

An Overview of Domestic Violence among Women in India

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ABSTRACT

The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 in India says that any act, conduct, omission or commission that harms or injures or has the potential to harm or injure will be considered domestic violence by the law. Even a single act of omission or commission may constitute domestic violence in other words, women do not have to suffer a prolonged period of abuse before taking recourse to law. The law covers children also. Domestic violence is perpetrated by, and on, both men and women. However, most commonly, the victims are women. Even in the United States, it has been reported that 85 per cent of all violent crimes experienced by women are cases of intimate partner violence, compared to 3 per cent of violent crimes experienced by men. Domestic violence in India is the interplay between socio-cultural factors, such as the widespread acceptance of violence as part of marital life, and of male entitlement, the equation of masculinity with dominance and control over women, and individual factors such as low self esteem, suspicion and negativism amongst the women. As it is not only individual men who are involved in acts of domestic violence but also female kin such as mother or sister-in-law, it gives credence to the power and control and the implicit mandate of the socio-economic context of power relations rather than to male violence. Domestic violence is one of the most common crimes against women which is inextricably linked to the perpetuation of patriarchy. Domestic violence refers to violence against women not only in matrimonial legislated Domestic Violence Act in 2005 to reduce the violence against women but the same has bore mixed result as of now. This paper explore tthe domestic violence in multi-dimensional perspective.

Keywords: Domestic violence, Protection of Women, Socio-cultural factors, multi-dimensional perspective.

INTRODUCTION

Domestic violence is the willful intimidation, physical assault, battery, sexual assault, and/or other abusive behavior as part of a systematic pattern of power and control perpetrated by one intimate partner against another. It includes physical violence, sexual violence, psychological violence, and emotional abuse. The frequency and severity of domestic violence can vary dramatically; however, the one constant component of domestic violence is one partner's consistent efforts to maintain power and control over the other. Domestic violence is a family problem affecting individuals in every community, regardless of age, economic status, sexual orientation, gender, race, religion, or nationality. It is often accompanied by emotionally abusive and controlling behavior that is only a fraction of a systematic pattern of dominance and control. Domestic violence can result in physical injury, psychological trauma, and in severe cases, even death. The devastating physical, emotional, and psychological consequences of domestic violence can cross generations and last a lifetime. Domestic violence can involve a wide array of physical, sexual and emotional abuse.

Domestic violence is a global issue reaching across national boundaries as well as socioeconomic, cultural, racial and class distinctions. This problem is not only widely dispersed geographically, but its incidence is also extensive, making it a typical and accepted behaviour. Domestic violence is wide spread, deeply ingrained and has serious impacts on women's health and wellbeing. Its continued existence is morally indefensible. Its cost to individuals, health systems and society is enormous. Yet no other major problem of public health has been so widely ignored and so little understood.

Domestic violence against women is one of the most serious and persistent social problems in India. It includes physical, sexual, emotional, verbal, and economic abuse, most often occurring within intimate partner or family relationships. Evidence from national surveys and recent studies shows that a substantial proportion of Indian women experience violence in the home, while many cases remain unreported due to stigma, dependence, and fear of retaliation. This article provides an overview of the magnitude, causes, consequences, and policy responses related to domestic violence among women in India. It also highlights the legal protections available under the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, and discusses the challenges that continue to limit effective prevention and redress.

Significance of the Study

The study on "An Overview of Domestic Violence among Women in India" is important because domestic violence has become a major social, economic, and human rights issue affecting millions of women in the country. While India has made strides in education, economic growth, and women's empowerment, violence against women in the household remains widespread. This study helps us understand the extent and seriousness of domestic violence faced by women in India. It highlights the different forms of abuse, including physical, emotional, psychological, sexual, and economic violence that women face daily. Domestic violence often stays hidden due to fear, social stigma, and family pressure. This study raises awareness about the causes and effects of domestic violence and encourages society to see it as a serious issue rather than a private family matter. It stresses the importance of protecting women's rights, dignity, equality, and freedom. The research points out the violation of basic rights caused by domestic violence and highlights the need for justice and protection for victims. The study identifies socio-economic and cultural factors that contribute to domestic violence, such as patriarchy, the dowry system, alcoholism, unemployment, gender discrimination, illiteracy, and economic dependency. Understanding these causes is crucial for creating effective prevention strategies. Domestic violence not only harms women physically and mentally but also has negative effects on children, families, and society. The study explains how violence leads to poor health, psychological stress, decreased productivity, family instability, and social insecurity. It adds to the existing research on women's issues and social problems in India. It can serve as a reference for future studies in sociology, economics, gender studies, public policy, and social work. The study is significant because it not only highlights the serious nature of domestic violence against women in India but also contributes to creating a safer, more equal, and violence-free society through awareness, policy changes, and empowerment efforts.

Statement of the Problem

Domestic violence against women is one of the most serious social and human rights issues in India. Despite constitutional guarantees of equality, legal protections, educational advances, and economic growth, many women continue to face violence in their homes and intimate relationships. Domestic violence includes physical abuse, emotional and psychological harassment, sexual violence, verbal abuse, and economic deprivation. This violence affects women of all ages, castes, religions, education levels, incomes, and regions, though its intensity and nature vary among social groups. In Indian society, patriarchal traditions, gender discrimination, dowry practices, alcoholism, economic dependency, lack of awareness, and social stigma greatly contribute to the persistence of domestic violence. Many women endure abuse due to fear of social rejection, concern for family honor, financial insecurity, or lack of support. In many cases, incidents of violence go unreported because victims hesitate to approach legal authorities or support services. As a result, domestic violence remains hidden within the family's private sphere. The consequences of domestic violence are severe and wide-ranging. It negatively impacts the physical and mental health of women, reduces their self-confidence, limits their participation in economic and social activities, and adversely affects the well-being of children and families. Domestic violence also hinders women's empowerment and national development. Although the Government of India has passed laws like the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, the issue persists due to poor implementation, lack of awareness, and deeply ingrained cultural attitudes. Therefore, we need to examine the nature, causes, forms, and impact of domestic violence against women in India. An overview study is essential to understand the scope of the problem, identify the main factors driving violence, and assess the effectiveness of legal and social measures aimed at protecting women. This study aims to analyze domestic violence as a critical social issue and suggest appropriate measures for reducing violence and promoting a safe and dignified life for women in India.

Objectives of the Study

- To explore the features of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 in India.
- To identify the main social, economic, and cultural causes of domestic violence
- To assess the physical, psychological, and social consequences of domestic violence.
- To describe the impact of domestic violence on women.
- To suggest remedies for reducing domestic violence against women.

Research Methodology

This article uses a descriptive and analytical review method. It is based on secondary sources, including peer-reviewed journal articles, policy documents, and official legal texts on domestic violence in India. The review focuses on four themes: prevalence, risk factors, consequences, and policy responses. Sources were selected for their relevance to the Indian context and their usefulness in presenting both empirical and legal viewpoints.

PROTECTION OF WOMEN FROM DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ACT, 2005

The Act ensures woman's right to reside in her matrimonial home. This Act has a special feature with specific provisions under law which provides protection to a woman to „live in violence free home. Though this Act has civil and criminal

provisions, a woman victim can get immediate civil remedies within 60 days. Aggrieved women can file cases under this Act against any male adult perpetrator who is in domestic relationship with her. They can also include other relatives of the husband and male partner as respondents to seek remedies in their case.

- This Act was enacted in the year 2005.
- It has five chapters and 37 sections.
- Chapter 1 – Section 1 to 2 - Deals with short title, extent and definitions.
- Chapter 2 – Section 3 – Definition of Domestic Violence.
- Chapter 3 – Section 4 to 11 Power and Duties of Protection Officers and other service providers
- Chapter 4 – Section 12 to 29 -Procedure for obtaining orders of reliefs.
- Chapter 5 – Section 30 to 37 – Miscellaneous provisions.

Salient features of the Act:

- Ensures Right to Residence under sec 17.
- Ensures economic relief by recognising economic violence.
- Recognises verbal and emotional violence.
- Provides temporary custody of child.
- Judgements within 60 days of filing of the case.
- Multiple Judgements in a single case.
- Cases can be filed under PWDV Act even if other cases are pending between parties.
- Both petitioner and respondent can prefer Appeal.

The following remedies are available under the protection of women from domestic violence act, 2005

Section 18 -- Protection Order

Section 19 -- Residence Order for residing at Matrimonial House

Section 20 -- Monetary Orders which includes maintenance for herself and her Children

Section 21 -- Temporary Custody of Children

Section 22 -- Compensation order for the damages caused to her

Protection officers

Under the Domestic Violence Act, 2005, Protection Officers have been appointed by the Government to help the aggrieved woman in filing the case against her husband or against any male adult person who has committed domestic violence and who is in domestic relationship with the petitioner. The Protection Officer facilitates the women to approach the court by providing legal aid and get appropriate relief from the courts concerned. Further, they execute the orders of the Court wherever necessary with the help of police. Options are also available to the aggrieved person to file the petition before the Judicial Magistrate Court or with the service provider or in the nearby police station.

Service providers

Under the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, service Providers are the members from notified Non Governmental Organizations They co-ordinate with all the stakeholders in getting justice and relief to the victims of domestic violence. The Service Providers help the aggrieved women in filing the Domestic Incident Report, provide accommodation in the short stay homes along with their children, counsel them and help the aggrieved to get medical treatment if necessary. They also impart them with vocational training to help them secure employment and sustainable income.

Forms of Domestic Violence in India

Domestic violence in India includes various forms of abuse within the household, usually targeting women, though others may also suffer. It can happen in marital, family, or intimate relationships.

1. Physical Violence: This involves bodily harm or injury caused by a family member. It includes slapping, beating, kicking, pushing, burning, and assault with objects or weapons. This is the most visible type of domestic violence.

2. Emotional / Psychological Violence: This includes actions that cause mental pain, fear, or emotional suffering. Psychological abuse involves intimidation, threats, isolation, controlling behavior, constant monitoring, and mental harassment. Although invisible, its impact on women's mental health is deep and lasting. Such abuse can seriously affect mental health and self-esteem.

3. Verbal Abuse: Verbal abuse refers to using harsh or offensive language, insults, humiliation, ridicule, name-calling, yelling, abusive language, public humiliation, and threatening statements, as well as constant criticism. Repeated verbal abuse can lead to long-term emotional trauma.

4. Sexual Violence: Sexual violence includes forced sexual acts, forced sexual intercourse, unwanted touching, sexual harassment, marital rape, coercion, and denying reproductive autonomy. It violates women's bodily integrity and personal dignity.

5. Economic Violence: Economic abuse happens when one person controls another's financial resources. It includes denying access to money, restricting employment, taking earnings, refusing basic necessities, and controlling property or assets. This creates dependence and limits freedom.

6. Dowry-related Violence: This type is linked to dowry demands:

- Harassment for additional dowry
- Threats from husbands or in-laws
- Physical abuse due to dowry disputes
- Cruel treatment for not meeting demands

This remains a significant issue despite being legally prohibited.

7. Social Violence: This includes restricting social freedom:

- Preventing education
- Stopping interaction with others
- Restricting movement
- Denying participation in social activities

It isolates victims from support systems.

The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, recognizes physical, sexual, verbal, emotional, and economic abuse as punishable forms of domestic violence in India. Domestic violence appears in many forms: physical, emotional, sexual, verbal, economic, and social. Many forms are hidden and may continue silently within families. Awareness, legal support, and social change are crucial to reducing it.

Major Causes of Domestic Violence in India

Domestic violence in India refers to physical, emotional, sexual, verbal, or economic abuse occurring within the family, especially against women. It is a significant social issue influenced by cultural, economic, and institutional factors. The major causes include:

1. Patriarchal Social Structure: Indian society has long been shaped by patriarchal norms where men are viewed as heads of households and decision-makers. This unequal power structure can promote control over women and justify abusive behavior.

2. Gender Inequality: Deep-rooted discrimination between men and women leads to unequal access to education, employment, and decision-making. When women are seen as subordinate, violence may be used to reinforce traditional roles.

3. Dowry System: Despite being illegal, dowry-related expectations continue in many households. Disputes over dowry demands contribute to domestic abuse and harassment.

4. Alcohol and Substance Abuse: Excessive alcohol use is often linked to increased household conflict and physical violence. Intoxication can lower self-control and heighten aggression.

5. Economic Stress and Poverty: Unemployment, low income, debt, and financial insecurity can create stress in families. This stress may lead to conflict, especially when economic pressure combines with existing power imbalances.

6. Lack of Education: Lower literacy and limited awareness of legal rights can make abuse more likely to persist. Education often raises awareness about rights, support systems, and gender equality.

7. Social Acceptance and Silence: In some communities, domestic violence is treated as a "private family matter," which discourages reporting. Social stigma and fear of shame often stop victims from seeking help.

8. Early and Forced Marriages: Women married at a young age often have less autonomy, fewer support networks, and increased vulnerability to abuse within marital households.

9. Weak Enforcement of Laws: India has laws like the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, but underreporting, slow legal processes, and limited access to protection can reduce their effectiveness.

10. Family Interference and Cultural Pressure: Pressure from extended family members, especially in joint-family settings, may worsen conflicts over household roles, finances, fertility, or dowry.

Domestic violence in India does not stem from a single factor but from a mix of social traditions, gender inequality, economic pressures, and weak institutional support. Reducing it requires legal awareness, education, women's empowerment, and social change toward equality.

Impact of Domestic Violence on Women in India

Domestic violence has serious consequences for women's physical health, mental well-being, social status, and economic independence. In India, its effects often extend beyond the individual to children, families, and society.

1. Physical Health Problems: Women may suffer:

- Injuries, bruises, fractures, and burns
- Chronic pain and disability
- Reproductive health problems
- Pregnancy complications
- Long-term health issues due to repeated abuse

2. Mental and Emotional Trauma: Domestic violence often causes severe psychological distress, including:

- Fear and anxiety
- Depression
- Stress and emotional instability
- Low self-confidence
- Feelings of helplessness
- Suicidal thoughts in severe cases

3. Social Isolation: Victims may be prevented from interacting with family, friends, or the community. Social stigma can make women reluctant to report abuse, increasing isolation.

4. Economic Dependence: Violence can limit women's financial independence by restricting employment, controlling income, or denying access to household resources. This can make leaving abusive situations much harder.

5. Impact on Education and Employment: Women experiencing abuse may:

- Drop out of education
- Miss work regularly
- Lose employment opportunities
- Face reduced productivity

This affects both personal growth and economic contribution.

6. Effect on Children: Children who witness domestic violence may develop:

- Fear and insecurity
- Behavioral problems
- Poor academic performance
- Emotional trauma
- A higher risk of repeating violent patterns later in life

7. Violation of Human Rights: Domestic violence denies women basic rights to safety, dignity, equality, and freedom. It undermines efforts toward gender justice and social development.

8. Health and Public Welfare Burden: Domestic violence increases the demand on healthcare, counseling, legal aid, and welfare systems, impacting broader social development. Reports from organizations like the National Family Health Survey and National Crime Records Bureau continue to document its extensive effects.

Domestic violence has deep physical, emotional, social, and economic impacts on women in India. It affects not only victims but also children and society. Preventing domestic violence requires legal protection, education, awareness, and stronger support systems for women.

Physical, Psychological, and Social Consequences of Domestic Violence

Domestic violence affects victims in many ways, leading to consequences that can last for years. These impacts fall into three categories: physical, psychological, and social.

1. Physical Consequences

Physical violence directly harms the body and can cause short-term and long-term health issues.

- Bruises, cuts, burns, and fractures
- Chronic pain and weakness in the body
- Disability from repeated assaults
- Reproductive health problems
- Complications related to pregnancy
- Increased risk of serious illness from stress and injury

In severe cases, domestic violence can result in permanent disability or death.

2. Psychological Consequences

Domestic violence greatly impacts mental health and emotional stability.

- Fear, anxiety, and constant stress
- Depression and sadness
- Loss of self-confidence
- Emotional trauma
- Sleep disturbances
- Feelings of loneliness and helplessness
- Suicidal thoughts in extreme cases

Victims may continue to experience emotional difficulties even after the violence stops.

3. Social Consequences

Domestic violence impacts a person's relationships, social life, and position in society.

- Social isolation from friends and relatives
- Loss of confidence in social situations
- Stigma and discrimination
- Reduced participation in community life
- Problems at work or school
- Family breakdown and separation
- Negative effects on children and family dynamics

In societies where domestic abuse is viewed as a private issue, victims may hesitate to seek help, which worsens these effects.

In India, these consequences are often made worse by social stigma, economic dependence, and underreporting. National data from the National Family Health Survey shows that domestic violence continues to affect women's health, mobility, and social participation across many states.

Domestic violence leads to serious physical injuries, psychological trauma, and social isolation. Its effects extend beyond the individual, influencing families, children, and society. Tackling this issue requires awareness, legal support, counseling, and social change.

Report on Domestic Violence Cases in India (2006–2018)

Domestic violence is one of the most serious social issues affecting women in India. It includes physical, emotional, psychological, sexual, and economic abuse within the household, particularly by husbands or relatives. In India, domestic violence cases are mainly reported under:

1. Section 498A IPC – Cruelty by husband or relatives
2. Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA), 2005
3. Dowry-related violence and abetment to suicide

The Government of India enacted the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, which took effect in 2006, to provide legal protection and support to women experiencing violence in the family.

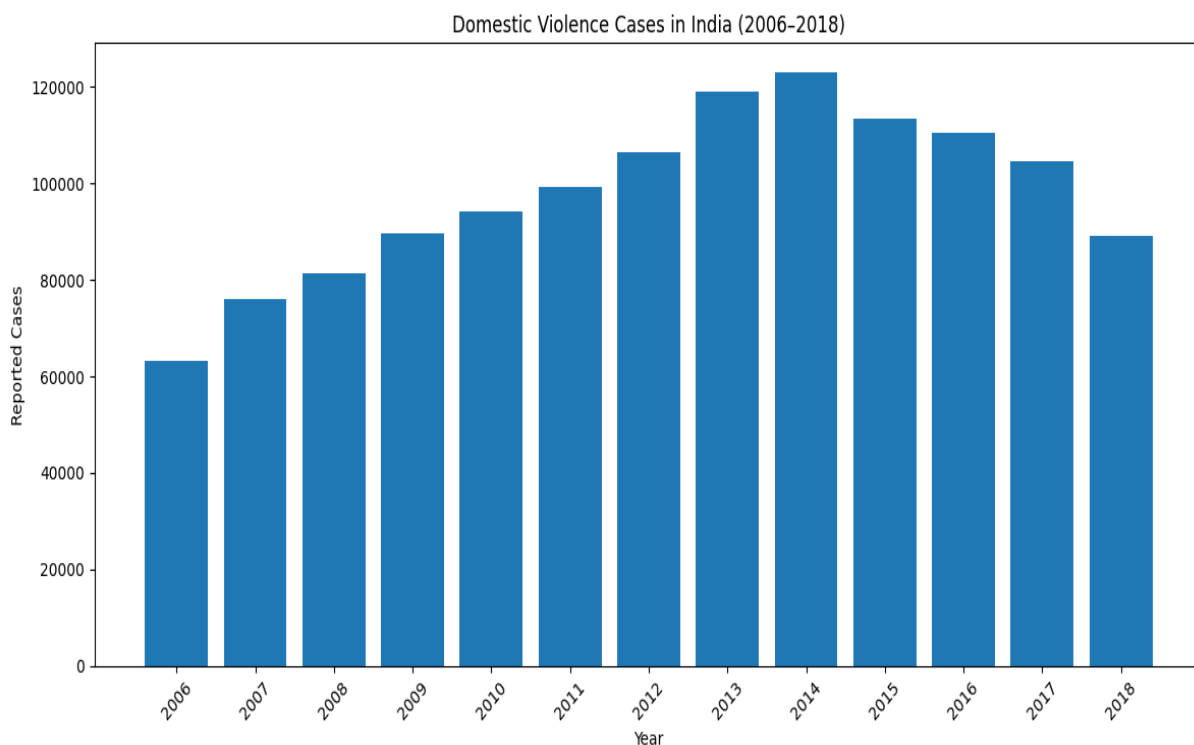
Year-wise Domestic Violence Cases in India (2006–2018)

The following table shows reported cases of “Cruelty by Husband or His Relatives” under Section 498A IPC, which is the main indicator of domestic violence in India according to NCRB data.

Year wise Reports(2006-2018)

Year	Reported Cases
2006	63,128
2007	75,930
2008	81,344
2009	89,546
2010	94,041
2011	99,135
2012	106,527
2013	118,866
2014	122,877
2015	113,403
2016	110,378
2017	104,551
2018	89,097*

*2018 figure includes NCRB-reported domestic violence-related cases and cruelty by husband/relatives category.



Cases Registered under the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA)

Year	Cases registered under PWDVA
2015	461
2016	437
2017	616
2018	579

Government Measures to Reduce Domestic Violence

The Indian government has put in place a few things to help:

The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, from 2005

- Women's Helplines (like 181)
- One Stop Centres for women who are victims
- Help with legal advice and counseling
- Special fast-track courts
- Campaigns to make people more aware of women's rights

Even with laws to protect women and changes in society, domestic violence is still a big problem in India. Between 2006 and 2018, more cases were reported, which shows that more people are aware, but also how serious the issue is. While we saw a bit of a drop after 2015, domestic violence still impacts thousands of women all over the country. To truly cut down on domestic violence and make sure men and women are equal in India, we need strong laws, better education for women, ways for women to be financially independent, good counseling, and public awareness.

Remedies to Reduce Domestic Violence against Women in India

Domestic violence against women in India is a big social issue that harms women physically, mentally, emotionally, and financially. To really cut it down, everyone needs to work together: the government, society, schools, families, and individuals. Here are some ways we can help stop and reduce this violence against women in India.

1. Strengthening Legal Measures

We need to strictly enforce laws like the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005.

- They should set up special fast-track courts so justice can be quick in domestic violence cases.
- Police officers need training to handle these complaints carefully and properly.
- People who commit these crimes should get harsh punishments so others fear breaking the law.

2. Promoting Women Education

- Education gives women the power to know their rights and make their own choices.
- They should expand reading and writing programs in villages and less developed areas.
- Schools and colleges should teach about equality between men and women, and women's rights.

3. Economic Empowerment of Women

- We need more job opportunities and training programs for women to learn new skills.
- When women have their own money, it helps them stand up to abusive relationships.
- The government should back self-help groups, encourage women to start businesses, and offer small loans.

4. Creating Social Awareness

- We should run public campaigns using TV, radio, newspapers, and social media to spread the word.
- Society should speak out against violence towards women, instead of seeing it as just a private family issue.
- Community leaders, non-profit groups, and youth organizations should really get involved in these awareness programs.

5. Gender Equality and Change in Social Attitudes

- We need to get rid of old-fashioned attitudes where men are always in charge, and stop discriminating against women.
- Boys and girls should be treated the same way at home and in society.
- Children should learn to respect women from a young age.

6. Counseling and Support Services

- They should set up counseling centers to help victims and families sort out problems without fighting.
- Helplines, places for legal help, and safe homes should be easy to get to in every district.
- Victims dealing with trauma and depression should get mental health support.

7. Role of Government and NGOs

- The government should make its welfare programs for women's safety and empowerment stronger.
- Non-profit organizations should offer shelter, legal help, and programs to help women get back on their feet.
- If government groups and non-profits work together, they can make support systems for victims much better.

8. Encouraging Community Participation

- Local communities should report cases of domestic violence instead of staying quiet.
- Women's groups and resident associations can build safe networks where people support each other.
- Religious and community leaders should speak out against domestic violence.

9. Use of Technology and Helplines

- Mobile apps, online ways to complain, and emergency helplines can help women get help right away.
- More people need to know about emergency numbers and tools that help with online safety.

10. Rehabilitation and Protection of Victims

- Victims should get safe places to stay, healthcare, and chances to find jobs.
- Programs to help people recover should assist survivors in putting their lives back together with self-respect and confidence.

Domestic violence against women isn't just a private matter; it's a big social problem and a human rights issue. To lessen it, we need legal protection, education, economic opportunities, public awareness, and everyone taking responsibility. A society that truly respects women and makes sure everyone is equal can build a safer, healthier place for us all.

CONCLUSION

Domestic violence against women is still one of the biggest social and human rights issues in India. Even with the country making economic progress, modernizing, and changing laws, many women at home still deal with physical, emotional, mental, sexual, and financial abuse. This problem comes from deep roots like old-fashioned social structures where men are dominant, treating genders differently, not enough education, women relying on others financially, dowry traditions, alcohol abuse, and uneven power within families.

This study clearly shows that domestic violence touches women from all areas, religions, castes, education backgrounds, and income levels. However, women in villages and those with less money are often more at risk. This violence doesn't just hurt women physically and mentally; it also harms children, makes families unstable, slows down social progress, and holds back the country. Things like fear, social shame, not knowing what to do, and not having easy access to legal help stop many victims from reporting abuse or getting support.

Even though the Indian government has brought in important laws, like the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act of 2005, making these laws actually work, raising awareness, and having good support systems are still big hurdles. So, to truly reduce domestic violence, we need a complete plan. This plan involves strictly enforcing laws, educating women, helping them become financially independent, ensuring gender equality, spreading public awareness, offering counseling, and having families, communities, non-profits, and government agencies all actively involved.

To wrap things up, domestic violence isn't just something that happens privately within a family; it's a huge social problem that needs everyone to act together. Making sure women are safe, respected, treated equally, and get justice is key to building a society that moves forward and includes everyone. When women can live without violence, it will really help India have social peace, human development, and lasting national growth.

Women and men are really one whole, whether we're talking about a family, a community, or the whole country. Both need to team up to build healthy families, communities, and a healthy nation. That means we have to work on making individual lives better, which will then change things in many ways. If we don't do this basic groundwork, any other effort will just scratch the surface, and the problem will keep hiding underneath.

We need to carefully look into all the different things that can cause violence inside homes. A smart study of what makes this violence happen could stop families from suffering from this terrible problem. Domestic violence can really mess up a victim's life, in many more ways than just what you see. We need to create the right environment, both in society and through our laws, to make homes safe and secure for women. India just can't do well if half its people are living in distress.

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