

Gender Studies

VIII. Gender Based Violence

- It is estimated that 35 percent of women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence. However, some national studies show that up to 70 percent of women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime from an intimate partner.
- Worldwide, more than 700 million women alive today were married as children (below 18 years of age). Of those women, more than 1 in 3—or some 250 million—were married before 15.
- Adult women account for almost half of all human trafficking victims detected globally. Women and girls together account for about 70 percent, with girls representing two out of every three child trafficking victims.
- At least 200 million women and girls alive today have undergone female genital mutilation/cutting in 30 countries.

1. Defining Gender Based Violence

- The term “gender-based violence” refers to violence that targets individuals or groups on the basis of their gender. The United Nations’ Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights’ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) defines it as “violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately”, in its General Recommendation 19.
- This includes acts that inflict physical, mental or sexual harm or suffering, the threat of such acts, coercion and other deprivations of liberty. Together with “sexual violence” and “violence against women”, “gender-based violence” is used interchangeably.
- Forms of violence:
 - Some of the forms of violence perpetrated by individuals are: rape, domestic violence, sexual harassment, reproductive coercion, female infanticide, prenatal sex selection, obstetric violence, and mob violence; as well as harmful customary or traditional practices such as honor killings, dowry violence, female genital mutilation, marriage by abduction and forced marriage.
 - Some forms of violence are perpetrated or condoned by the state such as war rape; sexual violence and sexual slavery during conflict; forced sterilization; forced abortion; violence by the police and authoritative personnel; stoning and flogging.

- Some forms of Violence Against Women, such as trafficking in women and forced prostitution are often perpetrated by organized criminal networks.

2. Theories of Violence against Women

- Battered women's syndrome/learned helplessness: According to this theory **Battered woman syndrome** (BWS) is a mental **disorder** that develops in victims of domestic violence as a result of serious, long-term abuse. The feeling of being both responsible for and helpless to stop the violence leads in turn to depression and passivity. This learned depression and passivity makes it difficult for the abused partner to marshal the resources and support system needed to leave.
- Male pathologies: Researchers and practitioners who adopt this perspective often focus on childhood and other experiences/events which shape men to 'become abusers'. Research seeks to compare them with 'normal' control group (NVM). The claim is made that the disturbed/violent men suffer more distress, personality disorders, anger/hostility, alcohol problems than 'normal'. Many lack resources or feel powerless, and they are more likely to have violence in family of origin
- Disinhibition caused by alcohol or substance use: The underlying premise is that men are 'naturally' violent and this is unleashed by use of substances.
- Family/Systems Conflict and 'Family Violence' Research. This approach sees the family as dynamic organisation made up of interdependent components. Behaviour of one member (eg violent man) is affected by responses and feedback of other members

3. Structural and Direct Forms of Violence

- Direct violence against women includes physical, sexual, psychological, and economic violence. Direct violence against women must be understood through the lens of unequal power relations between women and men.
- Indirect violence can be understood as a type of structural violence, characterised by norms, attitudes and stereotypes around gender in general and violence against women in particular. Indirect violence operates within a larger societal context; institutions, and the individuals within and outside these institutions, are all engaged in the production and reproduction of attitudes which normalise violence against women (United Nations 1992).

4. Strategies to Eliminate Violence against Women

- **Restriction on use of alcohol:** There should be prohibition of alcohol use in mass gatherings in institutions, public places like trains and buses. The number of alcohol outlets should be decreased. The age for purchasing alcohol may be raised to 30 years. Special checks on festive occasions are recommended with the help of breath analyzers. Involuntary treatment of persons with alcohol dependence should be carried out.
- **Control on media:** Sexual material should be censored. Good themes, which condemn violence and glorify rehabilitation of the victim, should be projected. Ban on pornography should be strictly implemented. The sites may be blocked.
- **Marriages:** Marriage of boys and girls should preferably be in early 20s, as soon as possible, so that sexual needs could be satisfied in a socially appropriate manner.
- **Strengthening the institution of marriage:** Strong marital bond would act as a deterrent.
- **Law enforcement:** Efficient and accountable law enforcement machinery at all levels (administration, government, police and judiciary) is needed.

- **Code of conduct:** Code of conduct at work place, school and home, with respect to interaction with persons of opposite sex should be outlined and implemented.
- **Gender sensitization:** Gender sensitization by parents and teachers is needed regarding the sensitivities and boundaries of man-woman relationships.
- **Education and employment:** Improvement in quality of education and employment opportunities for youth.
- **Recreation and talent:** Recreational avenues and opportunities for talent development in young people.
- **Moral and religious values:** Parents and teachers should strive to infuse good moral and religious values in children and serve as role models.