

Gender Violence Among the Women Workforce in Cuddalore District

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Abstract

The primary obstacle to women's advancement in various sectors is violence based on gender. In this male-dominated culture, it is believed that a woman's role lies within the household, and her work is viewed as domestic, leading to the perception that it lacks productivity. If half of the population is solely engaged in reproductive tasks, it will negatively affect not only the progress of women but also the overall development of the nation. Women in the workforce shoulder responsibilities both at home and at work. They face a high risk of gender-related crimes both within their residences and beyond. The recent "Me Too" movement has created significant upheaval, encouraging survivors of sexual harassment to share their experiences, despite the pressures of a biased patriarchal system. When a woman endures gender-based violence, she often seeks help from various organisations, including law enforcement, legal representatives, women's groups, and non-profit legal aid clinics. This research focused on 200 employed women who were victims of gender-based violence and sought legal support from the "Legal Aid Centre for Women" in Cuddalore District of Tamil Nadu, from 2023 to 2025. The offences reported included child sexual exploitation and domestic abuse. This paper outlines the socio demographic characteristics of victims, their employment types, vulnerabilities, and the obstacles they encounter in pursuing legal remedies.

Key Words: Victims, redressal, gender-based violence, vulnerability

I.INTRODUCTION

Gender-based violence, present in every nation, territory, and region globally, infringes upon fundamental rights and hinders women from realizing their social, economic, and political rights. Research indicates that 35 per cent of women worldwide have endured physical and/or sexual violence. The prevalence of violence directed at women and girls rank among the most significant human rights abuses across the globe. It transcends cultural, economic, and national divisions. It is estimated that one in three women will confront physical or sexual violence at some point in her life. This type of violence erodes the health, dignity, security, and independence of those affected, yet it continues to be enveloped in a veil of silence. Those who experience such violence may face serious sexual and reproductive health outcomes, including coerced and unwanted pregnancies, dangerous abortions, traumatic fistulas, sexually transmitted infections such as HIV, and even fatality. The cycle of violence persists due to insufficient justice, limited resources, and the absence of economic options, leading survivors to rely on their abusers. For instance, in the United States, a mere six per cent of rapists are expected to be imprisoned, and perpetrators of honour killings globally seldom face legal action. This lack of accountability enables violent actors and groups to misuse their authority without fear of consequences.

Justification for the Research: In light of examining women's progress in various domains and the gender disparities present, it is crucial to investigate the violence faced by working women, as it serves as an obstacle to advancement. This study assesses the occurrences of violence both within domestic settings and in public spheres, as well as how victims seek legal recourse.

Goals:

The aim of this research is to analyse the trends of violence against working women, to identify their initial avenues for support following an incident of violence, to investigate the unique obstacles working women encounter when victimized, to examine the correlations between violence and other factors, and to assess the motives behind compromises made by survivors.

Methods and Materials

The current research is both descriptive and exploratory in nature, incorporating quantitative factors. It employed non-probability sampling with a purposive approach, focusing on an organization that provides support to women seeking legal assistance. The Legal Aid Centre for Women, based in the Cuddalore District of Tamil Nadu, is a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO). Over the last twenty years, the Centre has offered complimentary legal guidance to women, helping them navigate from police stations to courts and providing counselling for informed choices. Additionally, the Centre advocates against gender-based violence

affecting all women. It organizes workshops and seminars aimed at generating public awareness against such offenses. The working women were experienced violence and wish to seek legal help visit the centre every Saturdays. During these sessions, two advocates, two social workers, and a counsellor are available. For this research, from a total of 350 women who visited the legal aid centre between 2023 and 2025, 200 employed women were chosen for the study. Since the author was among the advocates in those sessions, the women were personally interviewed. Additional information was gathered from the records maintained by the centre.

Review of Literature

A study conducted by an NGO in Nagpur (2004) surveyed 600 employed women across 10 districts in Maharashtra through random sampling, revealing that 37% of these women experience sexual harassment at work (SHW). The highest number of victims fell within the 18-23 age range. Among those facing SHW, 17% were employed in the organized sector, while 20% worked in the unorganized sector. The issue is particularly widespread among married women. The International Labour Organisation (2014) indicates that women's participation in the workforce in India is significantly low. Even though a large number of Indian women engage in work and support the economy, a considerable amount of this labour is not officially recognized or recorded in statistics, which leads to underreporting of women's contributions. In India, a high percentage of women classify their status as being involved in household duties. The issue of violence directed at women affects not only the survivors but also many other women. The threat of violence can discourage women from seeking education, participating in work, or asserting their political rights and voices (UNDP 2018). The theoretical framework posits that as the perception of crime against women rises, the expenses associated with commuting to work also increase. This raises the cost for women to engage in the workforce, suggesting that higher perceived risks of crime may lead to lower participation rates among women in labour markets (Chakraborty, Tanika. 2017). Research indicates that domestic violence (DV) escalates significantly when women enter the labour force in India. There are emotional costs for men related to the disruption of traditional gender roles, with violence acting as an expression of those emotional costs. Violence is viewed as a means to re-establish the favoured dynamics at home. The paper suggests that when a wife becomes employed, a husband may feel increasingly justified in resorting to violence to regain power. However, this does not imply that employment does not empower women. Gender norms may take time to adapt to the presence of women in the workforce (Paul, Solini, 2014).

Results and Discussion

Table -1
Percentage Distribution of Respondents by Socio-Economic & Demographic Profile

Sl. No.	SED Variables	No. of Respondents (N=200)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Religion	Hindu	96	48.0
		Christian	73	36.5
		Muslim	31	15.5
2	Caste	SC / ST	136	68
		MBC	26	13
		Others	38	19.0
3	Educational Attainment	Illiterate	48	24
		School	24	12
		College	28	14
		Professional	100	50
4	Occupation	Organized	127	63.5
		Unorganized	73	36.5
5	Monthly Income Level (In Rs.)	Less than Rs.20,000	57	28.5
		Rs.20,001 - Rs.40,000	68	34
		Rs.40,001 - Rs.60,000	48	24
		More than Rs.60,000	27	13.5
6	Age	Less than 18 years	59	29.5
		19-24 years	79	39.5
		25 – 35 years	40	20
		Above 36 years	22	11
7	Marital Status	Married	120	60
		Unmarried	80	40
Total			200	100

The table reveals that a large majority, 96 participants (48%), identified as Hindus, while 73 (36.5%) belonged to other faiths, and the remaining 31 (15.5%) were Muslims. The table indicates that among the SC/ST women, 136 participants (68%) were from the MBC category, while 26 women (13%) belonged to another group, and the remaining 38 women (19%) were classified as OCs. The table shows that a significant portion, 100 women (50%), held professional qualifications; 24 women (12%) had completed their school education, while 28 women (14%) had attained a college education. The remaining 48 women (24%) were illiterate. The table demonstrates that 73 women, or 36.5% of the participants, were employed in

the unorganised sector, while the remaining 127 women, accounting for 63.5%, worked in the organised sector. The table indicates that out of 200 participants, 59 women (29.5%) were under 18 years of age, 79 women (39.5%) fell within the age of 19 - 24 years, 20% were aged between 25 and 35 years, and 11% were older than 36 years. The table highlights those 120 women, representing 60% of the participants were married, and 80 women, or 40%, of women were not married in the study area.

Table -2
Percentage Distribution of Respondents by Gender Violence among the women workforce

Gender Violence	No. of Respondents (N=200)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Domestic Violence	No	130	65.0
	Yes	70	35.0
Sexual Harassment at Work Place	No	126	63.0
	Yes	74	37.0
Child Sexual Abuse	No	50	84.7
	Yes	9	15.3
Sexual Assault	No	120	60
	Yes	80	40
False Promise of Marriage	No	154	77.0
	Yes	46	23.0
First Point of Contact	No	185	92.5
	Yes	15	7.5
Police Station	No	195	97.5
	Yes	05	2.5
Advocate	No	187	93.5
	Yes	13	6.5
Nature of Disposal	No	188	94.0
	Yes	12	6.0
Total		200	100

The table presented above indicates that almost 130 individuals, or 65%, experience Domestic Violence. Among them, 70 individuals, translating to 35%, are working women who face Domestic Violence. A significant majority, 126 participants, representing 63%, have reported no experiences of sexual harassment at their workplaces. Additionally, a large number of 50 women, or 84.7%, whose children belong to the participants have not encountered child sexual abuse. Furthermore, 120 participants, making up 60%, stated that they are not victims of sexual assaults. A large portion of women, totalling 154 or 77%, have experienced the crime involving false promises of marriage. A notable majority, 185 participants,

accounting for 92.5%, did not seek assistance from the centre for legal recourse initially. Similarly, the majority of women, 195 participants or 97.5% did not visit police stations before reaching the centre. Moreover, only 187 individuals, representing 93.5%, did not consult advocates right after the incident occurred. Finally, a majority, consisting of 188 participants or 94%, did not make compromises.

ANOVA

Statistical analysis is a technique that divides a data set's overall variability into two components: random and systematic component. Random factors have no significant impact on the data set in question, whereas systematic factors do. The ANOVA test is used in a regression analysis to see how independent factors affect the dependent variable.

Table -3
One Way Analysis of Gender Violence among the Women Workforce and Age Group

		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F – value	Sig.
Domestic Violence	Between Groups	.093	2	.046	.274	.761
	Within Groups	23.132	197	.169		
	Total	23.225	199			
Sexual Harassment at work place	Between Groups	.139	2	.070	.221	.802
	Within Groups	43.137	197	.315		
	Total	43.276	199			
Child sexual abuse	Between Groups	.358	2	.179	.748	.475
	Within Groups	32.838	197	.240		
	Total	33.196	199			
Sexual Assault	Between Groups	.700	2	.350	1.830	.164
	Within Groups	26.200	197	.191		
	Total	26.900	199			
False Promise of Marriage	Between Groups	2.526	2	1.263	5.790	.004**
	Within Groups	29.885	197	.218		
	Total	32.411	199			

According to the above table, there is no substantial mean difference on Gender violence among the women workforce and age group in terms of Convenience ($F = .274$; $P > 0.05$), Domestic Violence ($F = .221$; $P > 0.05$), Sexual Harassment at work place ($F = .748$; $P > 0.004$), Child sexual abuse ($F = 1.830$; $P > 0.05$) at the 5% level. The null hypothesis is so accepted. At the 5% level, F – Child

sexual abuse (5.790; P0.05) is significant. As a result, the null hypothesis has been rejected, implying that Gender violence among the women workforce and age.

Factor Analysis

Compounded analysis is a statistical process for discovering limited items of factors that can be used to indicate correlations between groups of related variables.

Table- 4
Reliability Analysis Results

Cronbach's Gender violence among the women workforce alpha value	Items
.887	18

Reliability refers to the likelihood of getting the same result if a measurement is repeated. A researcher can develop a scale of those dimensions to measure the factor study as a whole using Cronbach's alpha for internal reliability of a series of questions after finding the dimensions underlying a factor (scales) Cronbach's. Gender violence among the women workforce has an alpha value of 0.851. (85.1%). It is a very good acceptable value level.

Table 5
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Sampling Adequacy Measure Statistics

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Sampling Adequacy Measure	.887
The Sphericity Test by Bartlett	1441.452
	342
	.000
	21115.638
	628
	.000

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value measures the sampling sufficiency of a variable, indicating how much of its volatility is related to underlying variables. If the value is close up to 1.0, a factor analysis can be useful. If the value is less than 0.50, the factor analysis result will most likely be useless. In this study, the KMO Sampling Adequacy Measure value is 0.804. This indicates that there is a high level of sufficiency.

Table - 6
Total variance

Total Variance Explained						
Element	Loading Extraction of Sums of Square			Loading of Rotation Sums of Square		
	Total	Variance %	Cumulative %	Total	Variance %	Cumulative %
1	7.032	23.441	33.441	3.533	8.444	8.444
2	2.940	6.466	39.906	3.481	8.270	16.714
3	2.736	5.787	35.693	3.321	7.735	24.449
4	2.577	5.257	60.950	3.218	7.394	31.843
5	2.475	4.917	65.868	3.893	6.309	38.152
6	2.318	4.394	60.262	3.748	5.826	43.978
7	2.269	4.230	64.492	3.701	5.671	49.649

The total variation explained for the 7 extracted components is 49.649%, as shown in the table above.

Discussions and Findings

Domestic Violence

The cross-sectional research indicated that out of 45 instances of domestic abuse, 9 victims from an organized workplace and 36 from an unorganized setting were identified. A noteworthy trend is that employed women are beginning to report these incidents, potentially due to their financial independence. Within the age groups of 24-29 and 30-35, there were 39 reported cases, highlighting a greater susceptibility among women in these ranges. Typically, victims of domestic violence either seek assistance from police stations, with 19 instances, or turn to legal representatives, with 9 cases. When a husband pursues legal action, the affected woman tends to contact an attorney. In 4 instances, victims engaged with senior police officers based on the seriousness of the abuse. However, those women reported that these efforts were largely unhelpful, as junior officers would chastise them for reaching out to higher authorities. Thirteen women sought help from the centre, aiming for a peaceful resolution and a desire to reconcile with their partners. It is suggested that initiating action against their spouse under “The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005” is wise, yet the actual application of the law undermines the very goals of the legislation. Most victims wished to put an end to the abuse instead of incarcerating their husbands. No level of counselling can be effective if the husband remains unyielding. Fourteen cases were resolved peacefully, either by reconciling or separating. A total of 31 cases proceeded to court.

Sexual Harassment at Work Places

Women in the workforce face increased susceptibility to sexual harassment at work, yet this crime remains largely unreported due to feelings of shame and fear of retaliation. The research indicates that nine individuals aged 18 to 23 and six individuals aged 24 to 29 experienced sexual harassment at work. A total of 15 individuals reached out to the support centre, while four sought help from an advocate. It can be concluded that these victims may not have been knowledgeable about the channels for filing complaints or perhaps lacked trust in them, or the mechanisms were not established at their workplaces. Out of the 19 victims, four were employed in the organized sector, while 15 were from the unorganized sector. It is alarming to note that, with the exception of one individual, the rest did not take further action regarding their cases. Although the Sexual Harassment (Prohibition, Prevention and Protection) Act of 2012 exists, its enforcement is inconsistent and does not prioritize the needs of the victims.

Child Sexual Abuse

The offspring of employed mothers are at risk of child sexual abuse. With both parents absent from the household, these children may become targets for offenders. In all instances mentioned, the abusers are individuals familiar to the children. Initially, all the parents reported the incidents to the nearby police station. One child falls within the 5-10 age category, while the other two belong to the 11-14 age range. The mother of one child is employed in the formal sector. The other two mothers are engaged in the informal sector. The offenders exploited the parents' absence to sexually assault the minors. Two of the incidents reached an out-of-court settlement, whereas the last case is still awaiting trial in the court. The mother who continued with the legal proceedings works as a domestic helper. Silence is often the expected response within the culture surrounding child sexual abuse. Factors such as stigma, community pressure, concerns for the child's future, fear of backlash, and unwelcoming attitudes from officers contribute significantly to the reluctance to report these offenses. In 2012, the Government passed "The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences" Act. Although the legislation represents significant progress, the persistent mindset of those in law enforcement hampers effective implementation.

Sexual Assaults

All three individuals who suffered were employed in an informal sector. One was engaged in a tailoring shop, while the other two were employed as workers in private stores. The assailants are all familiar individuals. One is the victim's boss. Another is the bus driver on which the victim frequently commuted. The third individual was a neighbour. Each of the three victims firmly asserted that they did not provide consent and that the sexual actions were not mutual. Despite the fact

that both the victims and the offenders knew each other, this interaction was not consensual. Initially, the victims went to the police station before reaching out to the centre. The centre assisted them in continuing with their cases, which are currently awaiting trial.

False Promise of Marriage

All instances were noted within the informal sector. Thirteen instances involved individuals aged between 18 and 23, while nine pertained to those aged 24 to 29. The victims clearly articulated their lack of consent regarding the sexual activities. These individuals were linked to their offenders through misleading promises of marriage. Subsequently, the offenders either withdrew from the marriage proposal independently or were influenced to do so, citing reasons related to caste or social status. Seven victims sought assistance at the center, whereas fifteen reached out to the police station. There is no distinct legal clause addressing this crime. However, it may be classified as rape under the provisions of Section 90 and several Supreme Court rulings. There is no legislation obliging the offender to uphold the marriage promise. Thus, even if the victim initiates legal proceedings, she will face the battle alone. In contrast, the offender might legally wed another woman and view the court process as a casual outing. Consequently, nineteen victims opted for settlement with the offenders, while only three individuals chose to pursue their legal case. Yet, within the judicial system, victims can negotiate a settlement at any point prior to a decision being rendered. Moreover, the male-dominated mentality of law enforcement agencies tends to blame the victims and regard the act as consensual sexual activity.

II.CONCLUSION

Although all crimes are subject to punitive measures under either the Indian Penal Code or specific laws, the execution of these laws tends to be slow, inconsistent, and often flawed. The existing myths within a male-dominated society, along with the stigma surrounding these offenses, further exacerbate the situation. As a result, it is necessary to conduct gender sensitization training for relevant parties on a regular basis. Strategies such as empowering women and girls, transforming gender roles and societal beliefs, and increasing awareness on a global scale can help tackle the issue. Additionally, it is crucial to develop gender-oriented labour policies, which include providing on-site childcare facilities, implementing two days of paid menstrual leave, and granting paid or unpaid time off to attend court proceedings for women affected by Gender-Based Violence. Lastly, it is important to foster widespread social movements against Gender-Based Crimes, similar to the "Me Too" initiative. "I believe that the rights of women and girls are the unfinished business in the 21st century" – Hillary Clinton.

III. REFERENCES

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