

**VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN
KERALA - A STUDY OF ITS CAUSES**

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By

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CONCLUSION

MAJOR FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The present study analyzed the gender issues of Modern Kerala between AD. 1956 -2016 and reached the conclusion that despite high female literacy and other basic female capabilities, violence against women in Kerala is increasing. The inquiry into the socio-economic, political and educational situation of women in Kerala pointed out that their status and economic freedom are in very pathetic condition. The police records and reports many cases of crime against women, but much of the violence goes unreported. In fact, women face violence at the hands of their protectors.

The gender disparities are also seen in the higher education sector particularly in technical field. The decision making power of man and ignorance of woman about modern technologies, lead woman as second citizen and there by economic dependency.

According to Praveena Kodoth there is growing uneasiness with Kerala's social development outcomes linked to non- conventional indicators as in the rising visibility of gender based violence, mental ill health among women, and the rapid growth and spread of dowry and related crimes.

Judit Butler talks about how the universal category ignores the very important distinction between sex and gender. Sex is biological and gender is sociological. Butler says that women must become 'subjects not objects' rhetoric of traditional feminism- is inherently messed up and reinforces the patriarchal status quo which is already oppressing us.

Nowadays, the dowry rates in all communities especially in Christians, Muslims and among the Ezhavas of Hindu community, are highly increase. Dowry continues to be cited empirically as a reason for denying women their inheritance rights (Chowdhary, 1994: 330).

Praveena Kodoth remarks that ‘modern’ dowry has grown through the generalization of gendered market dynamic of match making at the cost of previously heterogeneous bases of exchange. Bride grooms are privileged for their access to modern education and salaried jobs in the ‘organized sector’, transnational employment in conditions of globalization.

A study report of “Sakhi” Women Resource Centre (2005) reported that there are 2-3 cases of physical violence are reporting daily in each district hospitals of Kerala. The physical violence affects the mental health and it leads to suicidal attempts.

The present study reveals the fact that the status of women in Kerala is an inferior condition both in domestic and outside the home. Women are embedded within households and kinship systems. The men folk take precedence in almost all varieties of ordered human activity in the cultured world. This tremendous expansion has been made possible by the multi-faceted power of freedom available to men, but woman lack this opportunity.

The present study finds that almost 72% of women are victims of domestic violence. (Nearly 78%of the total sample of women from the rural areas (Villages like Panavoor, Anad, Pullampara, Manickal,Vembayam, Thonnakkal, Mudakkal) reported marital violence and 66% from urban areas(Thiruvananthapuram,Peroorkada,Sreekaryam,Vattiyoorkkavu,Kilimannoor,Venjaramoodu(town area), Nedumangad(town area) etc.) reported violence from their husband and relatives). Thiruvananthapuram is the first district that shows the highest increasing trend of crimes against women in all the years since 2007. The cities of Kerala, ie, Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Ernakulam, and Kozhicode become the hub of increasing violence.

Analysis of the socio-economic background of the respondents proved that dowry related issues, alcohol habits of husband, early marriages and mal-adjustments, marital rape etc. may increase the intensity of domestic violence. Domestic violence leads to stress and stress related mental illness and these mental health problems have a higher risk for suicide and suicide attempts.

Domestic violence and related health problems are another important issue which has serious consequence for woman's physical, mental and reproductive health. Marital stress is a major reason for mental ill- health. The domestic violence leads to physical injuries and thereby causes physical ill health.

The stigma of violence against women within homes especially from husbands, the unwillingness to relieve the experiences, the possibility of re-victimization and the shame and blame prevents them from disclosing the information to outsiders.

Husband expects 'proper behavior' from his wife. i.e she must be look after his children carefully , do household chores, keep away from neighbor's issues, sexually be faithful and satisfying.

There are many types of violence against women in community. They are ; rape, kidnapping and abduction, sexual harassments, molestation and intimidation in public places and workplaces, stripping and shaming of women, trafficking and forced prostitution, commercial interest of sex working industry, importation of girls, enticement of married women etc. In Public places women experiences the problem of violence like robbery of young men in bikes wearing helmets and snatching ornaments, nuisance of drunkards, nuisance in vehicles, in public toilets, secluded paths, in slum areas, etc.

One of the objectives of the study was to find out the unequal wage distribution and the insecurity of job that lead women to low work participation rate. Today, almost all working women are vulnerable to sexual harassment irrespective of their status, personal characteristics and types of their employment.

Women professionals are facing harassments at and exploitations at work places at the hands of superior officers, coworkers and even customers. Today, almost all working women are vulnerable to sexual harassment irrespective of their status, personal characteristics and the types of their

employment. Women experience a variety of behaviors ranging from sexist comments to sexual assault. In addition to this the feeling of fear, anxiety, intimidation and helplessness etc produces in working women.

A greater portion of women working as casual laborers are experience any type of violence in their lifetime. They are victims of harassments and exploitations at work places. Women do not respond against these atrocities and exploitations due to the fear of their financial constrains.

The Study found that the wage rate of women is less than the wage rate of males. It is a severe discrimination and it is illegal to pay a lower wage to a female worker doing hard manual labour like agriculture and construction works.

Economic violence is another form of violence perpetrated usually by males both in the domestic, professional and social field. The abuser controls every economic resource of victims. Preventing the victim from completing education or obtaining employment, with holding money and forcing the victim to beg for the money, non- payment of rent in case of a rented accommodation, forcibly taking away the salary, income or wage, selling 'stridhan' or any other valuables without informing or without consent, not allowing to use clothes or articles of general household use, forcing to leave the house preventing from accessing any part of the house. etc are economic abuses. It is an economic black mailing of man, denial of property rights and control over her financial freedom.

While considering the political participation of women in Kerala, the study reports reveal the fact that the numbers of women politicians are low. A very few women participate in political realm as well. At the urban area, women despite their free-spirited participation in Politics are highly marginalized within their own local space. The patrifocal family structure ban women from political interferences.

The image of women in advertisements echoes the traditional patriarchal attitudes and prejudices, reinforcing the myth that a woman is born to be a house wife, mother or a commodity. Whether the print media or audio-visual media is the concern for problems of women is lacking. But these media sensationalizing women related issues. The social values perpetuated by the media in general tend to view women as helpless, orthodox and predominantly as sex objects.

While checking the laws which prepared for the protection of women, some of the laws have not been functioning properly for example, 'The Dowry prohibition Act'. The system of 'dowry' continues even now in all communities. The prevalence of sexual harassments public nuisance and domestic violence are not exceptions. Here arises the importance of laws to prevent the crimes against women. But the law by itself cannot change the social ethos of society.

Criminal laws enacted to prevent crimes against women are not effectively implemented in the Court. Instead of giving importance to the criminal proceedings and technicalities, importance should be given to circumstantial evidences while dealing with cases of dowry death, cruelty by relatives of the husband, suicide etc. In addition to this, in most of the existing laws have loopholes which prevent the effective implantation of the provisions contained in the law. Sometimes the laws are twisting for the sake of political leaders and for important personalities.

Women's economic dependency upon men, man's patriarchal attitude, and the absence of proper functioning of laws are the major reasons for their continuous exploitation which are supported by culture and religion.

The following ***recommendations*** have been drawn, on the basis of the study including the interaction with the victims and key personnel through interviews and discussions.

More attention needed to develop safe and qualitative improvement programmes and planning education. Education facilitates woman to move out of a certain limited domain and enable her to respond against the economic dependency and social evils.

Economic assistance must be given for the higher education of girls in educationally and economically backward families. The economic burden of Schools and Colleges has to be minimized by promoting open universities and distance learning. Co-education should be encouraged. The training programmes to be implemented for developing women skills.

Co-education for girls and boys, gender and sex education in school, promotion of mutual respect among children as human beings, children should be education on abuse etc.

Women and property right has also much importance in present society. Not only woman's property ownership, but also their access to property must be strongly established. The women should be capacitated to have control over their property and earnings.

Parents should build confidence in their children to deal issues positively.

The Government should take initiative to encourage the self-help groups for the economic empowerment of women. The Kudumbasree movement in Kerala has great potential to make women conscious of their safety in public places and to work towards educating young women to learn self defense mechanisms.

The Governmental activities and policies should be taken to provide adequate protection for women against domestic violence. The Dowry prohibition Act, The Domestic violence prohibition Act, Maternal benefit Act, Property rights Act etc. have an important role in minimizing violence against women.

Gender Budget: Ensure that budgets of governments earmark adequate budget for implementing safety for girls and women and other marginalized.

Very often incidences and experiences of street harassments are silenced and dismissed. But the public violence cases are increasing day by day. Women should respond and self protect against this menace. Women should be empowered to respond and take self care. Parents should build confidence in their children to deal issues positively.

People need to be more sensitive to women safety issues. The physical planning of the city is to be improved, considering gender specific needs like rest rooms. Authorities should take measures to ensure the safety of women and girls in public vehicles, in bus stands, railways stations and in public gathering places.

Strict enforcement of the laws regarding dowry should be made for reducing the occurrence of domestic violence. Mobile Courts should be established in the rural/ urban areas to assure the active functioning of Police force and strict law enforcement. Fast settlement of cases and strict implementation of Law and severe punishment should be given to the perpetrators. Cyber crimes should be controlled with the help of police. Helpline numbers and CCTV displays to be shown where it is visible to all.

Government should implement and evaluate the activities of Women Cells and Jagratha Samitis and special institutional mechanisms to settle relate complaints. Information regarding all agencies(including NGOs) dealing with domestic violence should be made available to all health care institutions for their reference resulting in the provision of services as and when required.

List of NGOs and other governmental organizations dealing with women's issues should be made known to the public. Easy access to protective laws should be made available for women through women's organizations and NGO's.

Marriage counseling programmes and awareness programmes against alcohol consumption should be arranged through the local governing bodies.

Poverty among the marginalized sections which is one of the root causes of violence remains unaddressed. The place of Dalits, especially Dalit women is still at the periphery of society and they experienced caste based socio-economic and psychological isolation. The plight of Adivasi women in certain areas of Kerala like Attappadi and Wynad is miserable. The pathetic condition of the other socially backward women also should be addressed.

Frequent legal awareness camps for women empowerment and spreading social awareness about women's status and rights should be organized in rural /urban areas.
