



Women Safety Matters: Addressing the Complexities and Violence Against Women

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Received: 15 Jul 2024; Received in revised form: 12 Aug 2024; Accepted: 17 Aug 2024; Available online: 24 Aug 2024

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Abstract— Violence against women is a pervasive global issue, affecting millions of lives. This paper examines the multifaceted nature of women's safety, exploring the types of violence, causes, effects, and consequences. Through a critical analysis of existing literature and case studies, this research highlights the sociocultural, economic, and political factors contributing to women's vulnerability. It also showcases innovative solutions, strategies, and initiatives aimed at preventing violence and promoting women's safety. By emphasizing the importance of education, community engagement, and policy reforms, this paper advocates for a comprehensive approach to address the complexities of violence against women. Ultimately, it calls for collective action to ensure women's safety, equality, and empowerment.



Keywords— Women's Empowerment, Gender Equality, Violence Against Women, Women's Safety, Gender-Based Violence, Women's Rights, Empowerment Initiatives, Gender Inequality, Women's Education, Economic Empowerment, Political Participation, Social Change, Gender Stereotypes, Women's Health, Human Rights.

I. INTRODUCTION

As the world becomes increasingly urban, gender-based violence in urban public spaces has become a growing phenomenon. With increasing population density, a diverse mix of people in cities, growing inequalities and lack of opportunities for a large proportion of disaffected youth, urban crime in general is on the rise. Violent Crimes against women are also increasing as part of this process.¹ Women's safety refers to the comprehensive and multidimensional protection of women and girls from various forms of harm, violence, and discrimination, encompassing:

1. Physical safety: Protection from physical harm, injury, or violence, including domestic abuse, sexual assault, and harassment.
2. Emotional safety: Freedom from emotional distress, psychological manipulation, and mental health impacts resulting from violence, abuse, or discrimination.
3. Psychological safety: Protection from mental health impacts, trauma, anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) arising from violence, abuse, or discrimination.
4. Sexual safety: Protection from sexual harassment, assault, exploitation, and abuse, including online and offline forms.
5. Economic safety: Protection from economic exploitation, financial abuse, and discrimination, ensuring access to resources, employment, and financial independence.
6. Social safety: Protection from social exclusion, marginalization, and discrimination based on gender, race, ethnicity, or other factors.
7. Digital safety: Protection from online harassment, cyberbullying, and digital exploitation.
8. Environmental safety: Protection from environmental hazards, natural disasters, and climate change impacts.
9. Institutional safety: Protection from systemic and institutional violence, discrimination, and abuse within public and private institutions.
10. Cultural safety: Protection from cultural exploitation, appropriation, and erasure, ensuring respect for diverse cultural identities and practices.

Current state of women's safety and the global issues regarding it could be divided into multiple sections:

Violence Against Women:
- 1 in 3 women experience physical or sexual violence worldwide (WHO, 2020)
- 38% of murders of women are committed by intimate partners (UNODC, 2018)
- 71% of human trafficking victims are women and girls (ILO, 2017)
Gender-Based Violence:
- 243 million women and girls experience sexual and/or physical violence by an intimate partner in the past year (WHO, 2020)
- 82% of women experience online harassment (Pew Research Centre, 2020)
Femicide:
-50,000+ women killed by intimate partners or family members annually (UNODC, 2018)
Sexual Harassment:
-60% of women experience sexual harassment in public spaces (UN Women, 2019)
Reproductive Rights:
- 214 million women lack access to modern contraception (WHO, 2020)
- 25 million unsafe abortions occur annually (WHO, 2020)
Economic Inequality:
- Women earn 23% less than men globally (ILO, 2020)
- 70% of women work in informal or precarious jobs (ILO, 2020)
Education and Healthcare:
- 132 million girls out of school worldwide (UNESCO, 2020)
- 1 in 5 women lack access to healthcare (WHO, 2020)
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Conflict and Humanitarian Crises:
- Women and girls disproportionately affected by conflict, displacement, and humanitarian crises
- 70% of refugees are women and children (UNHCR, 2020)
Legal Protections:
- 46 countries lack laws protecting women from domestic violence (UN Women, 2020)
- 18 countries allow marital rape (UN Women, 2020)

Women's safety demands a transformative approach: intersectional empowerment, community-led initiatives, and policy reforms tackling root causes, not just symptoms.

Research and interventions on security in cities has also highlighted the fact that women feel more unsafe and insecure than men. It has been widely recognised that this sense of insecurity affects women's everyday life, restricting their personal freedom and access to public and private spaces in the city associated with employment, health, education, and political and recreational facilities. While all women might face safety and insecurity concerns, women in low-income communities in developing countries are considered to face. (Moser 2012)

II. TYPES OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN GLOBALLY

1. Physical Violence:
- Domestic abuse (e.g., intimate partner violence)
- Sexual assault (e.g., rape, molestation)
- Acid attacks (e.g., Bangladesh, India)
- Female genital mutilation (FGM) (e.g., Africa, Middle East)
<u>Indian example:</u> The Nirbhaya case (2012) – a brutal gang rape in Delhi that sparked widespread protests.
<u>International example:</u> The #MeToo movement (2017) – a global movement against sexual harassment and assault, starting in the United States.
2. Emotional/Psychological Violence:
- Verbal abuse (e.g., name-calling, insults)
- Emotional blackmail
<u>Indian example:</u> The case of Hadiya, a Kerala woman who faced emotional abuse and forced conversion to Islam.
<u>International example:</u> The case of Britney Spears, an American singer who faced emotional abuse and conservatorship.
3. Sexual Violence:
-Rape (e.g., stranger rape, acquaintance rape)
- Sexual harassment (e.g., workplace, public)
- Gaslighting
- Stalking (e.g., online, offline)
- Online sexual exploitation (e.g., revenge porn, sextortion)
<u>Indian example:</u> The #MeToo movement in India (2018) highlighted sexual harassment cases in Bollywood, media, and other industries.

<u>International example:</u> The Harvey Weinstein scandal (2017) – a series of sexual assault allegations against the American film producer.
4. Economic Violence:
- Financial abuse (e.g., controlling access to money)
- Property rights denial
- Economic exploitation (e.g., forced labour)
<u>Indian example:</u> The case of Lakshmi Agarwal, an acid attack survivor who faced economic abuse by her husband.
<u>International example:</u> The case of forced labour in Qatar (2020) – migrant workers faced economic exploitation and abuse.
5. Digital Violence:
- Online harassment (e.g., trolling, cyberbullying)
- Revenge porn
- Sextortion
- Online stalking
<u>Indian example:</u> The case of Dhanya Rajendran, a journalist who faced online harassment and trolling.
<u>International example:</u> The case of Gamergate (2014) – a controversy surrounding online harassment of women in the gaming industry.
6. Institutional Violence:
- Systemic violence (e.g., police brutality, judicial bias)
- Healthcare violence (e.g., forced sterilization)
- Education violence (e.g., discrimination, harassment)
<u>Indian example:</u> The case of Rohith Vemula, a Dalit student who faced institutional violence and discrimination at Hyderabad University.
<u>International example:</u> The case of police brutality against African Americans in the United States (e.g., George Floyd, 2020).
7. Cultural Violence:
- Honor killings (e.g., Pakistan, India)
- Dowry-related violence (e.g., India)
- Forced marriages
- Female infanticide
<u>Indian example:</u> The case of Qandeel Baloch, a Pakistani woman who faced honor killing by her brother.
<u>International example:</u> The case of forced marriages in Afghanistan (2020) – women faced cultural violence and oppression.

8. Medical Violence:
- Forced sterilization
- Denial of medical care
- Medical experimentation without consent
<u>Indian example:</u> The RG medical case (2024) - a resident doctor at RG Kar Medical College and Hospital in Kolkata was raped and murdered, highlighting the issue of medical violence against women.
<u>International example:</u> The case of forced sterilization of indigenous women in Canada (2019) - a report revealed widespread medical violence and abuse.

III. CAUSES AND RISK FACTORS IN WOMEN SAFETY

Violence against women is a complex, pervasive issue affecting millions worldwide. Despite efforts to address it, women and girls continue to face significant risks. Understanding the individual, relationship, community, and societal factors that contribute to this issue is crucial to developing effective prevention, intervention, and support strategies, and creating a safer, more equitable world.

Individual Factors

1. Gender: Being a woman or girl increases the risk of violence and abuse.
2. Age: Younger women and girls are more vulnerable to violence and abuse.
3. Socioeconomic status: Women from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to experience violence and abuse.
4. Education: Women with lower levels of education are more vulnerable to violence and abuse.
5. Disability: Women with disabilities are more likely to experience violence and abuse.

Relationship Factors:

1. Intimate partner violence: Women in abusive relationships are at higher risk of violence and abuse.
2. Family dynamics: Women from dysfunctional families or those with a history of violence are more vulnerable to violence and abuse.
3. Social isolation: Women who are socially isolated or have limited social support networks are more vulnerable to violence and abuse.

Community Factors:

1. Cultural and social norms: Communities with patriarchal norms and attitudes that condone violence against women increase the risk of violence and abuse.

2. Lack of community resources: Communities with limited resources, such as law enforcement, healthcare, and social services, can increase the risk of violence and abuse.

3. High crime rates: Communities with high crime rates increase the risk of violence and abuse.

Societal Factors:

1. Patriarchal society: Societies with deep-rooted patriarchal attitudes and norms increase the risk of violence and abuse against women.

2. Gender inequality: Societies with significant gender inequality increase the risk of violence and abuse against women.

3. Lack of policies and laws: Societies without adequate policies and laws to protect women from violence and abuse increase the risk of violence and abuse.

4. Media representation: Societies with media representation that objectifies or degrades women increase the risk of violence and abuse.

Other risk factors include:

1. Substance abuse
2. Mental health issues
3. Previous experiences of violence or abuse
4. Being a refugee or migrant
5. Being LGBTQ+

IV. EFFECTS AND CONSEQUENCES

Global women's issues have far-reaching, devastating consequences, affecting every aspect of women's lives, perpetuating poverty, poor health, social isolation, and economic dependence. These issues hinder economic growth, entrench harmful norms, and undermine human rights. Urgent collective action is needed to address these problems and create a more just, equitable, and sustainable world. Some of the consequences include:

1. Physical and Mental Impacts

Physical and emotional harm: Violence, abuse, and exploitation can lead to physical injuries, mental health issues, and emotional trauma.

2. Social and Economic Impacts.

Social isolation: Women who experience violence or discrimination may become socially isolated, leading to reduced social support networks.

Poor health outcomes: Limited access to healthcare, inadequate reproductive health services, and exposure to violence can lead to poor health outcomes.

Limited access to education and employment: Discrimination and bias can restrict women's access to education and job opportunities, perpetuating cycles of poverty.

Reduced economic growth: Gender-based discrimination and violence can hinder economic growth, as women's contributions are undervalued or marginalized.

Political disenfranchisement: Women's exclusion from political decision-making processes can perpetuate gender-based discriminations.

3. Long Term Consequences

Intergenerational trauma: Trauma experienced by women can be passed down to future generations, perpetuating cycles of violence.

Human rights violations: Women's rights violations can undermine human rights and fundamental freedoms.

V. SOLUTION AND STRATEGIES FOR SAFETY PURPOSES

Addressing women's and girls' issues requires a collaborative, multifaceted approach that tackles root causes, not just symptoms. By combining education, economic empowerment, policy reform, community mobilization, and technology, we can create a comprehensive framework for progress that prioritizes women's voices, promotes gender equality, and fosters inclusivity. Together, we can unlock women's and girls' potential, driving transformative impact and shaping a brighter future.

Some specific strategies for promoting women's safety include the following (extracted from *Mehrotra 2010, Women in Cities International 2010, and UN-Habitat 2008*):

- Develop women's networks and partnerships: Women's networks and partnerships include collectives, NGOs, forums, and virtual communities that operate at different (international, national, local, community) levels. They work on a range of issues related to women's safety such as education, employment, health, and gender-based violence. They focus on a variety of issues such as knowledge production and exchange, community mobilisation and advocacy, public education, mediation, and capacity-building. Prominent networks and partnerships on women's safety include women in Cities International, Red Mujeres y Habitat, the Huairou Commission, and jagori.

- Guarantee women's right to the city: Approaches aim to strengthen women's 'right to the city', thereby empowering them. This includes helping them to improve their levels of civic participation that provide them with a greater feeling

of security and safety. A rights-based approach to women's safety highlights the fact that women should have the right to access land and housing, be protected from homelessness and forced eviction, have the right to freely and safely move within cities, and receive access to basic services such as water, sanitation, and hygiene. In Asia, for instance, the women's network Jagori is an organisation with a rights-based approach that focuses on water and service provision for women. In order to ensure the right to free and safe movement in cities, many cities have launched women-only buses and taxi services.

- **Women's safety audits:** Women's safety audits are one of the major methods of promoting women's safety. They rely on participatory tools, similar to participatory rural appraisals, in which a group of women walk through a physical environment, evaluating how safe it feels to them and identifying solutions of increasing safety. This approach is used world-wide by women's groups to improve women's safety.

- **Gender-responsive budgeting:** Similar to participatory budgeting, gender-responsive budgeting is used by municipalities in many countries to sensitise elected officials about the specific needs of women. Involving women in municipal budgeting processes increases their capacity to participate in public decision-making processes.

- **Economic development for women:** Many policy and programmatic initiatives aim to generate economic opportunities for women, such as providing them with training to increase their chances of employability, ensuring that jobs match women's specific needs, and recognising that women should receive economic support in the informal sector.

VI. CASE STUDIES AND EXAMPLES

Real change for women and girls requires effective solutions. This collection of global case studies showcases successful initiatives, offering lessons and inspiration for advancing gender equality through collective action and innovation.

International:

1. **Rwanda's Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Program:** A comprehensive program that has reduced GBV cases by 50% through community mobilization, education, and legal support.
2. **The Global Fund for Women:** A organization that provides grants and support to women-led organizations, advancing women's rights and gender equality worldwide.
3. **UN Women's HeForShe Campaign:** A global movement engaging men and boys in promoting

gender equality and ending violence against women.

Indian:

1. **Self-Help Groups (SHGs) for Women:** A government initiative empowering rural women through microfinance, education, and entrepreneurship opportunities.
2. **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP):** A government program addressing declining child sex ratio and promoting girls' education.
3. **One Stop Centre (OSC) Scheme:** A government initiative providing integrated support services for women survivors of violence.
4. **Kudumbashree:** A Kerala-based program empowering women through microfinance, entrepreneurship, and community leadership.
5. **Apnalaya:** An NGO working in Mumbai slums, providing education, healthcare, and livelihood support to women and children.
6. **SEWA (Self-Employed Women's Association):** A Gujarat-based organization promoting women's economic empowerment through entrepreneurship and microfinance.

These case studies demonstrate effective solutions and strategies addressing various aspects of women's empowerment and gender equality.

VII. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, violence against women and global women's issues are complex and interconnected problems that require a multifaceted approach to solve. Education, economic empowerment, policy reform, community mobilization, and technological innovation are crucial strategies for addressing these issues. Successful initiatives and programs, such as those in Rwanda, India, and globally, demonstrate the power of collective action and collaborative effort in advancing gender equality and empowering women. By learning from these examples and working together, we can create a more just and equitable world where women and girls can thrive, free from violence and discrimination. Ultimately, a sustainable future depends on the full participation and empowerment of women, and it is our collective responsibility to make this vision a reality.

To further fight the problems and provide women's safety day and night, a multi-faceted approach is necessary. This includes educating and raising awareness about gender equality and women's rights, supporting women-led initiatives, and encouraging male allies to become active advocates. Strengthening laws and policies, improving

public spaces with adequate lighting and surveillance, and increasing women's representation in decision-making roles are also crucial. Additionally, providing accessible resources like helplines and shelters, fostering a culture of respect, and leveraging technology like safety apps can enhance women's safety. Ultimately, a sustained and collective effort from individuals, communities, and societies is required to create a safe and equitable environment for women.

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