



Domestic Violence against Women in Odisha: A Systematic Review

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DOI : <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18873090>

ARTICLE DETAILS

Research Paper

Accepted: 18-02-2026

Published: 10-03-2026

Keywords:

*Violence against Women,
Odisha, Domestic Violence,
Gender politics*

ABSTRACT

Women comprise nearly half of India's population in. However, they face several challenges, given the patriarchal structure, including sexual abuse, women trafficking, prostitution, rape, and kidnapping. Domestic violence is one of them that involves an unequal power relationship between men and women (Verma & Srivastava, 2020), perpetuating exploitation and discrimination against women. Domestic violence is defined in several forms, including physical assault, psychological assault, social abuse, financial abuse (dowry practice) (Nipa et al., 2024), and 'sexual assault. Unequal power relationships between men and women escalate the growth of domestic violence against women'. Violence against women is a universal phenomenon; it prevails in all over the world, despite several international and national efforts, including the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women 1993 and the Indian government's Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005 (Nova Scotia Legislature, 1996). Domestic violence against women (Ahmad Kamal & Suhaimi, 2021) is higher in rural regions than in urban areas. This highlights the vulnerability of women in the predominantly rural state of India. Odisha is a majorly rural eastern



state of India, where women reported more than one-third of its population. As per the National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB) report 2024-25, Odisha has constituted 27,973 cases in terms of violence against women and girls (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2017), making Odisha the highest rank in terms of crime rate. Violence against women is increasing day by day despite a high literacy rate in Odisha. This paper examines the international and national efforts to halt violence against women and explores Odisha as the epicentre of domestic violence against women (Tomar, 2024). This paper also examines the growth in crime against women in the eastern region of India, particularly in Odisha. This paper also offers several policy insights for policymakers to address violence against women. This study will use international agency reports, government documents and scholarly literature to provide a comprehensive study on domestic violence against women.

I Introduction

Women constitute a major chunk of the GDP growth of the country. However, their contributions are unrecognized in society, especially by family members. The root of harassment of women begins in the family. Even the society and our institutional mechanisms legitimize harassment of women in the family domain. Traditional perception of gender projects the idea that personal is not political. Therefore, women's exploitation at the domestic level is unaddressed by the state. As per the official statistics, 78% of women face sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is not limited to physical touch; however, it deals with mental trauma. Marital rape and verbal abuse in the domestic space are not considered illegal. The men-women relation remains asymmetrical and vertical in nature, leading to women's exploitation, marginalization and underrepresentation.

This paper is divided into the following sections. The first section discusses the introduction. The second section examines the theoretical framework. Third section examines the historical background of legal intervention. The fourth section examine domestic violence in Odisha. The five section highlights literature review, the six section explores findings, the seven section propose a way forward, and the eight section conclude the study with insight into further study.



II. Theoretical Framework

Carol Harnisch introduced personal is political. This academic discourse examines issues and problems that women face in the domestic space as political. This study used personal is political narrative to include domestic violence, marital rape, and sexual abuse into the mainstream sphere, political. This feminist discourse has rewritten the meaning of politics, which excluded the women’s issues in the domestic space. As an inclusive approach, the personal is political emphasizes legal and legislative intervention in halting domestic violence against women.

J.B. Elshtain had conceptualized public man and private woman. Public-private dichotomy is a social construct, as gender inequality and women’s issues remain a private domain. Feminist discourse has countered this prevailing narrative. As woman a human’s concerns and issues are also related to public affairs.

III. Historical Background

International Legal Framework for the protection of Women’s Rights

The international community has taken various legal steps to uphold women’s rights, dignity, and freedom, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) Act (Latin America News, 2023), introduced in 1979. In addition, UN Article 1 states all human beings are born free and equal in dignity, providing equal rights and liberty to women just like their counterparts. Article 3 of the UN ensures that every human being has the fundamental right to work.

National Legal framework for protection of women rights

As an alignment to international legal framework, India has taken various policies and legislation to safeguard rights and liberty of women. India has introduced Sexual Harassment of Women at workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013. The POSH Act introduced in 2013. As a constitutional recognition, article 14, 15, 19 and 21 enable fundamental rights for women to live with dignity.

Sl No.	Name of the Act	Year
1	Dowry Prohibition Act	1961
2	Sati Prevention Act	1987



3	Factories Act	1948
4	Maternity Benefit Act	1961
5	National Commission for Women Act	1990
6	Protection of Human Rights Act	1993
7	India ratified CEDAW Act	1993
8	Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act	2005
9	Sexual Harassment Against Women (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act	2013

Table 1: National legislation for the protection of women against various forms of violence

Source: Domestic Violence Against Women: An Analytical Study of the District of Balasore of Odisha

*Domestic violence against women an analytical study of the district of Balasore of Odisha.pdf

Despite the above-cited legal steps, violence against women continues to persist, as evidenced by the fact that ‘between 20 and 50 per cent of women have experienced physical violence. Up to 45% of married men acknowledged physically abusing their wives, according to a 1996 survey’ (UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, 2000).

IV. Odisha

Odisha has evident 37,611 cases of crime against women since 2024-2025 (Barik, 2025). This includes rape, attempt to rape, molestation, sexual harassment, and public disturbing. Dowry torture is significantly hampering women’s dignified living, where 5,464 crimes against women registered in terms of dowry torture (Barik, 2025). Visakha VS State of Rajasthan, leading to the creation of the Visakha guidelines in 1997. Beti Bachao Beti Padhao was introduced in 2015.

Sl. No.	Name of crime against women in Odisha	Statistics	Time line
1	Molestation	9,181	2024-25
2	abduction	8,227	2024-25
3	Non-dowry torture	5,464	2024-25
4	rapes	2,933	2024-25
5	Sexual harassment	1,278	2024-25
6	Public disrobing	2,161	2024-25

Table 2: Crime reported against women in Odisha during 2024-25



Source: The Hindu, dated 23 September, 2025, Under BJP rule, Odisha reports 37,611 crimes against women in just 14 months - The Hindu

In response to the above crimes against women, the Odisha government has taken various legal provisions, establishing an internal complaints committee, etc. Shakti Shree App launched in 2025 with an objective to protect women from prevailing crime in a transparent and effective way.

What is sexual harassment?

Sexual harassment is a multi-pronged phenomenon as it deals with physical assault, mental trauma, humiliation, verbal abuse, and blackmail. Therefore, Prevent, Prohibit, and Redress face on elimination of sexual harassment. 78% of women are faced sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is a mental trauma.

V. Literature Review

Narayan et al. (2025) in their article examine that “India is estimated to have 4 million-90 million domestic workers”. Women constitute the majority of domestic workers. As a domestic worker, women may face harassment, abuse, and segregationist practices (Narayan and Geetha 2025). As a response, ILO has passed a convention in 2011 to ensure the rights and protections of domestic workers. India has introduced National Platform for Domestic Workers (NPDW). In addition, several states such as Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka has several steps to reduce violence against domestic workers.

UNICEF (n. d) in its study argues that several factors are responsible causing domestic violence, including cultural, economic, legal and political. Therefore, all stakeholders, including the family, civil society, the local community, the state, and international organizations, should come together to shape an integrated approach to address domestic violence against women. In addition, The government must accommodate gender sensitive curriculum and discourse in all its educational institutions system to halt domestic violence against women (UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, 2000).

Semahegn and Mengistie (2015) in their study argues that women face domestic violence at a rate of 5 times than man. Various factors are associated with domestic violence against women, including age group, lower educational status, and the woman's occupational status.

VI. Findings

Historical evolution of the Women Empowerment Act: Several significant laws have been enacted to halt all forms of violence against women at various levels, including international and national.



‘Joint family and financial dependence of women on their husbands are the major causes for domestic violence against women.’

Specific groups of women are more vulnerable: Violence against women is not universal it more impact on minority women, including SC, ST, and vulnerable groups.

Coordinated and Integrated policy response: To halt domestic violence against women need, a coordinated and integrated policy response is needed in which all stakeholders should come together to rethink violence against women and must take a robust and strong action against it.

The woman's occupational status: Housewives are more vulnerable to domestic violence than working women and professional women.

VII. Way-Forward

To conduct counselling: Government should facilitate counselling mechanism for women’s safety and protection.

To conduct a peer group circle: As a peer group can play a pivotal role in reducing crimes against women, they must be sensitive towards violence against women.

Acceleration Action for Gender Equal Organization: All organizations should take proactive steps to ensure gender equality, facilitating special attention to women’s needs.

System needs to be gender sensitive: As a counter to domestic violence against women, entire systems, including public private, must take policy, emphasizing gender sensitiveness.

VIII. Conclusion

As domestic violence is an inhuman practice in society, the above discussion has offered an academic scholarship and political discourse on the intricacies of violence against women and its potential solution. As it is a systematic and structural problem, all stakeholders should come together to explore a strong and proactive legislation to curb domestic violence against women in society. As it is an ever-evolving issues, further study is inevitable on this perspective, to analyse the potential challenges and problems to women via domestic violence. “Structural solutions are imperative to protect the women in this critical situation”.



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