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VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SPACES IN HARYANA

Doctoral Dissertation Abstract (2019)

Author: **Preeti**

Supervisor: **Dr. Rajeshwari**
Professor

Department of Geography, Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra

Violence against women is a worldwide phenomenon and women are subject to violence throughout their life cycle. The United Nations defines violence against women “as any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is 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 private life”. The study attempts to highlight violence against women in private and public spaces. The distinction between public and private space is made on the basis of accessibility, interference and freedom. The present study is focused on Haryana which is one of the economically developed states of India. This material development, however, shows little reflectance in social indicators of the state, largely related to parameters of women development. Further, the state also remains in limelight due to existence of patriarchal social outfit of khap panchayats. Hence, it is interesting to study the expression of violence against women in public and private spaces in rural and urban settings of the state.

Objectives of the Study

Major objectives of the study are:

- to study the spatio-temporal variations in level of crime and type of crime against women in Haryana from 1991 to 2014;
- to study the levels and correlates of women autonomy and violence against them in public and private spaces in rural and urban settings of sample study areas;
- to study the type, form and frequency of violence against women in public and private spaces in rural and urban settings in sample study area;
- to study the triggers, consequences and coping mechanism of violence against women in private spaces in rural and urban settings and
- to study the level of legal awareness and reporting of violence vis-à-vis government programmes in the sample study area.

Database and Methodology

The study is based on both the secondary and the primary sources of data. Major secondary source of data is National Crime Records Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India (Annual publications, 1991 to 2015). Statistics regard-

ing violence against women in public and private spaces, their types, forms, spells, reasons etc. have been generated through primary survey. For this, a household survey has been conducted in rural and urban areas of two districts of Fatehabad and Rohtak. A semi-structured questionnaire has been used to generate household information about their socio-economic characteristics and violence against women in public and private spaces.

For the present study, information about all types of violence (whether it is physical, emotional, sexual) occurred at any point of time in the life of women has been collected. In order to study the correlates of violence against women, the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents have been considered. The levels of violence against women in public and private spaces have been computed as percentage of women ever experienced any type of violence at any point of time in their life. The lifetime prevalence of violence has been used instead of last 12 months. Physical, emotional and intimate partner sexual violence has been considered as a violence of private spaces and non-contact and contact sexual violence has been taken as public spaces violence. The women autonomy has been measured by women participation in decision making regarding four issues (i) for personal choice i.e. choice for food, clothes and makeup, (ii) freedom of mobility that includes going to any social gathering and parental visit without any restriction/permission, (iii) minor economic autonomy and (iv) political autonomy in terms of vote. The triggers, consequences and coping mechanism of violence in private spaces are based on case studies and group discussions, conducted in the rural and urban settings of both the districts. For this, woman of all caste groups, age groups, educational

level and economic status have been taken for the analysis. Data have also been collected to know about legal awareness of women and girls regarding violence and policies and programmes carried out by central and state governments for the reduction of violence against women.

Major Findings

The findings based on secondary data reveal that the crime against women has increased about three times over a period of 24 years i.e. from 1991 to 2014. The study reveals relatively lower rate of crime per lakh women in western Haryana. Its prevalence is higher in eastern Haryana and districts lying along National Highway with an exception of district Sonapat. It is highly distressing to note that during the period of 2001 to 2014, none of the districts of Haryana witnessed a decline in crime against women. Among all crimes, cruelty by husband is the most prominent crime followed by assault on women with intent to outrage her modesty. The study also reveals that the rate of all types of crime against women has increased from 1991 to 2014. However, this increase is more after 2012, which may be related to increased awareness about reporting of crime after Nirbhaya case of 2012. The districtwise pattern also shows that cruelty by husband is the most reported form of violence in all districts of the state.

The level of violence against women based on primary data reveals that in one-third households women have experienced violence. In terms of space, it has been noted that ever-married women are victims of violence in private as well as in public spaces, whereas, the incidence of violence against girls is reportedly low in private spaces. The proportion of violence affected women in private spaces is high in Fatehabad district,

whereas this proportion is high in public spaces in Rohtak district. Also, in case of girls proportion of reported violence is two times more in urban areas as compared to rural areas. It has also been observed that women from lower caste groups are more likely to be affected by any kind of violence. In case of age of victims, it has been found that as the age of women increases, the magnitude of violence against them decreases. Further, illiterate women are more sufferers from any kind of violence against them. However, regarding occupational status, violence has been found to be highest under landless category of households. In case of girls, it has been found that all girls in sample area are prone to violence irrespective of their caste, age and educational status.

Space-wise, violence in context of ever-married women reveals that lower caste women are more vulnerable to violence in private spaces as compared to others. However, not much variation has been witnessed in context of violence against women in public spaces. In context of age group of the victims, much variation has not been observed in private spaces, however, proportion of younger victims is high in public spaces. Further, women having very low levels of education are more prone to violence in private spaces, whereas higher educated women have been found to be victims of violence in public spaces. On account of occupational status, it has been found that women whose husbands are working as landless labor have a high vulnerability of violence in private spaces.

In context of participation of women in decision making, the study has revealed that except personal choice, in all other issues, women of urban sample area are more autonomous than women residing in rural areas.

However, involvement of women in decision-making has been found to be higher among women of Rohtak as compared to Fatehabad district. The study has reflected that the women choice in decision making about themselves has no association with their social status. However, regarding decisions about mobility, minor economic purchases and voting, upper caste women have more autonomy than other caste groups. It has also been noted that the level of autonomy is increasing with the age. In terms of occupational status, the landless labor category comprises the lowest proportion of women having decision making power. Further, it has been found that women with any type of autonomy in decision making are also as much subject to violence as are the women who could not make such choices/decisions.

The results have revealed that there are various social, economic and individual factors that trigger violence in sample study area. However, variations in terms of factors associated with violence against women have been witnessed in both the sample districts and their rural and urban areas. The most prominent triggers in Fatehabad district are both social and individual. On an individual level, the consumption of liquor is one of the major reasons. Among the societal reasons, gender role has emerged as one of the major triggers. Financial reasons for violence have also been reported by few households. In case of rural areas, liquor consumption, interference of in-laws, son preference and poverty have been observed as the major triggers.

The results regarding consequences of violence reflect that in both the districts, the physical violence is more common, which range from minor cuts to fractures to the cruelest level. The other consequences have been stress, anxiety and depression. Further,

for the coping of violence, two types of strategies have been adopted by the victims. These are short term or sudden reactions of violence and long-term coping mechanism. The sudden reaction to violence reported during case studies are crying, getting angry or going to other place for a little while to avoid the situation of further violence. Whereas, the long-term mechanism is visiting to parental home or seeking help from friends or family members. However, the most general method is endurance. In group discussion also, women have reported that in absence of any other alternative; they had to tolerate the violence. The male superiority, strong patriarchal system and subjugation of women have social acceptance and sanctions of violence which women have accepted to be a norm and tolerate it, which further promotes violence.

In the context of violence, many policies and programmes have been launched by the national as well as state governments to curb this problem. Some of these laws are related to private spaces and some deal with the violence in context of public spaces. The percentage of aware women has been found to be high in urban areas as compared to rural areas. Further, in context of both the sample districts, Rohtak women have reported more awareness than Fatehabad women. As far as girls are concerned, it has been found that about 90 per cent girls are familiar with the laws against sexual harassment. However, in urban areas, all the girls taken for survey have been aware, while its proportion has been found about half in case of rural areas. The proportion of girls having knowledge about laws has been found high in Rohtak as compared to Fatehabad district. Further,

women of upper castes and younger in age have been found to be more aware about laws as compared to others. The level of awareness about laws, among women, has been increasing with the increasing level of education. Women from the landless labor occupation category have reported lowest level of awareness about laws.

The reported statistics show that half of women victims in sampled area have taken legal action against violence. The complaint regarding violence has been reported either in village panchayat or in police station. However, more legal action has been taken by rural women. In context of geographical variations, the proportion of women that complained about violence has been observed to be high in Fatehabad as compared to Rohtak district.

The present study reflects that women and girls in Haryana are vulnerable to violence in rural as well as in urban areas. This violence against women is not only limited to private spaces but has vast expanse in public spaces also. The study indicates a very high level of violence against married women from their homes and from them whom they love, while girls are more vulnerable in public spaces. Women's autonomy is also very low, which reflects their vulnerable position in society. The root cause, that has emerged from the study, is the dominance of patriarchal culture. Due to this, women not only have subordinate positions in the society, but they have to bear several other consequences ranging from physical injuries to suicide. The study shows that various interventions and programmes have been initiated by the government but despite all these, condition of women has not improved much in the society.

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