



CRIMES AGAINST WOMEN: A CONCEPTUAL APPROACH TOWARDS UNDERSTANDING CRIME IN INDIA.

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ABSTRACT

Every morning, we wake up to horrifying headlines, breaking news in the media related to victimization of Women in the form of rapes, assaults, molestations, murders, acid attacks etc. Women in the country have been feeling insecure, traumatized, scared and scarred for long periods of time. This results in anxiety, depression, post traumatic stress disorder and an overall threat to their mental health and well-being. According to the data reported by the National Crime Records Bureau, crimes against women have been more than double over the past decade, with 26 crimes reported every hour. The following research paper is undertaken to obtain a conceptual understanding into the phenomenon of crime, the various kinds of crimes that women are subjected to, the common thread underlying crimes against women and the possible prevention strategies that women can follow to safeguard themselves. The data obtained are secondary in nature and are being cited.

KEYWORDS : Crimes, Women, Media, India.

Introduction

According to the Merriam Webster Dictionary, a crime is an illegal act for which someone can be punished by the government; especially: a gross violation of law. The word crime is derived from the Latin root "cerno" meaning "I decide, I give judgment". Originally the Latin word "crimen" meant "charge" or "cry of distress."

Indian society has been a patriarchal, male-dominated society that sharply discriminates men and women with regard to power, status, roles. Women have been considered vulnerable, and have been subjected to suppression; oppression and their rights have been snatched away, violated from time immemorial. Women have been subject to various forms of violence such as rapes, sexual assaults, abuse (physical, emotional, psychological), domestic violence, honor killings (love jihads), acid attacks, genital mutilations, forced prostitution, trafficking etc.

The UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women states, "violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women" and "violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men."

The World Health Organization reports that violence against women puts an undue burden on health care services, as women who have suffered violence are more likely to need health services and at higher cost, compared to women who have not suffered violence.

Crimes against women are classified in the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and special and local laws.

Some of the crimes under the IPC are mentioned below:

- Rape (Section 376 IPC): Over the years there has been a trend of increasing number of cases being reported. 9.2% increase was reported in the year 2011 over the year 2010. Rape cases have been divided into two categories: Incest rape and other rapes. Delhi has often been addressed as the rape capital of India
- Kidnapping and abduction (Section 363-373 IPC): Delhi has shown the highest rate
- Dowry death (Section 302, 304B IPC) and Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961: Highest rate has been reported in Bihar
- Torture (Cruelty by Husband and Relatives of Husband) (Section 498-A IPC): The highest crime rate was reported in West Bengal
- Molestation (Section 354 IPC): Madhya Pradesh has reported the highest incident, and Kerala has reported the highest crime rate
- Sexual harassment (Section 509 IPC): Sexual harassment of women is a violation of the fundamental right of women to work in a safe environment.

• Need for the study:

Crimes are rampant in our society. Every hour, there are about 26 crimes reported. Our society has become extremely unsafe for women, leading to a whole array of emotional and psychological disturbances and dependence on males for safety and protection. In spite of being accompanied by males, there have been crimes committed against women. The shocking gang-rape case of Jyoti Singh also known as Nirbhaya is one example for the same. Cases of violence against women are steadily increasing in the country. According to the National Crime Record Bureau, India, there is one dowry death in the country every 78 hours, one act of sexual harassment every 59 minutes, one rape every 34 minutes, one act of torture every 12 minutes and almost one in every three married women experience domestic violence. These crimes are violations of serious magnitude and need public attention and concern. This research work is undertaken to understand the nature of these crimes, causes and possible prevention strategies.

Types of Crimes:

Rapes:

A rape is defined as non-consensual sex, wherein the perpetrator indulges in sexual intercourse without the consent of the victim in an attempt to obtain sexual gratification, thereby harming the victim. In most of the rapes, the offender is a known/familiar person to the victim, who wishes to seek revenge by engaging in sadistic non-consensual penetration. Rapes are of several types- such as **marital rape**; also known as spousal rape/ intimate partner sexual assault wherein sex is non-consensual between married couples; **date rape**-wherein the victim is raped by one's dating partner; **acquaintance rape**-wherein the offender is a familiar person/acquaintance to the victim; **gang rape**- wherein a victim is raped by more than one violator. The National Crime Records Bureau of India suggests a reported rape rate of 2 per 100,000 people, much lower than reported rape incidence rate in the local Indian media. Ever since December 2012, when Jyoti Singh, also addressed as "Nirbhaya"-India's fearless daughter was gang raped in New Delhi, the statistics of rapes reported in India have risen. The entire nation stood up against the issue to create awareness on violence against women.

Domestic violence:

Domestic violence is defined in India by the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act of 2005. According to Section 3 of the Act, "any act, omission or commission or conduct of the respondent shall constitute domestic violence in case it

1. harms or injures or endangers the health, safety, life, limb or well-being, whether mental or physical, of the aggrieved person or tends to do so and includes causing physical abuse, sexual abuse, verbal and emotional abuse and economic abuse;

- or
2. harasses, harms, injures or endangers the aggrieved person with a view to coerce her or any other person related to her to meet any unlawful demand for any dowry or other property or valuable security; or
 3. has the effect of threatening the aggrieved person or any person related to her by any conduct mentioned in clause (a) or clause (b); or
 4. otherwise injures or causes harm, whether physical or mental, to the aggrieved person

According to a National Family and Health Survey in 2015, total lifetime prevalence of domestic violence was 33.5% and 8.5% for sexual violence among women aged 15–49 years.

Honor killings:

A practice wherein an individual is killed by one's own family members because s/he is believed to have brought shame to the family/community by engaging in behaviors such as avoiding arranged marriage, being in love with an individual of another caste/religion/community, engaging in sexual relationships before marriage, extra-marital relationship, or engaging in homosexual relationship. Honor killings in India have grown by more than 796% from 2014 to 2015, according to latest crime data. While 28 murders were reported under this category in 2014, this number jumped to 251 in 2015, as per the National Crime Record Bureau statistics.

Acid attacks:

A form of violent attack wherein acid or corrosive material is thrown at a victim with an intention to disfigure, harm and kill. Sulfuric acid and nitric acid are usually used as they are highly concentrated and can burn skin tissues, cause everlasting marks/scars.

In 2013, section 326 A of Indian Penal Code was enacted by the Indian Parliament to ensure enhanced punishment for acid throwing.

Forced Prostitution:

In any given year, many thousands of young women and girls around the world are lured, abducted or sold into forced prostitution and involuntary marriage. They are bartered at prices that vary depending on their age, beauty and virginity, and exploited under conditions that amount to a modern form of slavery. Women and girls who have been trafficked can rarely escape or negotiate the conditions of their employment or marriage.

Female Genital mutilation (FGM):

Also known as female genital cutting and female circumcision, is the ritual cutting or removal of some or all of the external female genitalia. Typically carried out by a traditional circumciser using a blade, FGM is conducted from days after birth to puberty and beyond. In half the countries for which national figures are available, most girls are cut before the age of five. The practice is rooted in gender inequality, attempts to control women's sexuality, and ideas about purity, modesty and beauty. It is usually initiated and carried out by women, who see it as a source of honor, and who fear that failing to have their daughters and granddaughters cut will expose the girls to social exclusion. This practice is high in rural India.

Prevention of Crimes against Women

- Educating young boys and girls on respectful relationships by promoting gender equality.
- Self-defense programs, women empowerment programs to enable women understand issues pertaining to personal safety.
- Gender sensitization programs.
- Educating women regarding their rights and providing legal awareness.
- Community awareness programs using media, including social media.
- Mobilization and educational programs for all regarding long-term impact of violence and ways of eradicating crimes.
- Reducing substance abuse- as several crimes are committed

under the influence of illegal substances.

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