

Analysing Crime against Women in India: A Comprehensive Study

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Abstract

Crime against women is a global human rights issue and has emerged as a major stumbling block to the ideals of equality and freedom. This paper delves into the types and nature of crime against women in India based on the Crime in India, 2019 report, supplemented by other sources. It explores the link between law, crime and women theoretically and provides an analysis of the crimes committed against women, their varieties, and consequences. The findings aim to form the design of effective mechanisms to counter the problem of crime against women.

Keywords: Crime, Law, Violence, Women, Victims

Introduction:

Women constitute one of the most vulnerable segments of society when it comes to violence. Violence, a violation of human rights, affects women regardless of their age, economic status, ethnicity, or religion. Research, particularly on domestic violence and rape, reveals that women are at the highest risk when harmed by individuals they are familiar with. National and international organizations are committed to safeguarding women's rights, with the United Nations General Assembly adopting the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1979. India, a signatory to this convention since 1993, pledged to work toward eliminating all forms of discrimination that disadvantage women.

Crime against women in India has its roots in patriarchy, characterized by an unequal distribution of power between men and women (Lerner, 1986). This unequal power distribution and gendered division of labor, prevalent in early societies, have contributed to crimes against women. Various forms of crimes victimizing women have been explored by scholars, including intimate partner violence, non-intimate partner violence, women trafficking, forced prostitution, physical and sexual abuse against prostitutes, abortion, female infanticide, rape, and rape in war (Kumar, 1998; Dreze and Khera, 2000; Watts and Zimmerman, 2002; Ahuja, 2007). This study primarily focuses on crimes committed against women.

Crimes against women are not confined to specific cultures or geographical regions; they exist uniformly across societies worldwide. The term "crime against women" broadly encompasses various actions aimed at physically and psychologically harming women. The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women offers a widely accepted definition, describing it as "any act of gender-based violence resulting in, or likely to result in, physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether

occurring in public or in private life" (UN, 1993: Art. 1). The declaration further lists types of violence against women, including those occurring within families, in the community, or condoned by the state.

Methodology:

This study employs a mixed-method approach to analyze various forms of crimes committed against women in India. Quantitative data is sourced from the Crime in India reports by the National Crime Records Bureau of India. This data is complemented by reports from governmental and non-governmental organizations, published literature in books, journals, articles, and legal documents.

Forms of Crimes and Crime Mapping:

Women, regardless of socio-economic or religious factors, are vulnerable to various forms of violence. While the available data on crime incidents in India is substantial, it likely underrepresents the actual number of cases due to underreporting caused by the fear of social stigma (Atal, 1993; Visaria, 2000). Nevertheless, the data does reveal alarmingly high and increasing crime rates in many Indian states (NCRB, 2019). A spatial analysis of the NCRB data is essential to identify regions requiring special attention from the criminal justice system. Crime occurrences in specific locations can be influenced by external factors, altering people's activities and thus the crime rate. Consequently, focusing on specific areas may or may not be an effective crime control strategy, depending on whether crime distribution is random (Anselin, Cohen, Cook et al., 2000: 213-214). Table 1.1 below presents a state-wise breakdown of cumulative crime figures against women and their percentage contribution to the total crimes against women:

Table 1.1: State-wise crime incidences and their percentage contribution*

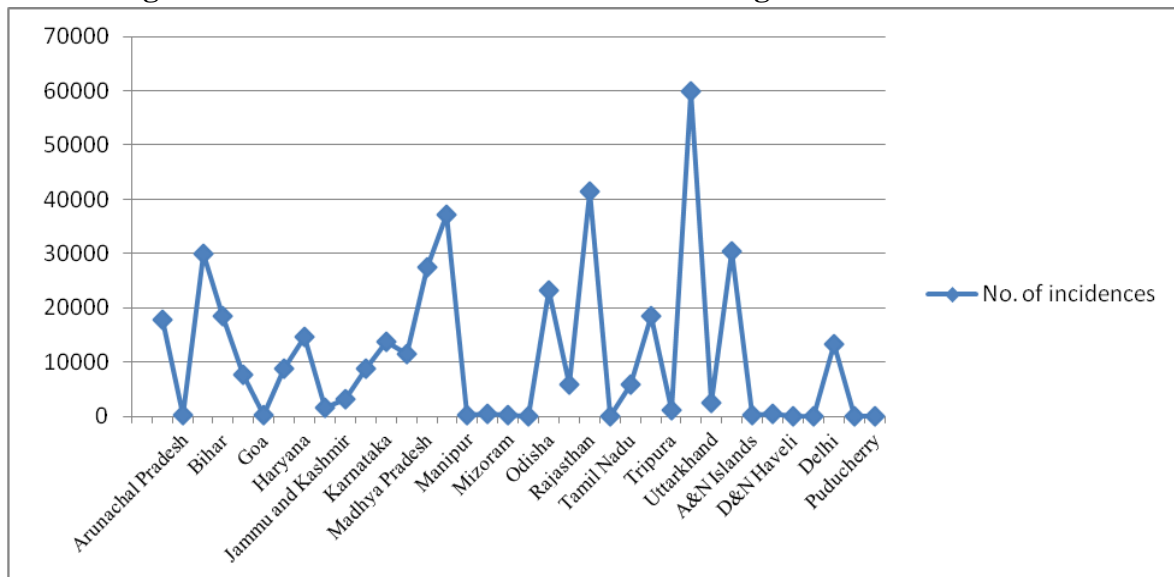
S.No.	State/UT	No. of incidences	%age
1	Andhra Pradesh	17746	4.37
2	Arunachal Pradesh	317	0.08
3	Assam	30025	7.40
4	Bihar	18587	4.58
5	Chattisgarh	7689	1.89
6	Goa	329	0.08
7	Gujarat	8799	2.17
8	Haryana	14683	3.62
9	Himachal Pradesh	1636	0.40
10	Jammu and Kashmir	3069	0.76
11	Jharkhand	8760	2.16
12	Karnataka	13828	3.41

13	Kerela	11462	2.82
14	Madhya Pradesh	27560	6.79
15	Maharashtra	37144	9.15
16	Manipur	266	0.07
17	Meghalaya	558	0.14
18	Mizoram	170	0.04
19	Nagaland	43	0.01
20	Odisha	23183	5.71
21	Punjab	5886	1.45
22	Rajasthan	41550	10.24
23	Sikkim	125	0.03
24	Tamil Nadu	5934	1.46
25	Telangana	18394	4.53
26	Tripura	1070	0.26
27	Uttar Pradesh	59853	14.75
28	Uttarkhand	2541	0.63
29	West Bengal	30394	7.49
30	A&N Islands	135	0.03
31	Chandigarh	515	0.13
32	D&N Haveli	49	0.01
33	Daman & Diu	33	0.01
34	Delhi	13395	3.30
35	Lakshadweep	38	0.01
36	Puducherry	95	0.02
Total		405861	100.00

* Crime in India Report 2013.

The table shows a significant disparity in crime reporting across Indian states and Union Territories. Some regions report minimal incidents, while others report tens of thousands. Uttar Pradesh has the highest percentage share of crimes against women (14.75%), followed by Rajasthan (10.24%) and Maharashtra (9.15%). Several states and Union Territories report less than 1% of these crimes, with Lakshadweep having the lowest share at 0.01%. Figure 1.1 illustrates the state-wise distribution of crimes against women.

Figure 1.1: State/UT-wise incidence of Crime against women in India*



* Data extracted from Crime in India report 2019.

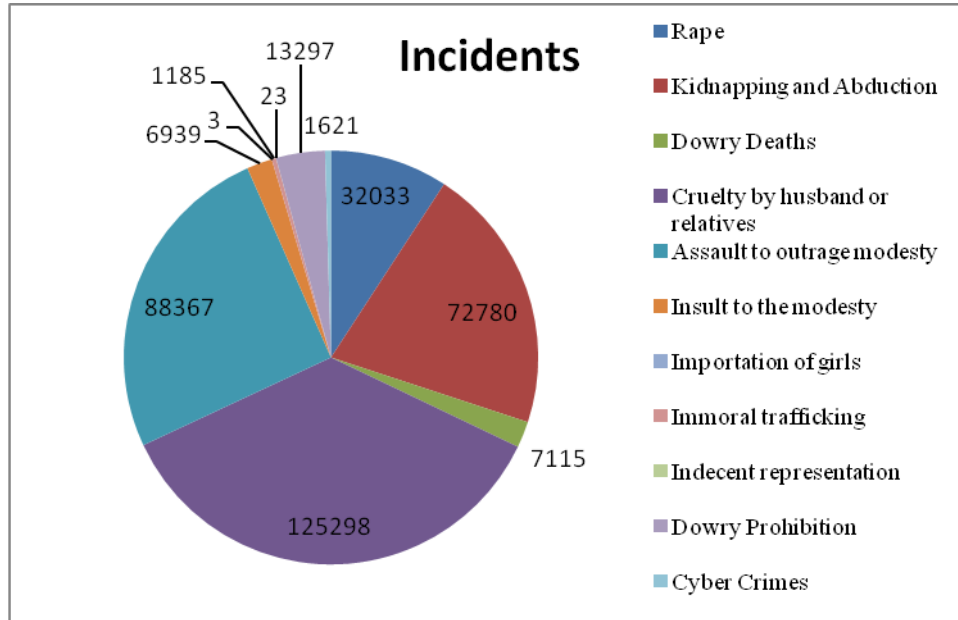
The huge incidences of crimes in the country as shown in table 1.1 represents the total number of crimes committed against women. The most horrifying trends found by a study conducted at the Centre for Women’s Development Studies (CWDS) with regard to the varieties of crimes committed against women include: increasing rate of crimes against women over the years, domestic violence including cruelty by husband and relatives has the highest crime rate; daily reported crime cases against women are 337 among which rape cases are extremely high; sexual harassment cases are tremendously increasingly over the years and so on (CWDS, 2002). Against these terrible trends, the data collected for this study equally suggest the alarming rate of crimes against women in its various forms. Table 1.2 below shows various forms of crimes committed against women in India and a graphical representation of them can be seen in figure 1.2 below:

Table 1.2: Types of Crimes against women reported from various States/UTs*

S. No.	Crime	Incidents
1	Rape	32033
2	Kidnapping and Abduction	72780
3	Dowry Deaths	7115
4	Cruelty by Husband or relatives	125298
5	Assault on Women to outrage her modesty	88367
6	Insult to the modesty of women	6939
7	Importation of girls	3
9	Immoral trafficking	1185
10	Indecent representation of women	23
11	Dowry Prohibition	13297
12	Cyber Crimes	1621
	Total	348661

* Data extracted from Crime in India Report 2013.

Figure 1.2: Graphical representation of incidences of crimes against women

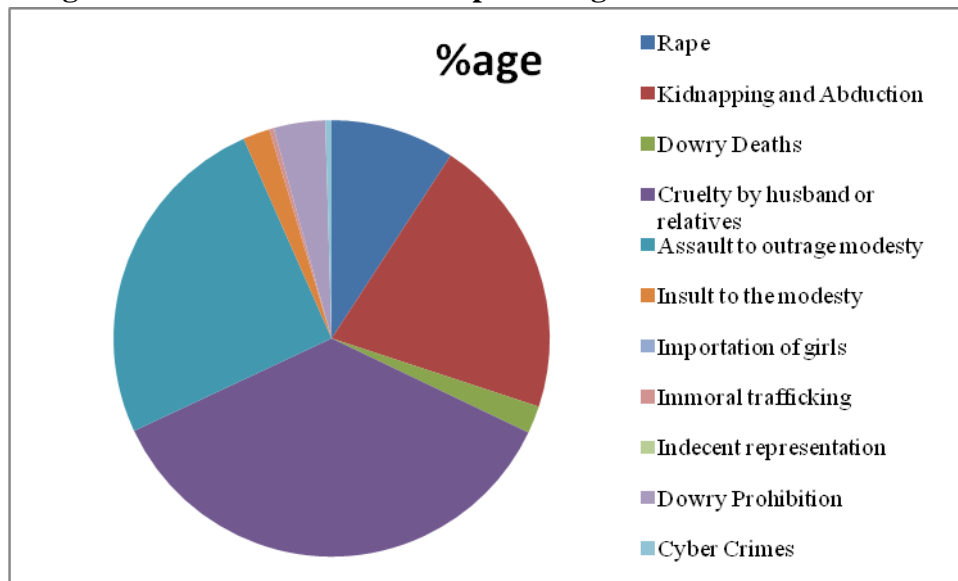


The total number of crimes against women in India as shown in table 1.1 is 405861. This figure corresponds to the cumulative figure of all such crimes as recorded from across the country and therefore the number does not represent one specific geographical region in India. Among the given total number of crimes recorded for the identified crimes, NCRB data shows that the highest number among all types of crimes against women is ‘for cruelty by husband or other relatives’ with a total of 125298 for the year 2019 while as the lowest among all is 3 recorded for the ‘importation of girls from the foreign country’ for the same year. The incidences of other forms of crimes committed against women include rape (32033 incidences), kidnapping and abduction (72780 incidences), dowry deaths (7115 incidences), assault on women (88367 incidences), insult to the modesty of women (6939 incidences), immoral trafficking (1185 incidences), indecent representation of women (23 incidences) dowry prohibition (13297 incidences) and other cyber crimes (1621 incidences).

In an attempt to understand the nature and severity of these crimes, it's essential to explore their definitions and classifications. For instance, rape is generally defined as non-consensual sexual intercourse achieved through physical force, threats, or intimidation. While legal definitions may vary, any non-consensual sexual act involving force is typically considered rape (Vijayarasa, 2010; Raphael, 2011). Kidnapping and abduction often precede rape crimes and involve forcibly taking a person, typically known to the abductor, without consent. Immoral trafficking and importing females are related crimes that involve the forced labor and sexual exploitation of women and girls, often driven by economic crises. Dowry deaths and dowry-related offenses result from the demand for property or gifts from brides, a practice that has evolved into a serious social issue. In response, laws like the Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961 were enacted to protect women from violence and harassment. Other crimes, such as indecent representation, assault, and insult to the modesty of women, fall under the umbrella of sexual harassment and are governed by various legal statutes.

The graphical representation of the percentage share of various crimes committed against women during the year 2019 are shown in figure 1.3 below:

Figure 1.3: Pie-chart shown the percentage share of various crimes



Consequences of victimization:

Victims of crimes against women endure a wide range of psychological, physical, financial, and social consequences. Psychologically, they may experience shock, anger, fear, guilt, shame, and grief, which often lead to sleep disturbances, confusion, and self-blame. Victims of domestic violence may also feel trapped, isolated, and helpless, as leaving the abusive relationship can be challenging.

Physically, victims may suffer from increased heart rate, tears, bodily aches, and even long-term disabilities. Some physical injuries are visible, while others, like brain injuries, may be less apparent but equally devastating. Financially, victims often incur significant costs, including legal expenses, housing changes, and potential job disruptions. They may face demotions, salary reductions, or job loss due to the emotional toll of the crimes. Socially, victims may be treated as "othered" within their families and communities, experiencing neglect and isolation. The criminal justice system may also re-victimize them through insensitive treatment, further compounding their distress.

Conclusion:

Crimes against women remain a complex and pressing issue with multifaceted consequences. Addressing this problem necessitates the involvement of civil society, government institutions, and international organizations. Development policies must emphasize that violence against women is unacceptable, and no woman should suffer such treatment. This paper serves as a starting point for understanding the severity of crimes against women, their various forms, and their consequences, with the hope that it will be used to form strategies to combat this pressing issue.

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