

# **Crimes against Women in India – An Impediment to Women Empowerment**

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## **Abstract**

A large scale campaign for elimination of violence against women over the decades delivers the enormity of increasing incidence of crime against women in India. Women safety and security has become the biggest concerns of the country right now. According to National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), the crime rate against women shows an increasing trend. During the year 2018, the number of cases registered against women in India was 3, 78,277 which increased at a rate of 5.12 percent from the year 2017. Crime against women to the overall crime rate in India was stood at 7.5 percent in the year 2018. Despite a mushrooming policies and programmes proposed towards eliminating violence against women, the expected outcomes did not reveal in the statistics. This forms as a major impediment to women empowerment. Thus, the paper tries to analyze the current trends of crime against women at various crime heads in India from 1990-2018.

**Keywords:** Crime, Women, Violence, National Crime Records Bureau, Empowerment.

## **Introduction**

India is a democratic, multilingual and multi-ethnic society. The prevalence of gender differences and bias is so deeply entrenched in each and every strata of society and has become normalized. Most importantly the patriarchal rules and norms have been deeply rooted in every act of the society. When the rules and norms get breaches, it results in violence against women. In most of the places of India, violence faced by women on a regularly basis goes unreported or undocumented due to certain socio-cultural values and beliefs.

An estimate of World Health Organization (WHO) in 2018 indicated that about 1 in 3 (35 percent) of women and girls worldwide have experienced physical/sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime. The Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV), jointly also known as Violence Against Women (VAW) is meant as the violent acts that are predominantly committed against women and girls. Furthermore, violence against women can be classified into several categories, which includes violence carried out by "individuals" as well as "states". Some of the forms of violence carried out by individuals are: rape, domestic violence, sexual harassment, female infanticide, etc.; as well as harmful customary or traditional practices such as dowry violence, honour killings, female genital mutilation and forced marriage. The other forms of violence are inflicted by the state such as war rape, sexual violence and slavery during conflict, forced abortion, violence by the police and authoritative personnel, stoning and flogging (Devakunchari et al. 2019).

The process of growth and development along with its progressive changes in standard of living, life style and socio-cultural practices contributes to violent attitude and tendencies towards women and witnesses increase in crimes against women. It is a matter of serious concern and its containment is quite necessary, so that Indian women can attain their rights and live with dignity, self-respect, freedom, peace, free from crimes and aspersions. The battle against the crimes against women has to be waged by the various strata of the society by proper policy and legal interventions (NCRB, 1997).

Violence against women is widely recognised as an important public health problem, owing to its substantial consequences for women's physical, mental and reproductive health. This recognition was strengthened globally by resolutions of various international forums. Among them the fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 in Beijing has a crucial role. In India, the problem has been highlighted at two different points: after the ratification of The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1993 and legislation against domestic violence in 2005, which is popularly known as the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act.

The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) of India compiles data on crime against women in India year-by-year. It also states that, although women may be victims in any of the crimes be it 'Murder', 'Robbery', 'Cheating' or any other crimes, the crime which are directed specifically against women are characterized as 'Crime against Women'. These are broadly classified under two categories, which are indicated below:

The Crimes Identified Under the Indian Penal Code (IPC):

- a) Rape (Sec.376 IPC)
- b) Kidnapping and Abduction for specified purposes (Sec.33-373 IPC)

- c) Cruelty by Husband and Relatives (Sec.498-A IPC)
- d) Assault on women with intent to outrage her modesty (Sec.354 IPC)
- e) Dowry Deaths (Sec.302/304-B IPC)
- f) Others

The Crimes under the Special and Local Laws (SLL):

- a) Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956
- b) Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961
- c) Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986

## **Review of Literature**

Kaur in her study delivers the pros and cons of globalization on the status of women in India. The study revealed that globalization is unleashing competition between men and women, wherein she concluded that it offers women greater opportunities along with new cum unique challenges and proves more bad than good for women (Kaur, 2018). Also, Devakunchari et al. in their study examined the crimes against women in India using regression analysis. It is to predict the possible age group to target with the awareness drives, the frequency of different crimes in different states and thus to evaluate the effectiveness of the current security measures in all the states of the country (Devakunchari et al. 2019). This is supported by a study conducted by Kumari, wherein she analyzed the impact of globalization and market forces on changing nature of family and marriage and its relationship with growing domestic violence in India. Furthermore, she stated that only when the family and the society are democratized, the status of the women will be strengthened. Also, recommended that women empowerment approach to combat violence against women should be well integrated and interwoven into all policies and programs of the governments (Kumari, 2010). A study conducted by Himabindu, Arora and Prashanth highlighted that crimes against women is a multifaceted problem, so it is essential to tackle various other concurrent issues that act as contributing factors and thus play an equally important role. The study also stated that incorporation of stringent laws and stricter punishments are important to deter people from committing such crimes and the solution to this is much more than just promulgation (Himabindu, Arora & Prashanth, 2014).

## **Problem Statement**

The gender based violence against women starts from womb to tomb, which forms a major threat to women empowerment. While there are many impediments to women's empowerment, the increasing rate of crime against women is both a cause and consequence of gender inequality. Also, it brings down women and girls opportunities for education, socio-economic participation and self-reliance. As the violence against women is directly related to health factors, it has a negative impact on the development indicators. It strongly hinders women's full participation in

society and maintains an oppressive and coercive pattern of control of men over women. This may have an adverse effect on India's progress on Human Development Index (HDI) as well as Gender Development Index (GDI).

## Objectives

- To analyze the trend and growth pattern of Crimes against Women in India from the year 1990-2018
- To analyse the trend and growth pattern of Crimes against Women in India under selected Crime Heads from the year 1990-2018
- To suggest various measures on tackling Gender Based Violence in India

## Methodology

As the study based on secondary data, the required data was collected from National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) of India. The overall trend of crime against women in India and Crimes against women at specific heads has been fitted by trend line using the ordinary least square method. The equation of straight line trend is  $Y_t = a + bX_t$ . The annual compound growth rate of crimes against women in India was computed using semi log model. The semi log equation is  $\ln(Y_t) = a + bX_t$ . The compound growth rate coefficient is computed using the formula indicated as  $CGR = \{\text{antilog}(b) - 1\} * 100$

## Crimes against Women in India

It is very essential to learn the growing pattern of crimes against women in India, so that it can help to understand the degree of responsiveness of the gender impact policies and programmes in India. Here, the Table No.1 delivers the statistics of Crimes against women in India from the year 1990-2018.

**Table 1: Crimes against Women in India**

Year	Total Crime against Women in India		Total Crimes in India	Crimes against Women to Total Crime (%)
	No. of Cases Registered	Percentage Change Over (%)		
1990	68317	0.00	1604449	4.30
1991	74093	8.45	1678375	4.40
1992	79037	6.67	1689341	4.70
1993	83954	6.22	1629936	5.20
1994	98948	17.9	1635251	6.10
1995	109259	10.4	1719820	6.40
1996	115723	5.92	1709576	6.80

1997	121265	4.79	1695695	7.20
1998	131475	8.42	1778815	7.40
1999	135771	3.27	1764629	7.70
2000	141373	4.13	1771084	8.00
2001	143795	1.71	1769308	8.10
2002	143034	-0.53	1780330	8.00
2003	140601	-1.70	1716120	8.20
2004	154333	9.77	1832015	8.40
2005	155553	0.79	1822602	8.50
2006	164785	5.93	1878293	8.80
2007	185312	12.50	1989673	9.30
2008	195856	5.69	2093379	9.40
2009	203804	4.06	2121345	9.60
2010	213585	4.80	6750748	3.20
2011	228649	7.05	6252729	3.70
2012	244270	6.83	6041559	4.00
2013	309546	26.70	6640378	4.70
2014	337922	9.17	4571663	7.40
2015	327394	-3.12	4710676	7.00
2016	338954	3.53	4831515	7.00
2017	359849	6.16	5007044	7.20
2018	378277	5.12	5074634	7.50

*Source: National Crime Report Bureau of India, Various Issues.*

It is evident from the growth rate analysis expressed in Table 1 that the crime rate against women is increasing constantly over the study period from the year 1990-2018. During the year 1990 the number of cases registered against women was 68,317 and with a steady growth it has increased to 3,78,277 cases in the year 2018. It is to be noted that in the years 2002, 2004 and 2015 it has shown negative growth rates of -0.53, -1.7 and -3.12 respectively which expressed an insignificant decline. As the incidence of total crimes in India is increasing at a rapid rate, the percentage share to the crime against women varies year by year. The proportionate share of crime against women to the total crimes stood at 4.3 percent in the year 1990. During the period between 2003 and 2009 the crimes over women in India was approximately 8 to 9 percent. Then, followed with insignificant variations it reported as 7.5 percent in the year 2018.

### **Crimes against Women in India at Selected Crime Heads**

The Table 2 indicates the information on Crimes against Women in India at various Crime Heads and Table 3 depicts the percentage share of crimes at different heads namely Rape, Kidnapping and Abduction, Cruelty by Husband and Relatives

Assault on women / Molestation and Dowry Deaths to the total Crimes against Women in India.

**Table 2: Crimes against Women in India at various Crime Heads**

Year	Crime Heads					
	Rape	Kidnapping and Abduction	Cruelty by Husband and Relatives	Assault on Women / Molestation	Dowry Deaths	Total Crimes against Women in India
1990	9518	11699	13450	20194	4836	68317
1991	9793	12300	15949	20611	5157	74093
1992	11112	12077	19750	20385	4962	79037
1993	11242	11837	22064	20985	5817	83954
1994	12351	12998	25946	24117	4935	98948
1995	13754	14063	31127	28475	5092	109259
1996	14846	14877	35246	28939	5513	115723
1997	15330	15617	36592	30764	6006	121265
1998	15151	16351	41376	30959	6975	131475
1999	15468	15962	43823	32311	6699	135771
2000	16496	15023	45778	32940	6995	141373
2001	16075	14645	49170	34124	6851	143795
2002	16373	14506	49237	33943	6822	143034
2003	15847	13296	50703	32939	6208	140601
2004	18233	15578	58121	34567	7026	154333
2005	18359	15750	58319	34175	6787	155553
2006	19348	17414	63128	36617	7618	164785
2007	20737	20416	75930	38734	8093	185312
2008	21467	22939	81344	40413	8172	195856
2009	21397	25741	89546	38711	8383	203804
2010	22172	29795	94041	40613	8391	213585
2011	24206	35565	99135	42968	8618	228649
2012	24923	38262	106527	45351	8233	244270
2013	33707	51881	118866	70739	8083	309546
2014	36735	57311	122877	82235	8455	337922
2015	34651	59277	113403	82422	7634	327394
2016	38947	64519	110378	84746	7621	338954
2017	32559	66333	104551	86001	7466	359849
2018	33356	72751	103272	89097	7166	378277

*Source: National Crime Report Bureau of India, Various Issues*

**Table 3: Crimes Rate at Various Heads to the Total Crimes against Women in India**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Rape (%)</b>	<b>Kidnapping &amp; Abduction (%)</b>	<b>Cruelty by Husband and their Relatives (%)</b>	<b>Assault on Women / Molestation (%)</b>	<b>Dowry Deaths (%)</b>
1990	13.90	17.12	19.70	29.60	7.10
1991	13.20	16.60	21.50	27.80	7.00
1992	14.10	15.28	25.00	25.80	6.30
1993	13.40	14.10	26.30	25.00	6.90
1994	12.50	13.14	26.20	24.40	5.00
1995	12.60	12.87	28.50	26.10	4.70
1996	12.80	12.86	30.50	25.00	4.80
1997	12.60	12.88	30.20	25.40	5.00
1998	11.50	12.44	31.50	23.50	5.30
1999	11.40	11.76	32.30	23.80	4.90
2000	11.70	10.63	32.40	23.30	4.90
2001	11.20	10.18	34.20	23.70	4.80
2002	11.40	10.14	34.40	23.70	4.80
2003	11.30	9.46	36.10	23.40	4.40
2004	11.80	10.09	37.70	22.40	4.60
2005	11.80	10.13	37.50	22.00	4.40
2006	11.70	10.57	38.30	22.20	4.60
2007	11.20	11.02	41.00	20.90	4.40
2008	11.00	11.71	41.50	20.60	4.20
2009	10.50	12.63	43.90	19.00	4.10
2010	10.40	13.95	44.00	19.00	3.90
2011	10.60	15.55	43.40	18.80	3.80
2012	10.20	15.66	43.60	18.60	3.40
2013	10.90	16.76	38.40	22.90	2.60
2014	10.90	16.96	36.40	24.30	2.50
2015	10.60	18.11	34.60	25.20	2.30
2016	11.50	19.03	32.60	25.00	2.20
2017	9.05	18.43	29.10	23.90	2.10
2018	8.82	19.23	27.30	23.60	1.90

*Source: Computed Data*

The Table 2 and Table 3 clearly indicate the existing scenario of Crimes against Women in India. Cruelty by husband and their relatives, Rape by blood relations and Dowry deaths comes under Domestic Violence against Women. Also, Kidnapping and Abduction, Molestation, Rape comes under Violence against Women.

It has been observed from Table 2 that the crimes against women in India at different heads also show an increasing trend over the study period. The number of cases registered under Rape was 9518 in the year 1990 and increased to a greater extent of 33356 cases in the year 2018. Likewise, the number of cases registered under “Kidnapping & Abduction” was 11699 in the year 1990 and goes up to 72751 cases in the year 2018. Crimes under “Cruelty by Husband and their relatives” show a substantial increase in the number of cases from 13450 cases in 1990 to 103272 cases in 2018. This followed by, crimes under Assault on women / Molestation and Dowry Deaths revealed a stable increase over the years, wherein it was 20194 and 4836 cases in the year 1990 and with a steady increase it reported as 89097 and 7166 in the year 2018 respectively. Table 3 reveals the proportionate share of crimes over women under different streams. The distributions of crimes under different streams show a mixed trend over the study periods. The share of Cruelty by Husband and their relatives to the total crimes of women was higher when compared to other streams, wherein it records an average of 33.73 percent of cases over the study period. Then, the average share of Rape is reported is 11.4 percent, Kidnapping and Abduction as 13.77 percent, Assault to women / molestation as 23.4 percent and dowry deaths as 4.38 percent to the total crimes against women in India over the period of 29 years.

### **Trend and Growth Analysis of Crime against Women in India**

The Table 4 explains the details of trend and growth analysis of crime against women in India at different crime heads from the year 1990-2018.

**Table 4: Trend and Growth Analysis of Crime against Women in India**

Crime Heads	Mean	Regression Coefficients		R <sup>2</sup>	CGR
		A	b		
Rape	20488.03	6437.71	936.69*	87	4.7
Kidnapping and Abduction	27199.41	2396.51	1973.06*	74	6.8
Cruelty by Husband / Relatives	64815.48	5176.40	3975.94*	95	7.6
Assault on Women / Molestation	42726.72	8874.30	2256.83*	77	5.1
Dowry Deaths	6917.72	5113.17	120.30*	72	1.8
Total Crime Against Women	185680.50	30084.96	10373.03*	90	6.0

*Source: Computed Data*

The above table clearly depicts the trend and growth analysis of crime against women in India at different crime heads. It is inferred that that the total crimes over women in India was increased annually by 10373.03 cases, which occupies a compound growth rate of 6 percent and mean of 185680.50 crimes has been



recorded annually. It has been found that in specific crime heads the incidence of crime over women under Cruelty by husband and their relatives and Kidnapping and Abduction is more when compared to other heads. The compound growth rate for respective heads has been reported as 7.6 percent and 6.8 percent. The average cases under cruelty by husband and their relatives were 64,815.48 and it increases annually by 3975.94 cases. Furthermore, an average of 27199.41 cases has been registered under Kidnapping and Abduction, which gets an annual increase with 1973.06 cases. Moreover, the average number of cases recorded under Molestation, Rape and Dowry deaths are 42726.72, 20488.03 and 6917.72 respectively. Also, the results indicated that average cases under these respective crime heads are getting a yearly increase by 2256.83, 936.69 and 120.30 respectively. The compound growth rate for Rape has been recorded as 4.70 percent along with 5.01 percent for Molestation and 1.80 percent Dowry Deaths.

The regression estimates are found to be positive and statistically significant at 5 percent level.  $R^2$  values are satisfactory and the changes in the different crime heads were account for Rape (87 percent), Kidnapping and Abduction (74 percent), cruelty by husband and their relatives (95 percent), Molestation (77 percent) and Dowry deaths (72 percent). Moreover, for total crime against women,  $R^2$  value is found to be significant at 90 percent. The overall analysis brings out that there exists a positive and significant growth in the crimes over women at different crime heads. This clearly indicated that there has been a steady increase in the crimes against women in India, which is quite unfortunate.

## Discussion

It is quite evident from the overall analysis that the incidence of crimes committed against women in India has seen continuous rise over the years. Moreover, it has been observed that “cruelty by husband and their relatives” come out with more cases followed by Kidnapping and Abduction, Molestation, Rape and Dowry Deaths respectively. This indicates that the crimes under Domestic Violence Against Women (DVAW) were more than Violence against Women (VAW). This implies that women are not even considered safe at their homes, which exhibits a major form of violence called ‘domestic violence’ and has become normal in the Indian Society. Furthermore, even in this lockdown period, domestic violence against women has been considered as one of the major threats, wherein it has been discussed and made as headlines that there could be an increase in domestic violence cases against women. It has been estimated that about 30 percent of total crimes against women in India are reporting under Domestic Violence. In reality, the registered number of cases of under domestic violence may grossly underestimate the true number of cases. Many incidents go unreported due to lack of documentation, stigma of victimization in Indian society and fear of social exclusion, whereas all of which may inhibit distraught women from seeking help. The causes of violence committed against women may be traced at its roots to the

characteristically patriarchal structure of the family and society at large that promote gender inequalities in the Indian Economy. Despite various legislations policies and programmes starting from CEDAW and Prevention of Domestic Violence Act to Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (educate the daughter, save the daughter) the crime rate per 100,000 women has been rising year-by-year and reported as 58 percent in 2017 and increased to 59 percent in 2018.

It has been found that in India a rape is reported every 15 minutes. Nirbhaya case in 2012 shook the whole nation. Moreover, when details of ferocity of the attack emerged in media's, the whole nation erupted into protests. This led to a number of changes in the existing Indian legislative laws and programmes and made it more stringent regarding rape cases. The government also set up a special fund called "Nirbhaya Fund" in 2013 to provide rehabilitation to the rape victims and also to improve the public safety for women. The expansion of criminal Amendment Act, 2013 has also had an impact on rape reporting cases. However, none of these initiatives led to any decrease in the number of rape cases. It emerged again in 2019 when a 23-year-old girl rape victim belonging to Uttar Pradesh was set on fire when she was on her way to court to attend a hearing. Sadly, she was another victim evident the growing sexual violence in India. Most importantly there are number of cases take a decade to provide justice. For instance, the Nirbhaya case took seven years to go through the Indian Judicial systems. Likewise, in most of the cases police have not ready to register a formal complaint, which in turn results in the increase of unreported cases. This leads to a huge difference over the magnitude of cases filed and cases convicted, which in turn paves the way to discomfort and disrespectful for women and discouraging them from reporting any kind of violence. The states like Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Goa, Delhi, Rajasthan, etc have the worst records in violence against women, especially the rape cases.

## **Causes & Consequences**

The cruelty by husband and their relatives, Dowry deaths and Rape by blood relations were comes under Domestic Violence against Women, which constitutes a major share of crimes against women. It is to be noted that Domestic Violence against Women is mainly a cause of patriarchy and changing pattern of social systems. The following are the consequences for the aforementioned violence:

- a) As already said, India is a Patriarchal society, there women are usually considered as second class citizens, which is the primary reason for all kinds of violence against women.
- b) Lack of democratization in the family systems and reproductive health issues making women more vulnerable to violence.
- c) An economic factor plays a crucial role in increasing rate of domestic violence. women's economic dependence on men, limited access to credit facilities, discriminatory laws regarding inheritance, property rights, use of communal lands, difficulties in formal and informal sectors

- d) Globalization in the forms of urbanisation, liberalization, modernization and migration both internally and internationally plays a vital role in inducing diverse changes in the economy. The advent of information technology in globalization has made the world a very small place. The penetration and integration of the changes induced in our day-to-day life has made the impact of globalization many fold higher. It can't be denied that how the waves of globalization improves the lives of women in the forms of educational attainment, economic participation and health indicators etc. At the same time, it has an adverse impact on Indian family systems. The forces of globalization and market expansion are influencing the family structure and marriage norms to a larger extent. Also, the institution of marriage and existence of a 'family' as a unit have found a new meaning. The reason is due to inter and intra caste marriages, cohabitation and joint family systems to nuclear families and newly emerging autonomous family structure. To the contrary, women are allowed to earn, educate and enjoy freedom. However, on the other hand they are viewed as incapacitated due to lack of control over their own resources and earnings. Hence, they bear discrimination and violence. In both public and private arena, the patriarchal rules and norms continue to dominate. Thus, the changes seem to be more superficial than penetrating. The roles of men and women changing simultaneously, but they are causing more burden for women. Therefore, the question arises at this point that whether the process of globalization cum changing societal structures are inducing more violence into the lives of women or they provide a new power in hands of women to come out of patriarchal dominance and exert their rights to fight violence (Kumari, 2010).
- e) Modernization and modernity have also been blamed, wherein social media, smart phones, television, computers and internet have become the order of the day. The way the television and cinemas portraying women are one of the most important reasons for increasing crime against women in India. Nowadays, the pornographic material is easily available to many on the internet and through other ways.
- f) Legal loopholes and social conditioning are the main reasons of increasing rate of crimes against women.

Thus, violence against women is not only a cause of gender inequality but also it is a consequence of it. It makes women more worsen in development progress, which in turn widens the gender gap in development indicators. In several places, gender based violence is reinforced by discriminatory laws and exclusionary societal norms that undermine women and girl's opportunities for education, income and independence.

## **Suggestions**

- a) Democratization of the family systems should be developed.

- b) Gender differences in education, health and employment services should eliminate with the help of gender friendly or gender responsive policies and programmes.
- c) Gender sensitization programmes should be conducted at the grass root level of the society, so that it helps men and women to understand their own roles, responsibilities and capabilities.
- d) Gender sensitization training should be given to higher personnel's and officials (ex. police officers in this case...).
- e) Gender integrated policy approach should be developed in all stages of policy formulation and implementation.
- f) Gender budgeting on women safety and security should be increased.
- g) There should be prohibition of alcohol use in public places.
- h) Role of media on portraying women should be censored; Ban on pornography should be strictly implemented.

## **Conclusion**

The violence against women and girls continues to be a global epidemic. It is a health-related, legal, economic, educational and overall a human rights issue. Despite, mushrooming policies and programmes proposed towards eliminating violence against women, the expected outcomes does not revealed in the statistics. Hence, it forms as a major impediment to women empowerment. Furthermore, the deviations in number of cases registered to that of conviction has been too long, which need to be addressed is the need of the hour. Although, the incidence of crimes under each crime heads shows an increasing trend over the years, only the crimes under domestic violence and rape is getting more attention and becoming sensational. The serious concern should develop holistically for coordinating and integrating the policy measures. Improvising the legislations programmes alone cannot bring a change. It is not just a judicial issue but a social issue. Hence, existing cum new policies should develop with gender responsiveness and sensitiveness respectively. Women have to provide access to education, employment opportunities and legal literacy and right to inheritance so that they can have chances for developing an optimistic and hopeful approach to life. Also, it is quite important for society and family to teach the boy child in accordance with gender sensitization and behavioural orientation.

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