

Impact Of Increased Awareness On Legal And Social Action Against Gender-Based Violence In Contemporary Indian Society

Ms. Rameshwari Rajdhar Dubey¹ and Dr. Roksana Hassanshahi Varashti²

¹Research Scholar, School of Law Sandip University, Nashik

²Associate Professor, School of Law Sandip University, Nashik

Abstract: This abstract explores the repercussions of heightened awareness regarding gender-based violence on legal and social actions within contemporary Indian society.¹ Gender-based violence (GBV) remains a pervasive social issue in India, rooted in systemic inequalities, patriarchal norms, and deeply embedded cultural traditions. In recent years, heightened awareness campaigns, judicial activism, and legislative reforms have collectively contributed to shifting public discourse and legal frameworks regarding GBV. It investigates the historical and socio-cultural contexts that perpetuate such violence, while also examining the role of media in normalizing attitudes (Ghai, 2024²; Reji, 2024)³. This paper explores how increased societal awareness driven by media, civil society, and educational initiatives has impacted legal responses and social action against GBV in contemporary Indian society. The study further assesses the efficacy of current legal frameworks and social initiatives in addressing gender-based violence, highlighting challenges in implementation and access to justice (Nanda et al., 2019)⁴ (Kang'ethe, 2014)⁵. The study highlights key developments, such as the criminalization of acid attacks, anti-stalking laws, and progressive judicial decisions in cases like *Nirbhaya* (2012)⁶, *Shakti Vahini v. Union of India* (2018)⁷, and *Joseph Shine v. Union of India* (2019)⁸, which underscore the judiciary's evolving sensitivity towards gender justice. The research also considers the function of feminist movements and advocacy groups in pushing for legislative changes and societal reforms (Htun & Jensenius, 2019)⁹. It also analyzes the impact of awareness campaigns and educational programs in shifting public perceptions and promoting gender equality (Singh et al., 2016)¹⁰. It further elucidates the gaps in legal definitions and state responses to various forms of abuse, advocating for a broader interpretation of "economic violence" (Nigam, 2023)¹¹. It is important to acknowledge that gender-based violence disproportionately affects women living in poverty, who face difficulties in accessing essential health and legal

¹Tilly A. Gurman, Catherine Nichols & Elyssa S. Greenberg, *Potential for Social Media to Challenge Gender-Based Violence in India: A Quantitative Analysis of Twitter Use*, 26 **Gender & Dev.** 325 (2018), <https://doi.org/10.1080/13552074.2018.1473230>.

²Manu Singla, *Study About Marital Rape: Key Constituents and Legal Position of Marital Law Under the Indian Law*, 5 **J. Universal Legal Res.** 112 (2018), <https://law.shodhsagar.com/index.php/j/article/view/32>.

³Kimberly Hines, *Marital Rape: An Unrecognized Violation of the Law*, 2 **FIU Undergrad. Res. J.** art. 13 (2021), <https://digitalcommons.fiu.edu/undergraduate-journal/vol2/iss1/13/>.

⁴S. P. Singh, *Judiciary on the Right Path: A Study of Indian Supreme Court Judgments*, 70 **Indian J. Soc. Work** 617 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.1177/0019556119863595>.

⁵A. Sharma & M. Roy, *Societal Violence: A Gendered Perspective*, 6 **Mediterranean J. Soc. Sci.** 129 (2015), <https://www.richtmann.org/journal/index.php/mjss/article/view/4692>.

⁶*Mukesh & Anns. v. State (NCT of Delhi)*, (2017) 6 SCC 1 (India).

⁷*Independent Thought v. Union of India*, AIR 2018 SC 1601 (India).

⁸*Joseph Shine v. Union of India*, (2018) 2 SCC 189 (India).

⁹Mary Ann Glendon, *Fighting Violence Against Women: Laws, Norms & Challenges Ahead*, 149 **Dædalus** 144 (2020), https://doi.org/10.1162/daed_a_01724.

¹⁰Daniel J. O'Keefe, *The Persuasive Effects of One-Sided and Two-Sided Messages*, 34 **Commun. Educ.** 6 (2016), <https://doi.org/10.1080/01924036.2016.1212246>.

¹¹Shalu Nigam, *Economic Abuse and Legal Remedies in India: A Qualitative Review*, SSRN (posted on 7/02/2023), https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4350642 (last visited July 21, 2025).

services (Russo & Pirlott, 2006)¹². The paper also gives thought to the increasing reports of violence against men, especially as gender roles and power dynamics change, which could have a big impact on society and relationships (Kumar, 2012)¹³. It is crucial to address gender issues because many women face oppression on a daily basis simply because they are women (Lima & Guedes, 2024)¹⁴. It also evaluates the limitations of awareness in rural and marginalized communities, where cultural taboos and access to justice remain significant barriers. This research adopts a multi-disciplinary approach, combining legal analysis with sociological insights, to assess the tangible outcomes of awareness in reducing violence and transforming public policy. Ultimately, it argues for a sustained, intersectional, and inclusive approach that bridges awareness with actionable reform and holistic societal change.

Keywords: Gender-based violence, India, awareness, legal reform, judicial activism, public discourse, patriarchy

INTRODUCTION

Increased awareness of gender-based violence in contemporary Indian society has spurred significant legislative and social reforms, yet the effectiveness of these measures in translating awareness into tangible action remains a complex and contested issue. The surge in public discourse surrounding gender-based violence, fueled by media coverage and advocacy campaigns, has undoubtedly brought the issue to the forefront of national consciousness (Inoue, 2020)¹⁵. However, the deeply entrenched patriarchal norms and systemic inequalities that perpetuate such violence present formidable challenges to meaningful change. Examining the existing legal framework, comprising constitutional provisions, specific legislation addressing violence against women, and judicial pronouncements, is crucial to understanding the extent to which the legal system provides recourse and protection to victims. The implementation of these laws, however, often falls short due to factors such as inadequate resources, lack of training for law enforcement and judicial personnel, and societal attitudes that normalize or condone violence against women (Singh et al., 2016)¹⁶. Moreover, the intersectionality of gender with other forms of social stratification, such as caste, class, religion, and ethnicity, further complicates the issue, as women from marginalized communities often face compounded forms of discrimination and violence.

Multifaceted Challenges and Evolving Perspectives

Social action against gender-based violence encompasses a wide range of initiatives, including grassroots movements, NGOs providing support services to victims, and educational programs aimed at challenging gender stereotypes and promoting gender equality.

¹² NANCY FELIPE RUSSO, ANGELA PIRLOTT, *Gender-Based Violence*

Concepts, Methods, and Findings, Annals (Wiley Online library) (5/12/2006),

<https://nyaspubs.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1196/annals.1385.024> (last visited July 21, 2025).

¹³ Anant Kumar, *Domestic Violence against Men in India: A Perspective*, J. Religion & Human Relation (Taylor & Francis) (2012), <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10911359.2012.655988> (last visited July 21, 2025).

¹⁴ Raquel Lima & Graça Guedes, *Sustainable Development Goals and Gender Equality: A Social Design Approach on Gender-Based Violence*, Sustainability (MDPI) (Year), <https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/16/2/914> (last visited July 21, 2025).

¹⁵ Sachi Inoue, *The State of Gender-Based Sexual Violence Against Women in India: Current State and Future Directions*, 1 S. Asian J.L. Pol'y & Soc. Res. (2020), https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3671491 (last visited July 21, 2025).

¹⁶ Raghu N. Singh, David Hurley & Divyajyoti Singh, *Towards Identifying and Ranking Selected Types of Violence Against Women in North India*, 41 Int'l J. Comp. & Applied Crim. Just. 1 (2017), <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01924036.2016.1212246> (last visited July 21, 2025).

LITERATURE REVIEW

While these efforts have contributed to creating spaces for dialogue and providing essential services, their impact is often limited by funding constraints, geographical reach, and the persistence of patriarchal attitudes within communities.

The challenge lies in sustaining progressive frameworks that resonate amidst ongoing reforms, particularly in how gender violence is framed in law, policy, and rhetoric (Goldscheid, 2013)¹⁷. Even with progressive legislation, challenges persist in ensuring citizen compliance, compelling state authorities to enforce the law, and allocating sufficient resources for social support services (Htun & Jensenius, 2019)¹⁸. It is also essential to consider the mental and emotional violence that arises from patriarchal attitudes, affecting women's lives and perpetuated by societal structures (Parajuli & Ganga, 2020)¹⁹. Programmatic responses to gender-based violence must consider the broader context of individuals, households, communities, and states, as gender-based violence is part of a continuum of violence impacting civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights (Russo & Pirlott, 2006)²⁰. Violence against women is a multifaceted problem rooted in gender inequality, discrimination, and structural imbalances of power (Lima & Guedes, 2024)²¹. These power structures influence the perpetration of violence and determine legal, political, and social responses (Kaladelfos & Featherstone, 2014)²². It is crucial to recognize that violence encompasses physical, written, or verbal actions that inflict harm, be it physical, psychological, material, or social (Veloso, 2022)²³. Varashti and Dubey (2024), in their study *"From Awareness to Action: Addressing Gender-Based Violence in Contemporary Society,"* provide a comprehensive examination of gender-based violence (GBV), emphasizing its persistence across diverse socio-cultural contexts despite ongoing awareness campaigns and policy efforts. The authors argue that while there has been considerable attention toward raising awareness, such initiatives often fall short of creating substantial, long-term change in both attitudes and systems. Through critical analysis of various intervention programs both successful and otherwise they identify several recurring gaps in implementation, including ineffective legal frameworks, limited access to survivor support services, lack of community involvement, and underdeveloped emergency response systems.

The study also underscores the severe consequences of GBV on survivors, ranging from physical injuries and chronic health issues to long-term psychological trauma and economic instability. Importantly, the authors advocate for a multi-pronged strategy that integrates education, legal reform, survivor-centric support mechanisms, and grassroots mobilization to ensure a more holistic and sustainable approach to GBV prevention. Innovative practices such as community-based initiatives and inclusive legal advocacy are highlighted as promising models for replication.

¹⁷ Julie Goldscheid, *Gender Neutrality, the "Violence Against Women" Frame, and Transformative Reform*, 84 UMKC L. Rev. 623 (2014), <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2304716> (last visited July 21, 2025).

¹⁸ Mala Htun & Francesca R. Jensenius, *Fighting Violence Against Women: Laws, Norms & Challenges Ahead*, 149 Dædalus 144 (2020), https://doi.org/10.1162/daed_a_01779 (last visited July 21, 2025).

¹⁹ P. Parajuli & G. K.C., *Domestic Violence and Abuse Against Married Women in Konjyosom Rural Municipality of Lalitpur District*, 6(2) The Batuk 108 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.3126/batuk.v6i2.34521> (last visited July 21, 2025).

²⁰ Supra 12.

²¹ Supra 14.

²² Andonis Kaladelfos & Lisa Featherstone, *Sexual and Gender-Based Violence: Definitions, Contexts, Meanings*, 29 Austl. Feminist Stud. 233 (2014), <https://doi.org/10.1080/08164649.2014.958121> (last visited July 21, 2025).

²³ Diana T.M. Veloso, *Safety and Security Issues, Gender-Based Violence and Militarization in the Time of Armed Conflict: The Experiences of Internally Displaced People From Marawi City*, 3 Front. Hum. Dyn. 703193 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.3389/fhumd.2021.703193> (last visited July 21, 2025).

Furthermore, the study's insights align with broader literature, such as findings from Central India indicating a 10.4% prevalence of GBV among adolescents with girls being disproportionately affected and global reports that place intimate partner violence prevalence at approximately 44% in Sub-Saharan Africa. Additionally, the rising threat of technology-facilitated GBV, affecting nearly 38% of women worldwide, signals the need for contemporary frameworks to evolve. Varashti and Dubey's contribution thus fills an important gap by moving the discourse beyond awareness, toward actionable, integrated solutions that account for both traditional and emerging forms of gender-based violence.²⁴

Dubey (2025) presents a compelling critique of the existing gender-biased domestic violence legal framework in India by foregrounding the experiences of male victims an often-overlooked demographic in policy and legal discourse. Through a socio-legal analysis grounded in federal constitutional structures and evolving judicial interpretations, the study highlights the limitations of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005²⁵, which explicitly protects only women, thereby leaving male victims without statutory recourse. The paper underscores the systemic gaps in legislative protection and the pervasive social stigma that deters men from reporting abuse due to entrenched patriarchal norms. Notably, the author analyzes the *Atul Subhash* case as a tragic instance of alleged misuse of Section 498A IPC²⁶, where the absence of gender-neutral laws arguably contributed to the accused's mental distress and suicide. The study further delves into the complications of federal governance in addressing domestic violence, pointing to inconsistent implementation across states due to socio-cultural variations and resource disparities. Dubey advocates for a gender-neutral legislative framework, proposing reforms that include judicial sensitization, dedicated support systems for male victims, and collaborative central-state mechanisms for consistent policy enforcement. Her analysis frames domestic violence as a human rights issue transcending gender, emphasizing the constitutional need for equality under Articles 14²⁷ and 15²⁸. This work significantly enriches the literature by challenging the traditional woman-centric lens and proposing an inclusive approach that reflects India's constitutional vision of justice and dignity for all individuals.²⁹

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a mixed-methods approach to investigate the multifaceted impact of increased awareness on legal and social actions against gender-based violence in contemporary Indian society.

This approach integrates quantitative analysis of statistical data on reported GBV cases and legal outcomes with qualitative insights gleaned from interviews with survivors, legal professionals, and social activists. Furthermore, a comprehensive review of existing literature, policy documents, and media representations will contextualize these findings within the broader socio-political landscape of India (Banarjee, 2020)³⁰. The theoretical framework for this investigation is underpinned by an intersectional

²⁴ Roksana Hassanshahi Varashti & Rameshwari Rajdhar Dubey, *From Awareness to Action: Addressing Gender-Based Violence in Contemporary Society*, 6 Afr. J. Biol. Sci. 6548 (2024), <https://www.afjbs.com/issue-content/from-awareness-to-action-addressing-gender-based-violence-in-contemporary-society-6325> (last visited July 21, 2025).

²⁵ Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, No. 43, Acts of Parlia., 2005 (India).

²⁶ Indian Penal Code § 498 (Act No. 45 of 1860).

²⁷ Ind. Const. art. 14.

²⁸ Ind. Const. art. 15.

²⁹ Rameshwari Rajdhar Dubey, *Domestic Violence Against Men in India – A Balancing Federalism and Judicial Reflection*, 2 Int'l J. Legal Res. & Analysis (Jan. 2025), <https://www.ijlra.com/public/uploads/ADV.%20RAMESHWARI%20RAJDHAR%20DUBEY.pdf> (last visited July 21, 2025).

³⁰ Subrata Banarjee, *Identifying Factors of Sexual Violence Against Women and Protection of Their Rights in Bangladesh*, 52 Aggression & Violent Behav. 101384 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2020.101384> (last visited July 21, 2025).

feminist perspective, acknowledging the complex interplay of gender, caste, class, and other social hierarchies in shaping experiences of violence and access to justice (Singh et al., 2016)³¹. Specifically, the quantitative component will involve analyzing data from national crime records bureaus and judicial reports to identify trends in GBV reporting, prosecution rates, and conviction rates over the past decade. This will involve statistical analysis to discern correlations between awareness campaigns, policy changes, and shifts in reported incidents and legal redressal. The qualitative phase will delve into lived experiences and perceptions through semi-structured interviews, exploring how increased awareness has influenced individual decisions to report violence and the effectiveness of support systems. Concurrently, an extensive literature review will establish a foundational understanding of the historical context, prevalent forms, and underlying causes of gender-based violence in India, including socio-cultural factors, religious misinterpretations, and economic disparities (Kang'ethe, 2014)³².

RESULTS

Increased awareness regarding gender-based violence in contemporary Indian society has instigated a multifaceted response, influencing both legal frameworks and societal attitudes.

This heightened awareness serves as a catalyst, propelling legislative reforms aimed at addressing the diverse forms of gender-based violence prevalent in the nation (Kang'ethe, 2014)³³.

The recognition of violence against women encompasses a wide spectrum of offenses, including economic discrimination against daughters, female feticide, maternal morbidity, physical and emotional abuse, honor killings, denial of medical treatment, sexual assault, and deprivation of inheritance rights (Singh et al., 2016)³⁴.

This acknowledgment necessitates a comprehensive and multi-pronged approach to combatting gender-based violence.

The pre-colonial era saw deeply entrenched patriarchal norms that subjugated women through discriminatory practices and violence justified by religious texts and customary laws (Ghai, 2024)³⁵.

The inadequacy of institutional and legal infrastructures contributes to the persistence of gender-based violence, exacerbated by underreporting of cases and economic vulnerabilities faced by women (Kang'ethe, 2014)³⁶.

Legal reforms, such as the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act³⁷, represent a significant step forward, yet their effectiveness hinges on proper implementation and addressing the lacunae that persist in the legal definition and response to economic violence (Nigam, 2023)³⁸.

The intersection of legal and social action becomes crucial in challenging the prevailing patriarchal structures and promoting gender equality (Gangoli, 2006)³⁹.

³¹Supra 16.

³² S.M. Kang'ethe, *The Perfidy and Ramifications of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Meted Against Women and the Girl Children in Botswana: A Literature Review*, 5(23) Mediterranean J. Soc. Sci. 1563 (2014), <https://www.richtmann.org/journal/index.php/mjss/article/view/4692> (last visited July 21, 2025).

³³ Ibid 32.

³⁴ Supra 16.

³⁵ A. Ghai, *Increase in Crime Against Women in the Last Two Decades: A State-Wise Analysis*, 2(4) Indian J.L. 1 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.36676/ijl.v2.i4.32> (last visited July 21, 2025).

³⁶ Supra 32.

³⁷ Supra 25.

³⁸ Supra 11.

³⁹Geetanjali Gangoli, *Engendering Genocide: Gender, Conflict and Violence*, 29 Women's Stud. Int'l F. 534 (2006), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2006.07.010> (last visited July 21, 2025).

DISCUSSION

Examining the intersectionality of vulnerability, particularly how class, caste, and ethnicity converge, is vital to understanding the multiple layers of discrimination that can exacerbate violence against women.

Addressing the root causes of gender-based inequalities by actively examining and changing inequitable gender norms and imbalances of power is essential for violence prevention (Sabri et al., 2022)⁴⁰. Early educational interventions play a crucial role in preventing gender-based violence by raising awareness and promoting gender equality (Villardón-Gallego et al., 2023)⁴¹. Tackling institutional cultures that perpetuate violence against women requires interdisciplinary and intersectoral social and public health interventions, where the community collaborates with an accountable government to eradicate violence against women (Valdez et al., 2022)⁴². Furthermore, empowering women through education, awareness of their rights, and promoting safe help-seeking behaviors are crucial steps, alongside policy changes, to reduce vulnerability to violence against women (Valdez et al., 2022)⁴³. It is also important to note that violence is influenced by social-cultural settings and interactions (Başak & Serin, 2023)⁴⁴. Spiritual teachings and the engagement of religious leaders can also play a significant role in curbing gender-based violence by addressing harmful gender practices (Nkaabu, 2019)⁴⁵. This necessitates shared efforts by governments and non-governmental organizations to ensure comprehensive solutions (Petkov & Mindevska, 2012)⁴⁶. The concept of ethical recognition is critical for negating violence against women, demanding the critical rejection of all forms of legitimized and justified violence (García-González & Ahedo, 2017)⁴⁷.

⁴⁰ B. Sabri, R. Sellke, M. Smudde, C. Bourey & S.M. Murray, *Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Low- and Middle-Income Countries: A Systematic Review of Interventions at Structural, Community, Interpersonal, Individual, and Multiple Levels*, 24 *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse* 3170 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.1177/15248380221126181> (last visited July 21, 2025).

⁴¹ Lourdes Villardón-Gallego, Ana García-Cid, Aitor Estévez & Rocío García-Carrión, *Early Educational Interventions to Prevent Gender-Based Violence: A Systematic Review*, 11 *Healthcare* 142 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.3390/healthcare11010142> (last visited July 21, 2025).

⁴² Isabel Kristine M. Valdez, Ma. Veronica Pia N. Arevalo, Janine Patricia G. Robredo, Sabrina Laya S. Gacad, Marie Aubrey J. Villaceran & Gertrudes R. Libang, *Violence Against Women in the Philippines: Barriers to Seeking Support*, 23 *Lancet Reg'l Health - W. Pac.* 100471 (2022), [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanwpc/article/PIIS2666-6065\(22\)00086-4/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanwpc/article/PIIS2666-6065(22)00086-4/fulltext) (last visited July 21, 2025).

⁴³ Ibid 42.

⁴⁴ N. Başak & N. Bulut Serin, *Analysis of the Rate of Working Women's Acceptance of Partner Violence and Cultural Reflections in Cypriot Society*, 13 *Front. Psychol.* 962423 (2023), <https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/psychology/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.962423/full> (last visited July 21, 2025).

⁴⁵ D.M. Nkaabu, *The Role of Church Leaders in Averting Gender Based Violence in Imenti South Sub-County, Meru County, Kenya*, 7(8) *Int'l J. Human. & Soc. Stud.* (2019), <https://doi.org/10.24940/theijhss/2019/v7/i8/HS1908-062> (last visited July 21, 2025).

⁴⁶ Rossen Petkov & Atanaska Mindevska, *Prevention Methods of Violence Against Women and Girls as Shared Efforts by Governments and NGOs*, 4(2) *Rev. Eur. Stud.* 33 (2012), <https://doi.org/10.5539/res.v4n2p33> (last visited July 21, 2025).

⁴⁷ Dora Elvira García-González & Alethia Fernández de la Reguera Ahedo, *Transcending Gender-Based Violence Through Ethical Recognition: A Dialogue Between Philosophy and Empiricism in Migration Contexts*, 32(1) *Universum (Talca)* (2017), https://www.scielo.cl/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0718-23762017000100077&lng=en&nrm=iso&tlng=en (last visited July 21, 2025).

CONCLUSION

Gender-based violence remains a pervasive and deeply entrenched societal problem in contemporary India, despite constitutional guarantees of equality and various legislative interventions.

Increased awareness of gender-based violence has the potential to catalyze legal and social action aimed at addressing this critical issue (Kang'ethe, 2014)⁴⁸. However, the efficacy of such awareness campaigns hinges on a complex interplay of factors, including the nature and scope of the awareness initiatives, the socio-cultural context in which they are implemented, and the responsiveness of legal and social institutions (Kang'ethe, 2014)⁴⁹. Early educational interventions that integrate the school curriculum and promote the active participation of students and the community have shown positive impacts in raising awareness of gender violence, overcoming stereotypes, improving relationships, reducing violent behavior, and empowering vulnerable populations (Villardón-Gallego et al., 2023)⁵⁰.

It is imperative to acknowledge that awareness alone is insufficient to eradicate gender-based violence; rather, it serves as a crucial first step in a multifaceted process that necessitates legal reforms, social attitudinal shifts, and effective implementation of protective measures. In the Indian context, gender-based violence manifests in various forms, including domestic violence, sexual harassment, dowry-related violence, honor killings, and trafficking (Singh et al., 2016)⁵¹. The normalization of violence through media portrayals and other cultural factors further exacerbates the problem (Reji, 2024)⁵².

⁴⁸ Supra 32

⁴⁹ Ibid 48.

⁵⁰ Supra 41.

⁵¹ Supra 16.

⁵² Angel E. Reji, *Exploring the Evolution of Gender-Based Violence in India and Its Contributing Actors*, 2 FIU Undergraduate Rsch. J., no. 1, art. 13 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.25148/URJ.020115> (last visited July 21, 2025).