

Dowry and Domestic Violence against Women in India

Mohammed Nabeel.K^{1*}, Dr. M. Sumathy²

¹ Ph.D Research Scholar, Junior Research Fellow, School of Commerce, Bharathiar University, Coimbatore, India.

² Professor & Head, School of Commerce, Bharathiar University, Coimbatore, India.

*Corresponding Author Email: ¹nabeelmohammed44@gmail.com

Abstract

Domestic violence is a serious human rights and public health issue, with physical and mental health implications. The five basic components of domestic violence in Indian contexts are emotional abuse, physical violence, sexual violence, honour killing, dowry-related abuse, and death. The purpose of this study is to investigate domestic violence experienced by Indian women, particularly as a result of dowry and associated difficulties. Secondary data from NCRB, NFHS, and NCM were used in the study. According to the survey, dowry is the leading cause of domestic violence against women in India. Dowry-related deaths in India are falling year after year, which is a good indicator. There is always a need to educate rural India about the negative aspects of dowry. Domestic violence is prevalent in our community, and it has unspoken consequences for a woman's economical well-being, physical and mental health, and, as a result, society as a whole.

Keywords

Domestic Violence, Dowry, Sexual Violence, Spousal Violence, Women empowerment.

INTRODUCTION

Domestic violence is defined as any act of gender-based violence that causes or is likely to cause bodily, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women. Dowry has been highlighted as a key driver of domestic violence in India, both among affluent families with high dowry expectations and among women from destitute families who are unable to satisfy dowry demands. Dowry has also been linked to sex-selective abortions and other types of gender-based abuse. Dowry is one of several cultural customs that subjugate women, frequently to the point of torture and death. Dowry is the amount of money that a bride is supposed to bring with her to her husband's family during the wedding and marriage. It can take the form of money, jewellery, household goods, and other commodities. Despite regional and ethnic differences, nearly every marriage in India involves dowry in some form. The financial reward to the groom's family is a critical part of the present practise of the dowry system in India. Dowry's demands are linked to a variety of acts of gender discrimination and abuse against women in Indian society. The dowry system and its abuses are complicated issues.

Dowry is one of the most crucial components of an arranged marriage, and it has the potential to make or break the partnership. This practise shows men's and women's unequal marital position. The amount of dowry demanded varies depending on a man's status, social standing, and education. The higher his ranking on these factors, the greater his dowry. The expectations of the community vary as well; some have a tradition of requesting larger dowries. Even after marriage, if the bride's dowry obligations are not met, she is returned to her parents' home. This is considered

dishonourable by the bride's family, but not by the groom's.

Dowry on women was prohibited in India in 1961 due to the significant violence faced by women and their families as a result of the practise (e.g., harassment, assault, and bride burning). However, the law was not implemented, and dowry, as well as the associated cruelty of women, continued to rise. Although not every person who uses the dowry system is also involved in domestic violence, there is widespread concern about the link between the two. When dowry demands are not met, serious consequences ensue. Domestic violence, which includes both physical and emotional abuse, is a common outcome.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

[4] Did a comprehensive review of 137 prior studies on domestic violence in India to identify potential research gaps in the current literature. According to the report, over 40% of women in India have suffered abuse and domestic violence. The researchers identified a research gap in the influence of domestic violence on physical health in their study. The study finds that further research on domestic violence is needed to have a better knowledge of the issues confronting women in India [9]

With the use of secondary data acquired from NFHS 4, [1] conducted research to assess the domestic violence experienced by women in India (National Family Health Survey of India 2015-16). To determine the impact of explanatory factors on spousal violence, the study used multilevel logistic regression. According to the report, around one-fourth of women in India experienced some kind of domestic abuse throughout the study period. Women who married at a younger age and had an age gap of 4 to 5 years with their husband's age, as well as women who have more

children, have experienced greater physical abuse than other women [5]. The study indicated that there is a great demand for women's empowerment through sensitization and education.

By conducting 15 semi-structured interviews with women aged 17 to 22, [6] investigated sexual assault against women in India and coping methods. According to the report, sexual assault is well-documented in India. As for coping methods, women often employ safety, avoidance, and empowerment [2].

Previous research has found a link between exposure to natural disasters or other severe events and an increase in domestic violence rates. [3] Did extensive research to investigate the impact of covid 19 on domestic violence. The survey discovered that since the lockdowns were adopted, there has been an upsurge in cases of violence against women throughout the world.

According to data released by the National Commission on Women (NCW) India in early April 2020, there has been a 100 per cent increase in complaints related to violence against women since the statewide restriction was implemented in March 2020. Loss of income, especially for men, leads to less control over economic stability, leading to greater influence over their wives; this situation is exacerbated when the female spouse is employed and the husband is unemployed. Sexual assault is also likely to increase during a restraint. Pornography consumption and the sale of condoms and sex toys have increased in India, indicating an increase in sexual activity and consequently an increase in the possibility of sexual rights violations.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The current study is both descriptive and analytical in nature. It makes use of secondary data gathered from the National Crime Records Bureau and the National Commission for Women and data gathered by the National Family Health Survey of India from 2015 to 2021.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table:1 Domestic Violence faced by the Women in India

Women Empowerment Indicator	NFHS 5 2019-21			NFHS 4 2015-16		
	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Total
Ever-married women aged 18-49 years who have ever experienced spousal violence (%)	24.2	31.6	29.3	25.3	34.1	31.1
Ever-married women aged 18-49 years who have experienced physical violence during any pregnancy (%)	2.5	3.4	3.1	3.4	4.1	3.9
Young women aged 18-29 years who experienced sexual violence by age (%)	1.1	1.6	1.5	NA	NA	NA

Source: NFHS Website

The National Family Health Survey of India found domestic violence against women in India during the

research period. According to the 5th NFHS, around 29.3 percent of women in India suffered domestic abuse during 2019-21. 3.1 percent of pregnant women experienced physical assault. Furthermore, 1.5 percent of women aged 18 to 29 had suffered sexual violence. According to the poll, domestic violence against women is more prevalent in rural regions than in urban ones.



Source: NFHS Website

According to figure 1, domestic violence against women is decreasing. Approximately 37% of women were subjected to domestic violence in 2005-06. It fell to 29.30 percent in 2019-21. Despite a decline in marital abuse, 29.30 percent of women in India are still victims of spousal violence.

Table:2 Number of Cases filed for violence against women

Reasons for filing cases	Number of Cases	Percentage
Right to Live with Dignity	6792	41.14
Dowry harassment/Dowry Death	2584	15.65
Police Apathy Against Women	2734	16.56
Violence Against Women	1636	9.91
Outraging Modesty of Women	939	5.69
Sexual Harassment including Sexual Harassment at Workplace	750	4.54
Cyber Crimes against Women	402	2.44
Right to Exercise Choice in Marriage	369	2.24
Bigamy/Polygamy	160	0.97
Stalking/Voyeurism	142	0.86
Total	16508	

Source: Annual Report 2018-19 National Commission for Women

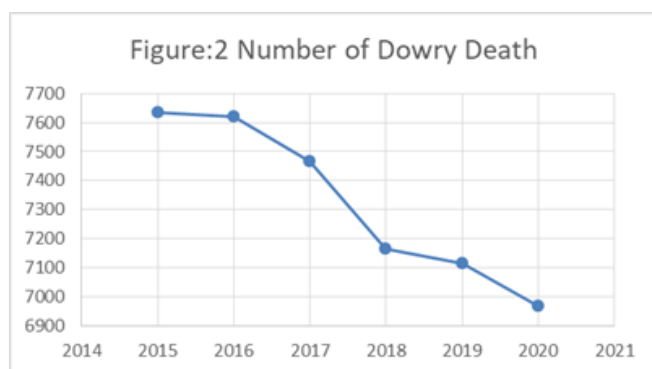
According to the National Commission for Women's annual report, a total of 16508 incidences of violence against women were reported for the fiscal year 2018-19. There was 41.14 percent of lawsuits filed for violations of the right to live in dignity. A total of 2584 dowry-related deaths and other dowry-related incidents were reported. In India, the number of incidences of police indifference is equally considerable.

Out of all cases submitted, 1656 percent are due to police indifference.

Table:3 Dowry Death in India

Year	Number of Death
2015	7634
2016	7621
2017	7466
2018	7166
2019	7115
2020	6966

Source: National Crime Records Bureau



Source: National Crime Records Bureau

Table 3 displays the overall number of dowry deaths in India from 2015 to 2020. Figure 2 shows that dowry-related deaths in India are decreasing year by year. In 2020, there were about 7,000 recorded dowry death cases in India. This was a gradual reduction from 2015, when the figure was at 7600. Despite being a crime, the dowry system has an open path in society since no one dares to take legal action against the family.

CONCLUSION

Despite the fact that many legislative measures have been put in place to improve the plight of women in the country, the problem of domestic violence remains one of the most pressing issues we face, especially in the context of industrialization, urbanization, and the growing cost of living. Domestic violence cannot be seen in isolation from other issues facing our society today, such as poverty, unemployment, population control and a lack of essential services for the majority of the population. Domestic violence is a complex issue rooted in a variety of socio-economic factors, including women's social position, illiteracy, poverty, drug abuse, and a variety of evil practices such as dowry and female feticide. As a result, it is unlikely that any solution that does not address all of these issues at once will have beneficial results. In order to have a visible impact and advocate for women's and children's rights, all stakeholders, including various government departments, law enforcement, the judiciary, women's and children's organizations, non-governmental organizations, the press and

professional bodies must work together in a coordinated and planned manner.

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