, sexual abuse in the workplace, rape.

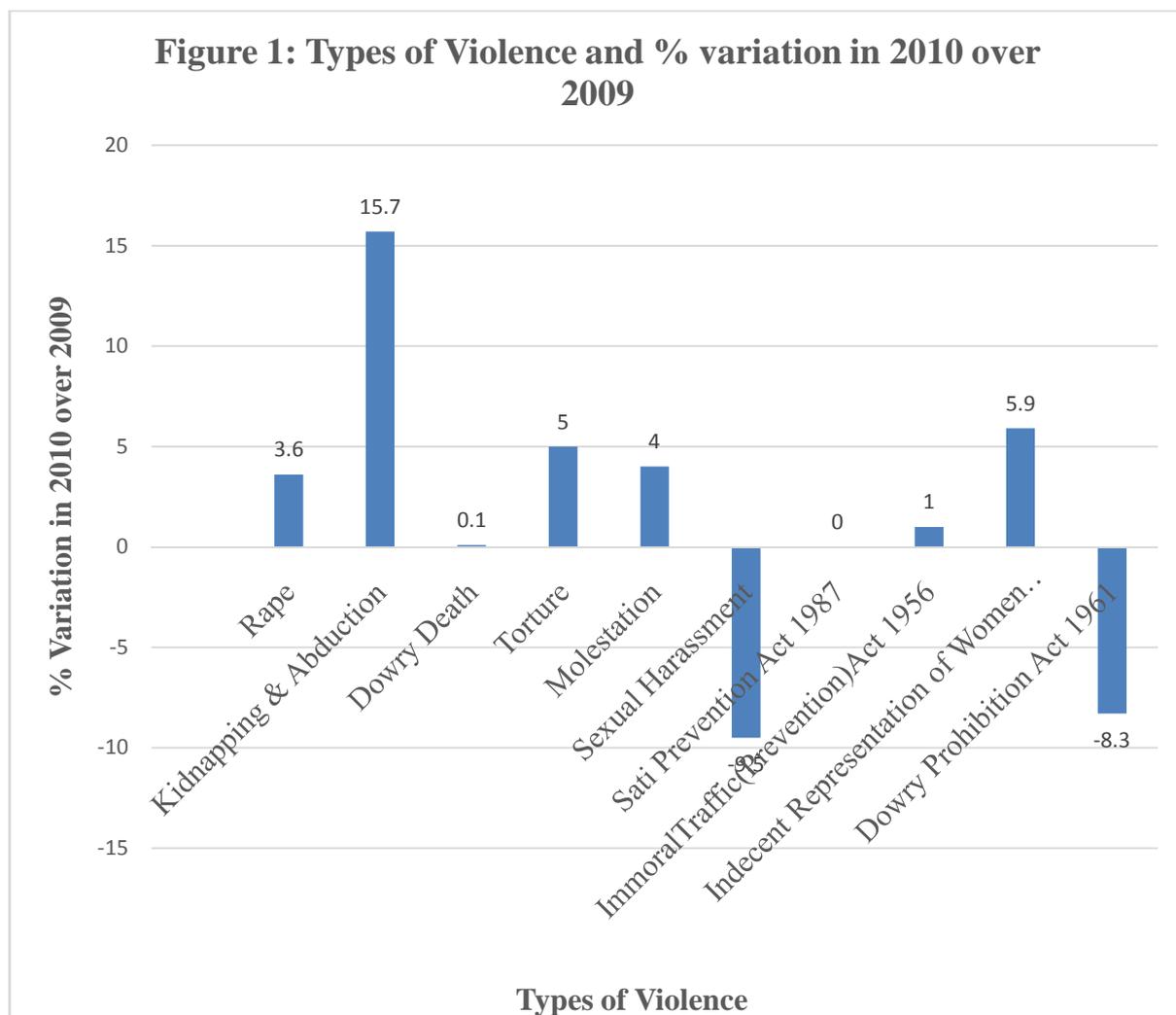
5. Reproductive Age: sexual abuse in the workplace, physical, psychological and sexual abuse by intimate male partners and relatives, forced pregnancies, sexual harassment, rape.

6. Elderly: abuse of widows including property grabbing, accusation of witchcraft, physical and psychological violence by younger family members, differential access to food and medical care. Another way of classifying violence against women is: Domestic Violence: by family members like husband or relatives. (Waghmode, 2012).

Table 1: Types of Violence against women

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

(Source: Crime in India, quoted by International Science Congress Association, 2012).



From the above table it is clear that there are different forms of violence against women and it also revealed that kidnapping and abduction is the major types in women violence during year 2009-10.

6. Causes: Lack of education & awareness, Abused as children, Socioeconomic status, Substance & alcohol use, Witnessing one parent abusing another (Waghmode et al, 2012), Women’s insecure access to and control over property and land rights, Male control over decision-making and assets, Young age, Poor Mental Health, Social Isolation, Attitudes and practices that reinforce female subordination and tolerate male violence (e.g. dowry, bride price, child marriage) (UN, 2013) are the major causes of gender violence. There are some factors given in the below table that perpetrate domestic violence.

Table 2: Factors that Perpetrate domestic violence

Cultural	Political
Belief in the inherent superiority of males Values that give men proprietary rights over women and girls Notion of the family as the private sphere and under male control	Under-representation of women in power, politics, the media and in the legal and medical professions Domestic violence not taken seriously Notions of family being private

Customs of marriage (bride price/ dowry) Acceptability of violence as a means To resolve conflicts	and beyond control of the state Risk of challenge to status quo/ religious laws Limited organization of women as a political force Limited participation of women in organized political system
Economic	Legal
Women's economic dependence on men Limited access to cash and credit Discriminatory laws regarding inheritance, property rights, Use of Communal lands maintenance after divorce or widowhood Limited access to employment in formal and informal sectors Limited access to education and training for women	Lesser legal status of women either by written law and/or by practice Laws regarding divorce, child custody, maintenance and inheritance Legal definitions of rape & domestic abuse Low levels of legal literacy among women Insensitive treatment of women and girls by police and judiciary

Adapted from: Source: Heise et al, 1994, quoted by Chaudhary, 2013.

7. Effects of violence against women

Physical effects: injury, loss of speech, aches and pain, burns, substance abuse, gynecological issues, sexually transmitted diseases, unintended pregnancy resulting in abortion, and the list just goes on.

Mental & emotional health complications: Unsocial behavior, multiple sexual partners, insomnia, depression and several others can also result. Apart from this, when the knowledge of abuse reaches others in the community, abused women are often shunned and forced to live in isolation (Waghmode).

According to UN (2013), there are multiple consequences of violence, having immediate and short-term to inter-generational effects. The consequences and costs of violence have effects at the individual level, within the family, community and society. They are:

1. Immediate injuries such as fractures and hemorrhaging, and long-term physical conditions (e.g. gastrointestinal, central nervous system disorders, chronic pain)
2. Mental illnesses, such as depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, attempted suicide
3. Sexual and reproductive health problems, such as sexually transmitted infections (including HIV), and other chronic conditions; sexual dysfunction; unintended/unwanted pregnancies and unsafe abortion; risks to maternal and foetal health (especially in cases of abuse during pregnancy)
4. Substance abuse (including alcohol)

5. Poor social functioning skills and social isolation and marginalization;
6. Death for both women and their children (from neglect, injury, pregnancy-related risks, homicide, suicide and/or HIV and AIDS-related)
7. Lost workdays, lower productivity and lower income
8. Overall reduced or lost educational, employment, social, or political participation opportunities
9. Expenditures (at the level of individual, family and public sector budgets) on medical, protection, judicial and social services. (Heise, et al., 1999; Heise and Garcia-Moreno, 2002; UN General Assembly, 2006).

Health Consequences of Violence against Women

Physical health outcomes: Gynaecological problems, Unwanted pregnancy, Injury (from lacerations to fractures and internal organs injury), HIV/AIDS, Miscarriage, Chronic pelvic pain, Pelvic inflammatory disease, Headaches, Permanent disabilities, Irritable bowel syndrome, Asthma, , Self-injurious behaviours (smoking, unprotected sex)

Mental health outcomes: Anxiety, Low self-esteem, Sexual dysfunction, Obsessive-compulsive disorder, Post traumatic stress disorder, Depression, Fear

Fatal outcomes: Suicide, Homicide, Maternal mortality

8. Findings of the study: The study is a brief one but the probable findings can be put in following manner.

1-The study revealed that kidnapping and Abduction is the major form of violence against women.

2-There are four major factors- cultural, political, economic and legal that perpetrate the domestic violence against women.

3- Effects of violence against women includes physical, mental and emotional and several fatal complications. Violence against women have impact at individual level, within the family, community and society.

9. Conclusion

At least in India, gender violence may take years to resolve. The very mindset of our culture, that deems a family to be incomplete without a son & the belief that the male is in every way superior to the female, needs a complete change of attitude in families, education, in fact, our lifestyle. Till moral values do not make us respect the other sex, there is dim hope of any far-reaching solution. Our media - in print, audio & visual manifestations, our films through their stories, our elders & teachers through their teachings & life, our political leadership through example, all must become responsible to remove this problem. If a villager can cut a mountain, cannot each of us change the small social area around us?

10. Recommendations: The study is a brief one but still following recommendations can be made.

1-To overcome with the problem of kidnapping, special women police stations staffed with multidisciplinary female teams should be established for the women safety. The judiciary must become gender sensitive.

2-Gender violence, human rights and gender issues should be included in curriculum at elementary and secondary school, universities, colleges and other training institutes.

3-NGO's like women organizations should provide education and awareness programs regarding gender issues.

4-Use of media to build public awareness

5-Expand Involvement of corporate sector

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