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Unmasking the Epidemic: Violence Against Women in India

RANJEET KUMAR SINHA[1] AND SURABHI AMBASTHA[2]

ABSTRACT

This article explores the prevalence of violence against women in India, drawing on data from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) and published sources. It highlights the cultural, social, and economic factors contributing to this issue and emphasizes the need for urgent attention and collective action. The article concludes that addressing root causes, challenging societal norms, and promoting education and awareness are crucial for creating a safer society for women in India.

Keywords: *Violence against women, Prevalence, Cultural norms, solutions.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Violence against women is a grave global issue, with India being no exception. Despite efforts to address this societal menace, women in India continue to face various forms of violence, deeply rooted in cultural, social, and economic factors. This article delves into the alarming prevalence of violence against women in India, drawing upon data from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), as well as published news, journals, and articles. It aims to shed light on the magnitude of the problem and explore potential solutions to create a safer society for women.

II. THE PREVALENCE OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN INDIA

The NCRB data highlights the disconcerting reality of violence against women in India. According to the latest available data from 2021, crimes against women in India increased by 7.3% from the previous year. The reported incidents included rape, sexual assault, domestic violence, dowry deaths, acid attacks, and harassment, among others.

Rape, one of the most heinous crimes against women, continues to be a pressing concern. In 2021, the NCRB recorded 31,775 cases of rape, indicating an increase of 12.4% compared to the previous year. These numbers, however, represent only a fraction of the actual incidents, as many cases go unreported due to social stigma, fear, and lack of trust in the justice system.

[1] Author is a Law Graduate at B.N. Mandal University, Madhepura, India.
[2] Author is a Research Scholar at University Department of Botany, Ranchi University, Ranchi, India.

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Domestic violence, another pervasive form of abuse, affects countless women in India. The NCRB data reveals that incidents of cruelty by husbands and relatives increased by 6.3% in 2021. Disturbingly, 71.4% of married women reported facing some form of domestic violence during their lifetime, according to the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) conducted in 2019-20.

III. Factors Contributing to Violence Against Women

Violence against women in India is rooted in a complex interplay of social, cultural, and economic factors. Deep-seated patriarchal norms, gender inequality, and rigid social hierarchies perpetuate and normalize violence against women. The preference for male children, dowry-related conflicts, and the commodification of women all contribute to this grim reality.

Furthermore, societal attitudes that perpetuate victim-blaming and shaming create barriers to reporting incidents and seeking justice. Limited access to education, economic opportunities, and healthcare exacerbate the vulnerability of women, leaving them trapped in abusive situations without recourse.

IV. Addressing the Issue: Progress and Challenges

Recognizing the urgency of addressing violence against women, India has implemented various legal measures and initiatives. The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act of 2013 introduced significant changes to the legal framework, including the definition of new offenses, enhanced penalties, and the establishment of fast-track courts for rape cases. The Nirbhaya Fund was also created to support initiatives for women's safety and empowerment.

Nevertheless, challenges persist in implementing and enforcing these measures effectively. The slow pace of legal proceedings, inadequate police response, and a lack of sensitization within the justice system deter women from reporting crimes. Moreover, the persistence of regressive social norms and gender biases hampers the success of preventive initiatives.

V. Role of Media and Civil Society

Media and civil society play a crucial role in raising awareness, advocating for change, and holding authorities accountable. Numerous news reports, articles, and investigative journalism have shed light on cases of violence against women, creating public discourse and pressuring the government to take action.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and grassroots movements have also been instrumental in providing support services, promoting gender equality, and empowering

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women. They offer helplines, counseling, and legal aid, acting as a crucial safety net for survivors.

VI. Education and Awareness: Key to Prevention

Education and awareness are fundamental in challenging regressive mindsets and breaking the cycle of violence. Comprehensive sexuality education in schools, community awareness campaigns, and capacity-building programs for law enforcement officials can foster a more inclusive society that values gender equality and respects women's rights.

Furthermore, economic empowerment of women through skill development programs and entrepreneurship initiatives can enhance their agency and reduce their vulnerability to violence. Empowered women have the means to assert their rights, access resources, and make informed decisions about their lives.

VII. Conclusion

Violence against women in India remains a pressing issue that demands urgent attention. Through an understanding of the NCRB data, published news, journals, and articles, it is evident that this societal malaise stems from deeply ingrained cultural norms and systemic inequalities. While legal measures and initiatives have been introduced, their effective implementation and enforcement remain key challenges.

Creating a safer society for women requires a collective effort involving government, civil society, media, and individuals. By addressing the root causes, challenging societal norms, and promoting education and awareness, India can strive towards a future where women are free from the threat of violence and can live with dignity and equality.

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