THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT OF DOMESTIC AND GENDER VIOLENCE IN WEST BENGAL

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ABSTRACT

In the era of women's empowerment, domestic violence against women remains a critical issue influencing the well-being of Indian communities. While science and technology have advanced and created awareness regarding empowerment, the lived reality of many women is still marked by economic vulnerability and abuse within the household. The relationship between domestic violence and family income has a significant role in the context of family planning and community health. Economic vulnerability is not unidirectional. Even when a woman possesses a higher economic status than her partner, she does not remain safe; conflicts over status instigate violence, particularly in already abusive relationships. This paper investigates the relationship between the socio-economic status of the family and domestic violence in West Bengal, India, based on secondary data analysis.

***Keywords**: Domestic Violence, Gender Violence, Socio-Economic Status, Economic Vulnerability, West Bengal, Family Planning, Women's Empowerment.*

INTRODUCTION

In contemporary India, women's empowerment is a central discourse in development policies. Yet, domestic violence remains one of the most frequent violations of human rights (Menon 45). Its causes are found not only at the individual level but also at the structural level, rooted in patriarchal power relations. Violence against women threatens their physical and psychological health and the well-being of their children and society at large.

The linkage between domestic violence and family income has important significance in family planning and community well-being. The present study investigates the relationship between the socio-economic status of the family and domestic violence in West Bengal. West Bengal, with its distinct socio-cultural fabric, presents a critical case where traditional norms intersect with modern economic pressures.

Global economic data clearly show that one of the consequences of globalization is the feminisation of poverty, making women generally more economically vulnerable than men (Benería 62; Chant 205). However, economic vulnerability is a distinct phenomenon at the personal level and deserves a category of its own in abuse studies.

FORMS OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC VIOLENCE

Typical forms of socio-economic violence include taking away the earnings of the victim, not allowing them to have a separate income by assigning housewife status or making them work in a family business without a salary, and making the victim unfit for work through targeted physical abuse (Panda and Agarwal 830).

In the public sphere, it includes denial of access to education or equally paid work, denial of access to services, and exclusion from certain jobs (Agarwal 45). Some public forms contribute to economic dependency: lower wages for women, low or no child-care benefits, and benefits tied to the income tax of the male partner. Such dependency offers a chance for an abusive partner to act without fear of losing their partner.

A critical paradox exists: even when the relationship is reversed and a woman has a higher economic status, this does not eliminate the threat of violence. Conflicts about status and emasculation may arise, particularly in already abusive relationships (Rocca et al. 260).

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES

Domestic violence has far-reaching consequences beyond immediate abuse. At the individual level, survivors suffer physical injuries and psychological trauma such

as anxiety and depression, which impair their capacity to maintain employment (NFHS-5).

Economically, survivors lose wages due to injuries, medical treatment, and court proceedings. According to NCRB data, economic abuse is a major component in reported cases in West Bengal (National Crime Records Bureau 45). Families face expenses for medical care, legal services, and counselling. At the workplace level, employees experiencing violence face absenteeism and reduced concentration. Employers experience reduced productivity and staff turnover. When women are systematically impeded from entering the formal labour force, national economies suffer a drag on human capital accumulation (Sen 95).

At the community level, children who witness violence may experience emotional insecurity and educational difficulties, contributing to an intergenerational cycle of inequality. Public resources are required for medical assistance, shelters, and legal support, placing pressure on healthcare and law-enforcement systems (International Institute for Population Sciences 112).

CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Domestic and gender violence is not a private family matter but a major socio-economic issue. Addressing it requires more than legal intervention under the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005. It requires economic empowerment, education, and accessible support services. Policies that enhance family income, promote income-generating activities, ensure equal wages, and reduce income inequality would help in reducing the intensity of violence against women in West Bengal. Education can challenge harmful stereotypes and promote gender equality. Strengthening financial literacy, access to banking, and social protection can increase economic independence and help break the cycle of dependency and abuse.

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