

Breaking The Silence: Unveiling The Hidden Reality of Men as Victims of Crime in South India

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Abstract—Gender-based violence has long been framed as an issue predominantly affecting women, often leaving the experiences of men as victims overlooked and underrepresented. This article explores the hidden and complex reality of male victimization in South India, focusing on the various forms of abuse, their psychological and social consequences, and the structural barriers that prevent recognition and justice. Drawing upon research findings, cultural analysis, and institutional critiques, the discussion highlights how societal expectations, rigid masculinity norms, and gender-specific legal frameworks contribute to the silencing of male victims. The article emphasizes the urgent need for gender-inclusive awareness, legal reforms, and support systems that recognize victimization as a human issue rather than a gendered one. Ultimately, it calls for a shift toward a more equitable and victim-centered justice system.

Index Terms—Male Victimization, Gender-Based Violence, Masculinity Norms, Social Stigma

I. INTRODUCTION

The concept of victimization is often shaped by societal assumptions about gender roles. Traditionally, men are perceived as strong, resilient, and emotionally self-sufficient, while women are viewed as vulnerable and in need of protection. This binary understanding has led to a disproportionate focus on female victimization in research, law, and public discourse. While such focus is essential, it has unintentionally marginalized the experiences of men who also suffer abuse.

In recent years, emerging research has begun to challenge these assumptions by revealing that men experience various forms of victimization, including

physical violence, emotional abuse, financial exploitation, and sexual coercion. Despite this, male victims often remain invisible due to stigma, disbelief, and lack of institutional support.

In the South Indian context, cultural values, family structures, and social expectations further complicate the issue. Men are often discouraged from expressing vulnerability, and seeking help is frequently equated with weakness. As a result, many male victims suffer in silence, with serious psychological and social consequences.

1.1 Understanding Male Victimization

Male victimization refers to the experience of harm inflicted upon men through physical, emotional, psychological, sexual, or financial means. Unlike commonly acknowledged forms of violence, abuse against men is often subtle, normalized, or dismissed. In South India, male victimization frequently occurs within intimate relationships, family settings, or close social networks. The abuse may be perpetrated by spouses, partners, relatives, or acquaintances. The complexity of these relationships often makes it difficult for victims to identify or report abuse.

The consequences of such victimization are profound, affecting mental health, social relationships, and overall well-being. However, the lack of recognition and support systems exacerbates these effects, leaving many victims without recourse.

1.2 Types of Abuse Experienced by Men

Abuse against men is a multifaceted and often underrecognized phenomenon that manifests in several interconnected forms. These forms frequently

overlap, reinforcing one another and creating complex patterns of control and psychological harm.

1.2.1 Mental and Emotional Abuse

Mental and emotional abuse involve manipulation, gaslighting, humiliation, and isolation. These forms of abuse erode self-esteem, create self-doubt, and lead to anxiety, depression, and emotional instability.

1.2.2 Physical Abuse

Physical abuse includes acts such as hitting, slapping, and restraining. Despite visible injuries, male victims often remain silent due to shame and fear of disbelief, allowing abuse to continue unchecked.

1.2.3 Financial Abuse

Financial abuse restricts economic independence through control over income, denial of resources, and coercion into debt. This creates dependency and limits the ability to escape abusive situations.

1.2.4 Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse includes coercion, harassment, and non-consensual acts. Social stigma and stereotypes lead to severe underreporting and long-term psychological trauma.

1.3 Cultural and Social Norms in South India

South Indian society is deeply influenced by traditions and social expectations that shape gender roles and behavior. While these norms provide structure, they can also silence male victims.

1.3.1 Patriarchal Family Systems

Family structures emphasize hierarchy and collective honor. Victims are often pressured to remain silent to protect family reputation, leading to suppression of individual suffering.

1.3.2 Masculinity Norms

Masculinity is associated with strength, control, and emotional restraint. These expectations discourage men from expressing vulnerability or seeking help.

1.3.3 Normalization of Abuse

Abusive behaviors are often dismissed as normal relationship conflicts. This normalization prevents recognition of abuse and prolongs victim suffering.

1.4 Psychological Impact of Abuse

The psychological consequences of abuse on men are severe and long-lasting, affecting mental health, identity, and social functioning.

1.4.1 Mental Health Consequences

Male victims commonly experience depression, anxiety, PTSD, low self-esteem, and emotional numbness, often worsened by stigma and lack of support.

1.4.2 Social Isolation

Victims withdraw due to fear of judgment, reducing support systems and intensifying psychological distress.

1.4.3 Suicidal Tendencies

Prolonged abuse and isolation may lead to suicidal thoughts or actions, highlighting the urgency of intervention.

1.5 Barriers to Reporting and Seeking Help

Male victims face multiple barriers, including social stigma, cultural expectations of silence, legal limitations, lack of support services, and institutional bias, all of which discourage reporting and help-seeking.

1.6 Legal Gaps and the Need for Reform

India's legal framework largely remains gender-specific.

1.6.1 Domestic Violence Laws

Existing laws primarily protect women, limiting legal recourse for male victims.

1.6.2 Sexual Assault Laws

Legal definitions often exclude men, reinforcing misconceptions about male victimization.

1.6.3 Need for Gender-Neutral Legislation

Inclusive laws are needed to ensure equal protection, recognition, and access to justice for all victims.

1.7 Social Awareness and Support Systems

Addressing male victimization requires both legal reforms and societal change.

1.7.1 Awareness Campaigns

Campaigns should challenge stereotypes and promote recognition of male victimization.

1.7.2 Mental Health Services

Accessible and stigma-free counseling tailored to men's needs is essential.

1.7.3 Community Support Groups

Safe spaces enable victims to share experiences and seek support.

1.7.4 Helplines and Outreach Programs

Confidential services provide immediate assistance and guidance.

1.8 Breaking the Silence

Encouraging men to speak out requires redefining masculinity to include emotional expression and vulnerability, supported by media, education, and public discourse.

II. TOWARD AN INCLUSIVE JUSTICE SYSTEM

A just society must recognize that violence affects individuals regardless of gender. This involves acknowledging male victimization, implementing gender-neutral policies, and ensuring equal access to protection and justice.

Such an approach strengthens the overall framework of justice without diminishing the importance of addressing violence against women, ultimately promoting a more inclusive and equitable society.

III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The issue of male victimization has gained increasing scholarly attention in recent years, though it remains underexplored compared to female victimization. Existing literature highlights the prevalence, psychological impact, and social invisibility of abuse against men.

3.1 Conceptual Perspectives on Male Victimization

Studies indicate that traditional gender frameworks often exclude men from the category of victims. Researchers argue that societal constructions of masculinity discourage acknowledgment of male

suffering, thereby limiting both academic inquiry and policy response.

3.2 Empirical Studies on Abuse Against Men

Empirical research across different contexts reveals that men experience various forms of abuse, including emotional manipulation, physical violence, and coercive control. However, these experiences are frequently underreported due to stigma and fear of disbelief.

3.3 Psychological Impact in Existing Research

Scholars consistently identify depression, anxiety, and trauma as common outcomes among male victims. Emotional abuse, in particular, has been found to have long-term psychological consequences comparable to physical violence.

3.4 Social Perceptions and Stigma

Research highlights that public attitudes often invalidate male victimhood. Stereotypes portraying men as inherently strong contribute to social disbelief and discourage help-seeking behavior.

3.5 Research Gap

Despite growing interest, there is limited research focusing specifically on male victimization in the South Indian context. Cultural, legal, and social dimensions unique to this region remain insufficiently studied, creating a gap that this study seeks to address.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research Design

This study adopts an exploratory research design to understand the hidden nature of male victimization and identify patterns of abuse, reporting behavior, and social perception.

4.2 Objectives of the Study

- To examine different forms of abuse experienced by men
- To analyze psychological and social impacts
- To identify barriers to reporting and seeking help
- To evaluate legal and institutional responses

4.3 Study Area

The study focuses on South Indian states, including Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and Telangana.

4.4 Population and Sample

The study population consists of adult male respondents. A sample of 150 participants was selected for data collection.

4.5 Sampling Technique

A non-probability sampling method was used to gather responses from participants across different socio-economic backgrounds.

4.6 Sources of Data

- Primary data: Structured questionnaires
- Secondary data: Books, journals, and official reports

4.7 Tools for Data Collection

A structured questionnaire was used to collect data regarding experiences of abuse, awareness, and perceptions.

4.8 Method of Data Collection

Data was collected through direct responses from participants, ensuring confidentiality and ethical considerations.

4.9 Method of Data Analysis

Descriptive statistical analysis was used to interpret the data and identify patterns.

4.10 Ethical Considerations

Confidentiality, informed consent, and voluntary participation were ensured throughout the study.

4.11 Limitations of the Study

- Limited sample size
- Possible response bias
- Sensitivity of the topic affecting disclosure

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings reveal significant insights into the prevalence and nature of male victimization.

5.1 Prevalence of Abuse

A majority of respondents reported experiencing some form of abuse, indicating that male victimization is more common than generally perceived.

5.2 Types of Abuse Identified

- Physical abuse and emotional abuse were the most frequently reported
- Financial and sexual abuse were also present but less frequently disclosed

5.3 Reporting Behavior

A large proportion of victims did not report their experiences due to stigma, fear of ridicule, and lack of legal awareness.

5.4 Psychological Impact

Respondents reported experiencing stress, anxiety, depression, and emotional distress, confirming the serious mental health consequences of abuse.

5.5 Social and Cultural Influences

Cultural norms and expectations were identified as major factors contributing to silence and underreporting.

5.6 Institutional Challenges

Participants expressed dissatisfaction with legal and institutional responses, citing lack of support and recognition.

VI. CONCLUSION

The study “Breaking the Silence: Unveiling the Hidden Reality of Men as Victims of Crime in South India” brings to light a deeply neglected dimension of gender-based violence. While societal and legal frameworks have rightly focused on protecting women, this research demonstrates that such a gender-specific approach has inadvertently obscured the experiences of male victims. The findings reveal that men in South India face multiple forms of abuse—emotional, physical, financial, and sexual—often within intimate and familial settings.

Cultural norms rooted in patriarchy and rigid constructions of masculinity play a critical role in silencing male victims. The expectation that men must embody strength and emotional resilience discourages them from acknowledging vulnerability or seeking

help. This silence is further reinforced by social stigma, lack of institutional support, and gender-specific legal provisions that fail to recognize men as potential victims.

The psychological consequences of such neglect are severe, ranging from anxiety and depression to social isolation and, in extreme cases, suicidal tendencies. The study also highlights systemic barriers, including inadequate legal recourse, lack of support services, and institutional bias, which collectively perpetuate the invisibility of male victimization.

Addressing this issue requires a paradigm shift toward a more inclusive understanding of victimhood. Legal reforms must move toward gender-neutral frameworks, and social awareness initiatives must challenge entrenched stereotypes surrounding masculinity. Ultimately, recognizing male victimization is not a challenge to existing gender justice efforts but an essential step toward a more equitable, humane, and inclusive justice system.

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