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### RESEARCH ARTICLE

#### INVISIBLE VICTIMS: INVESTIGATING THE UNREPORTED CASES OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN REMOTE AREAS

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#### Abstract

To achieve the aforementioned aims, the following recommendations are proposed: This study aims to examine the current deficiency in gender awareness among individuals employed in the media and ICT industries, irrespective of their gender, particularly those holding senior and managerial roles. This proposal aims to provide a formal definition and create normative standards for gender equality within the media and information and communication technology (ICT) industries. Strategies and Policy Frameworks for Promoting Equality in Media Organisations It is imperative to enforce a requirement for media organisations to implement formal and comprehensive plans and policy frameworks that promote equality and integration within their organisational structures. Incorporate methods for monitoring, assessment, and action into these frameworks to guarantee their efficacy. It is imperative that media and ICT businesses be obligated to comply with these measures as a mandatory requirement for their operation.

#### Introduction

Despite comprising half of the global population, women are subjected to many forms of atrocities committed by their male counterparts worldwide. The study of the development of human society aims to comprehend the historical context and inherent characteristics of women's subordination, thereby shedding light on the intricate dynamics of gender-related concerns. The global spotlight has been

directed towards the issue of women's oppression, which encompasses both physical assault and psychological anguish. Moreover, the mass media has assumed a crucial role in shedding light on diverse gender issues and their inherent problem of differing opinions in a more comprehensive manner. In this particular scenario, it is imperative to ascertain the preliminary findings pertaining to the distribution of information of diverse perspectives within the media landscape. Moreover, the present study aims to investigate the sociocultural aspects of gender-related

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matters through an analysis of media coverage from an Indian standpoint.

### **Violence against women- a global concern**

The issue of violence against women (VAW) is a multifaceted social phenomenon in modern civilizations. The construction of this phenomenon has exhibited variations in form and intensity throughout different societies. It is vital to comprehend the delineation of violence and its demarcation from non-violent actions. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO, 1997), violence against women and girls is a substantial concern in the context of health and human rights. The occurrence of violence directed at women is a significant obstacle to the advancement of women's empowerment and development. Furthermore, it has a detrimental impact on the progress of women, impeding the achievement of equality across various social and cultural domains. Moreover, these elements also contribute significantly to the evolving landscape of human rights concerns in the modern day.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO) in 2020, a significant proportion of women between the ages of 15 and 49 who have been involved in a romantic relationship have experienced instances of physical or sexual violence perpetrated by their intimate partner at least once over their career, starting from the age of 15. The prevalence rates of lifetime intimate partner violence vary across different regions. In the Western Pacific, the estimated prevalence is 20%, while in high-income countries and Europe, it is 22%. In the WHO Regions of the Americas, the estimated prevalence is 25%. On the other hand, the WHO African region has a higher estimated prevalence of 33%, followed by the WHO Eastern Mediterranean region with 31%, and the WHO South-East Asia region with 33%.

The COVID-19 pandemic lockdown has led to heightened social and economic consequences, particularly in relation to the vulnerability of women to violent partners and established risk factors. Additionally, access to essential services has been restricted for women during this period. The occurrence of humanitarian crises and displacement

has the potential to exacerbate pre-existing instances of violence, including intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence. These advancements may potentially give rise to novel manifestations of violence targeting women.

### **Women's Position in Indian Context**

In South Asia, especially in countries like India and Pakistan, discrimination against women has continued for generations. The position, power, and status of the daughter, wife, and widow have changed over time. The recorded history of India and its people is available from the various religious texts, which recorded the socio-economic and cultural patterns of the times. Around 2500 B.C., it is presumed there has been invasion into the Indian sub-continent by a warrior race from Central Asia who called themselves Aryans. Arya Sanskrit means noble - A tall, fair-skinned race who presumably arrived from Central Asia around 2500 B.C. and settled in Iran and northern India (Anne Cowardin -Bach (1992).

### **Women in the post independent India**

The Indian independence movement had significant female participation, with women playing a notable role in the struggle for freedom. Post-independence, India implemented a range of legal and administrative measures with the explicit intention of establishing safeguards for women's education, employment, health, and public participation. The Indian constitution explicitly forbids all forms of discrimination on the basis of gender, sex, caste, class, religion, and language. The constitution guarantees the principles of equality before the law, universal suffrage, prohibition of child marriages, and equal opportunity in employment and education. The implementation of legislative measures such as the Abolition of Devadasi System, the Child Marriages Prohibition Act, the Prevention of Sati, the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, the Dowry Prohibition Act, the Maternity Benefits Act, and the relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) pertaining to the prevention of indecent portrayal of women, rape, and assault on the modesty of women with the intent to outrage her modesty, represent significant legal safeguards established for women in our nation. The persistent endeavors of the

government, in conjunction with the endeavors of women's movements, scholars, civil society organizations, and grassroots movements, have effectively facilitated the empowerment of women in domains such as education, employment, healthcare, and legal protections. In contemporary society, women have attained prominent positions across a wide range of fields that were formerly dominated by men, including the military, medicine, athletics, engineering, aeronautics, space technology, media, politics, and various others.

### **Status of women compared to world countries**

Despite the significant strides made by both Indian women and men in advancing women's empowerment, there remain still obstacles that still need to be tackled. As evidenced by the 2011 census data, the literacy rates of males and females differ significantly. Specifically, the data reveals that 82% of males and 65% of females possess reading skills. It is worth noting that these figures represent a notable gain when compared to previous years. However, it underscores the presence of a gender disparity between males and females, placing India at a disadvantage in comparison to other nations worldwide in terms of gender equality. Moreover, the political engagement of women in India is disheartening, as it is seen that merely 10.11% of women hold positions as members of parliament. According to the information provided by the World Women in Parliament organization, India is positioned at the 111th rank out of 150 nations. The current state of health remains unfavorable, as seen by elevated maternal death rates, indicating a pressing need for increased focus and awareness on women's health concerns. In the present environment, various manifestations of criminal activities and acts of violence targeting women are prevalent within Indian society, becoming an integral aspect of the lived experiences of women in the country.

### **Gender based discrimination**

The underlying causes of violence against women can be traced back to the systemic discrimination that women face due to their gender.

According to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), discrimination against women encompasses any act of differentiation, exclusion, or limitation based on gender that results in the impairment or negation of women's ability to exercise their human rights or fundamental freedoms, regardless of their marital status. This discrimination is in violation of the principle of equality between men and women, and can occur in various domains such as politics, economics, society, culture, civil matters, or any other relevant sphere. In the contemporary era, enduring manifestations of violence rooted in tradition and culture persist. These include early marriages, disparities in educational opportunities favoring male children over their female counterparts, the practice of sex-selective abortions and female feticides, instances of spousal abuse, physical and verbal mistreatment based on gender, discriminatory customs such as the marking of widows' foreheads with tattoos, a rise in maternal suicides resulting from domestic issues, coercive confinement to traditional roles of homemaking and child-rearing, incidents of sexual harassment, and the denial of agency in matters of marriage, among others. The majority of the aforementioned daily experiences of women are constructed around discriminatory behaviors. Furthermore, it is observed that within numerous houses, women adhere to a customary practice of consuming food subsequent to the male members. Additionally, women often assume a subordinate position in family dynamics, standing in front of male members and facing limitations in expressing their opinions within communal settings.

Crimes against women up by 25% in Andhra Pradesh and Stand sixth in country in crimes against women:

The rise in incidents of violence against women suggests an improvement in the efficacy of the criminal justice system. According to a year-end assessment conducted by the state police on December 28, 2021, there has been a notable increase of more than 25% in the incidence of crimes targeting women in 2021, as compared to the preceding year. According to the HT Archive,

In the month of April in the current year, a 23-year-old lady belonging to the Dalit community was subjected to a gang rape incident that occurred in the town of Vijayawada. The murder of a 40-year-old homemaker in Guntur district was reported more than a week after the incident occurred. The autopsy findings have verified that the individual in question was subjected to a gang rape and subsequently died as a result of strangulation. On May 1st, an incident occurred at the Repalle train station in the Bapatla area, including the attack and rape of a 25-year-old pregnant lady. On the subsequent day, a case of gang rape involving a 26-year-old woman who is a mother of two children was reported in the Manyam district.

According to available information, a total of 20 instances of acts of violence against women, encompassing sexual assault, stalking, and homicide, have been documented in the state of Andhra Pradesh throughout the preceding two-month period.

The state police conducted a year-end assessment on December 28, 2021, which indicated a significant increase of more than 25% in the number of cases related to crimes against women in 2021, as compared to the preceding year. The report indicates that the state police have disclosed figures showing a total of 127,127 cognizable crimes occurring inside the state, in comparison to the figure of 122,987 recorded in the year 2020. The incidence of crimes against women, accounting for 14% of the total crimes within the state, had an increase from 14,603 incidents in 2020 to 17,736 instances in 2021.

According to the recently released report by the National Crime Records Bureau, Andhra Pradesh ranked sixth among the states in terms of crime rate in the year 2019. The state recorded a crime rate of 227.9 instances per one lakh population. In contrast, Haryana emerged as the state with the highest crime rate, with 386.4 crimes per lakh.

A decline in incidents of violent crimes has been observed in the State as compared to the data from 2017. In the year 2017, a total of 8,288 cases were recorded. However, in the subsequent year of 2018, the number of reported cases decreased to 8,211. Furthermore, in the year 2019, the number of reported

cases further declined to 7,670. There has been a noticeable rise in instances of criminal activities targeting women. 17,746 cases were filed in 2019 as against 16,348 in 2018.

In 2019, there were a total of 7,851 reported occurrences pertaining to domestic violence committed by spouses and their relatives. Additionally, there were 1,086 cases of rape, with 542 victims below the age of 18 and 542 victims above the age of 18. Furthermore, there were 112 instances of dowry murders, 589 cases of kidnapping, and three incidents of acid assaults. There has been a notable decline in instances of criminal offenses perpetrated against minors in the year 2019, in comparison to the preceding two years.

The number of recorded cases in the years 2017, 2018, and 2019 were 2,392, 2,652, and 2,523, respectively. In relation to the incidence of violent crimes documented in the year 2019, the recorded occurrences encompassed 902 instances of kidnapping, 1,086 instances of rape, 177 instances of attempted rape, 310 instances of robbery, and 473 instances of arson. There are further instances comprising 518 instances of abetments of suicide, 1,536 instances of attempted murder, seven instances of culpable homicides, 345 instances of attempted suicide, 50 instances of foeticide and abandonment of children, and 4,444 instances of attack on women with purpose to outrage their modesty. Andhra Pradesh (AP) ranked ninth in the country, with Odisha dominating the standings. In the year 2019, a total of 2,396 incidents of violence against women were reported. A total of 891 occurrences of sexual harassment were reported under Section 354A of the Indian Penal Code (IPC).

A total of 22 instances of workplace harassment were recorded, while 35 cases were reported in the context of public transport, and 60 cases occurred within shelter homes. Additionally, there were 265 reported incidents of disrobing of women, 111 instances of voyeurism, and 782 cases of stalking. A total of 110 instances of political unrest were documented. In the year 2019, a total of 11,301 incidents of theft and 3,857 incidents of burglary were officially reported. The total number of reported incidents involving the abduction and subsequent

demand for ransom of individuals, commonly referred to as kidnap and ransom cases, amounted to 902. Fifteen individuals were abducted for the purpose of ransom. A single instance of the trafficking of minors to foreign nations, along with 36 more occurrences of human trafficking, were documented. There has been a notable rise in the number of reported incidents under the SC/ST Prevention of Atrocities Act. The number of documented instances in the year 2017 amounted to 1,969, which experienced a growth in the subsequent year of 2018, reaching a total of 1,836 cases. Furthermore, in the year 2019, the number of cases further escalated to 2,071. Nevertheless, there was no discernible rise in instances of human rights violations against Scheduled tribes.

### **Violence against women in India**

Women have had significant hardships due to numerous shortcomings within Indian society, resulting in the mistreatment they have endured throughout history and persisting in contemporary times. Historically, women in India have suffered significant disadvantages and have been subjected to many forms of violence that are specific to the country's social, cultural, and economic contexts. Additionally, they endure the same atrocities experienced by women globally. The forms of discrimination against women can manifest in various ways, ranging from overt and aggressive to more covert yet as harmful.

In India, for several centuries and up to the present day, there has been a practice of directly killing or subjecting newly born female infants to discriminatory treatment. This discrimination manifests through the provision of inadequate nourishment, premature weaning, and diminished medical care in comparison to their male counterparts. The practice of eliminating female children by parents is motivated by the desire to avoid the financial burden associated with dowry or bridegroom price during marriage, as well as the subsequent transfer of the daughters to their marital homes. In contemporary times, the act of female infanticide has been replaced by a more intricate and ominous method known as amniocentesis, which leads to the annihilation of

female fetuses. This medical procedure, conducted during the early stages of pregnancy, serves to identify genetic abnormalities in the developing fetus or unborn child, as well as providing information regarding the sex of the fetus, among other factors. The utilization of this scientific methodology is being employed extensively and unethically by medical professionals and individuals with parental roles to terminate the pregnancy through abortion subsequent to the determination of the fetal sex. The phenomenon referred to as female foeticide has reached alarming levels inside this nation, as seen by the findings of the 2001 census. This observation signifies a shift in the demographic distribution among females aged 0 to 10 years, revealing a male-to-female population ratio of approximately 1000 men to 600 females, compared to the national average of 1000 males to 932 females. Even if a female child manages to live and reach the age at which she can attend school, her likelihood of receiving an education remains significantly lower compared to that of a male child. In rural regions of this nation, there exists a prevailing belief that girls should prioritize acquiring skills linked to home chores and similar responsibilities, whereas formal education is deemed less significant. Consequently, girls in these disadvantaged areas exhibit notably high rates of school discontinuation. In many societies, it is common for girls to be assigned the responsibility of caring for younger siblings and performing various miscellaneous tasks until they reach the stage of puberty.

### **Portrayal of Women in Mass Media**

This analysis examines the treatment of women's issues by the mass media, with a specific focus on print media, in both global and Indian contexts. Mass media refers to the various communication channels employed by individuals or organisations to disseminate information to a wide-ranging audience. The various forms of communication such as newspapers, radio, and television are commonly referred to as mass media. The development of modern communications technology and the widespread availability of satellite communication have facilitated global connectivity, enabling regions equipped with standardised

communication equipment to acquire a global dimension. The utilisation of technology has facilitated the dissemination of media messages and pictures on both a local and worldwide scale. The phenomenon of globalisation, coupled with the convergence of many media forms and emerging information technology, has facilitated the extensive and expeditious dissemination of ideas and values across all societal strata, beyond any previous scale and intensity. In recent years, there have been notable advancements in information technology that have enabled the establishment of a worldwide communication network, beyond both geographical and national limitations. The progress in question exerts a tangible influence on the formulation of governmental policies, the shaping of cultural attitudes, and the modulation of social behaviours on a global scale. The governments of emerging countries have assigned the mass media with the task of modernising traditional communities, recognising its potential as influential catalysts for societal transformation. It is widely acknowledged that the media has a significant and pervasive role in the majority of civilizations, particularly in democratic contexts.

### **Review of Literature on Violence against Women in International**

The Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) that pursues gender inequality in and through the world news media. The GMMP reports are published every five years from the year 1995. The most recent report, which pertains to the year 2010, was issued in 2014. The report's conclusions regarding the study that examines the portrayal of women and men in the media globally indicate that throughout the years 1995, 2000, and 2005, there was a significant disparity in the depiction of women in news coverage as compared to men. Among the 108 nations included in the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) in 2010, a significant finding of relevance to the study indicates that there is a disparity in the portrayal of female and male news topics as victims, with 18% of female subjects being shown as victims compared to 8% of male subjects. According to the source, a mere 13% of narratives centre around women, while a mere 6% of narratives address matters pertaining to gender

equality or inequality. According to the data, a significant proportion of narratives, specifically 46%, tend to perpetuate gender stereotypes, which is nearly eight times greater than the proportion of narratives that actively contest these preconceptions. Regarding India, the report asserts that "Women's issues" are predominantly perceived as limited in scope and are addressed accordingly. Certain situations, particularly those involving sensational or sensationalised instances of violence or discrimination, continue to garner greater attention compared to other equally significant matters.

Uma Singh (1995) writes the idea of a systematic audience-based impact study of the portrayal of women in the mass media was fundamentally prompted by the presumptive audience interest in the media and the coverage of women-related issues by the mass media. There have been discernible shifts in the views of adolescent males and females towards women in general. This study aims to investigate the view of individuals towards men and women, as well as their attitudes towards women who are considered liberated. Additionally, it aims to explore how individuals perceive the portrayal of women in the media, and how this influences the socio-cultural representation of women. The study also aims to evaluate the relationship between media personnel's perception and presentation of women. The study also centres its attention on the four primary forms of mass media, namely the press, television, radio, and short films. The cross-sectional multimedia study conducted on a nationwide scale in India is unique in its nature. The findings of the study suggest that there exists a moderate level of perception about the concept of the new woman. Furthermore, the attitude towards the liberated woman is predominantly favourable. It is evident that both personal and communicative elements, as well as exposure to mass media, significantly impact this perception and attitude. Nevertheless, Sonia Bathla, 1996 noted that broader debate on women, democracy, and the media and theorized the media coverage of women's news/issues and the women's movement in the Indian cultural context. This observation highlights the persistent dominance of a privileged caste-based patriarchal culture in India, which significantly influences gender dynamics despite the existence of a functional

democratic system. This study posits that the Indian press has played a role in perpetuating the prevailing social order by neglecting the women's movement and failing to prioritise women's problems in the media agenda. This assertion is supported via the utilisation of a multi-theoretical approach. The study successfully establishes a correlation between gender and cultural, political, and media practises. The research is grounded in primary empirical data obtained through a content analysis of news articles, supplemented by interviews conducted with journalists and women activists.

Lorenz Brinson (1990) focused on how rape is presented in prime-time TV dramas. The theoretical foundation for the study is feminism. Numerous widely-watched television serials undergo scrutiny and critical examination to assess the portrayal of rape via a sociological lens. The feminist critical analysis unveiled that certain instances of television programming portrayed rape in a manner that aligned with feminist principles. To clarify, authentic portrayals of rape have been depicted. The portrayal of rape in prime-time drama broadcasts presents contradictory narratives regarding the societal perspectives on rape. The divergent messages conveyed via television serve as a platform for cultural discourse about a matter of significant importance to both genders.

The study by Steve Deme (1999) shows that Indian films in the national language of Hindi do more than depict violence against women; they eroticize such violence and ask male viewers to identify with heroes who use force to win the affection of their beloveds. Furthermore, it elucidates the similarities between men's perceptions of the ideal dynamics inside marital relationships and the ideals propagated in Hindi cinema. The act of attending film screenings is a privileged opportunity for the formation and exploration of one's sexuality, mostly due to the prevailing societal taboo around open discourse on sexual matters within mainstream contexts. Theatrical dramas demonstrate that cinema theatres, which are predominantly occupied by men, often serve as a setting for male sexual harassment, which films portray as eliciting women's devotion. Therefore, it can be argued that popular films contribute to the perpetuation of sexual violence in India.

The study by Diane Lynn Borden (1993) examines the degree to which women's identities are historically bound both to the social roles of wife, mother, and housekeeper and to character traits associated with virtue and morality which are replicated in the representation of women in the mass media and, ultimately reinforced through defamation law in the judicial system as well. The study posits that the courts, through compensating a woman's reputation in alignment with the prevailing societal norms, inadvertently perpetuate the cultural values that initially led to harm. This study investigates a specific legal domain, namely defamation law, focusing on certain time periods. The research presents empirical data that substantiates the primary findings, both in terms of substantive content and methodological approach. The research provides empirical support for the argument that gender definitions utilised in the judicial decision-making process fail to accurately represent the authentic social identities of women. Throughout history, the construction of women's identities has consistently been intertwined with societal perceptions of sexual virtue and moral character.

Martin Barron and Michael (2000) study measures the sexually violent content in magazines, videos, and the UseNet (Internet newsgroup). The present analysis focuses on the examination of many factors pertaining to violence, including its intensity, prevalence of consenting and non-consensual acts, as well as the gender dynamics between the individuals involved in the roles of victim and perpetrator. The findings indicate a persistent upward trend in violence across different mediums, but with a lack of statistical significance in the observed increase across magazines and videos. Moreover, it is worth noting that both magazines and films often depict violence as a consensual act, whereas the internet tends to present it as non-consensual. While there is a tendency for UseNet and video platforms to depict males as victims, periodicals generally do not follow this pattern. Several potential explanations for these findings are presented.

### **Proposed Policy Recommendations**

To achieve the aforementioned aims, the following recommendations are proposed: This study aims to examine the current deficiency in gender

awareness among individuals employed in the media and ICT industries, irrespective of their gender, particularly those holding senior and managerial roles. This proposal aims to provide a formal definition and create normative standards for gender equality within the media and information and communication technology (ICT) industries. Strategies and Policy Frameworks for Promoting Equality in Media Organisations It is imperative to enforce a requirement for media organisations to implement formal and comprehensive plans and policy frameworks that promote equality and integration within their organisational structures. Incorporate methods for monitoring, assessment, and action into these frameworks to guarantee their efficacy. It is imperative that media and ICT businesses be obligated to comply with these measures as a mandatory requirement for their operation.

The purpose of these recommendations is twofold: to promote gender equality in the media and ICT industries, and to stimulate wider societal change. By effectively tackling systemic disparities across all Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it sets the stage for the establishment of a more inclusive and equitable global society.

The research described above have provided helpful suggestions and actionable steps to address persistent structural and cultural barriers that hinder women's career advancement and limit their ability to fully achieve their potential in the media sector. Deliberately underutilizing the skills and talents of around half of the media workers is not only ethically incorrect, but also lacks logical foundation when

considering both ethical and financial imperatives. Insufficient understanding among media managers of the full size of this issue and the feasible remedies that exist has emerged as a significant obstacle in implementing change.

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