

Gender Based Violence: Exploring the Role of Political Institutions in Jharkhand and Rajasthan

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Abstract

Gender-based violence (GBV) continues to be a major issue in India, with places such as Jharkhand and Rajasthan demonstrating high rates of such violence due to deeply ingrained socio-cultural norms, economic inequities, and institutional inefficiencies. This study investigates the role of political institutions in addressing and reducing gender-based violence in these two states, with a focus on legislative frameworks, policy implementation, and the involvement of local governance structures, particularly Panchayati Raj Institutions. The study investigates how state governments, law enforcement agencies, and women's representation in political decision-making affect the efficacy of GBV prevention and response strategies. It also evaluates the effectiveness of specific measures, such as state-level gender legislation, victim assistance programs, and legal remedies. The study employs a qualitative approach, analyzing policy documents, government reports, and case studies to evaluate institutional responses. Findings indicate that while legislative measures exist, gaps in enforcement, patriarchal resistance, and limited institutional accountability hinder progress.

Keywords: Gender-Based Violence, Political Institutions, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, Panchayati Raj, Women's Political Participation, Policy Implementation

1. INTRODUCTION

Women have historically played an important part in defining Indian culture and traditions, acting as the foundation of family and society systems as mothers, wives, and daughters. However, when Western concepts gain power and the socio-cultural landscape evolves, there is a noticeable shift in male views toward women. This shift has often resulted in the dehumanizing and marginalization of women. The wave of women's empowerment eliminated the restraints of the past, resulting in a modern, educated, financially independent, and politically informed women who nevertheless holds traditional values. Women today have a keen understanding of their rights and obligations, are aware of their skills and weaknesses, and use their potential to pursue valuable objectives. Research indicates that women are superior to males in many ways—emotionally, intellectually, and biologically—and are becoming more equal in the political and economic sectors. Despite these advancements, gender-based violence (GBV) remains a grave concern. The persistence of such heinous crimes raises critical questions about the underlying causes—whether they stem from deep-seated patriarchal anxieties, a perceived threat to male dominance, or resistance to shifting power dynamics. While GBV is a global issue, its complexity is magnified in the

Indian context due to societal stigma, the fear of ostracization, and systemic delays in addressing these injustices.

Women have long been integral to Indian culture and traditions, serving as the cornerstone of family and societal structures in their roles as mothers, wives, and daughters. However, with the growing influence of Western ideologies and evolving socio-cultural dynamics, there has been a discernible shift in male attitudes toward women. This transformation has, in many instances, led to their marginalization and dehumanization. The movement for women's empowerment has helped dismantle past constraints, giving rise to a modern, educated, financially independent, and politically aware woman who continues to uphold traditional values. Women today possess a strong awareness of their rights and responsibilities, recognize their strengths and limitations, and actively harness their potential to achieve meaningful goals. Research suggests that women exhibit superior emotional, intellectual, and biological attributes in several aspects, increasingly attaining parity with men in political and economic spheres.

Despite these advancements, gender-based violence (GBV) remains a pressing concern, raising critical questions about its root causes—whether they stem from entrenched patriarchal anxieties, perceived threats to male dominance, or resistance to shifting power structures. While GBV is a global issue, its complexities are amplified in the Indian context due to societal stigma, fear of social ostracization, and systemic inefficiencies in addressing such injustices. GBV is a profound socio-political challenge that violates human rights and impedes social progress. It manifests in various forms, including domestic violence, sexual harassment, honor killings, human trafficking, and socio-economic discrimination. Despite the presence of legal frameworks and policy measures, GBV remains a significant issue in India, particularly in states with deeply ingrained patriarchal structures such as Jharkhand and Rajasthan. Tackling this issue necessitates a multidimensional approach, with political institutions playing a pivotal role in designing and implementing policies to combat and prevent such violence. This study seeks to analyze the role of political institutions in Jharkhand and Rajasthan in addressing GBV, evaluate their effectiveness, and propose strategies for enhancing institutional responses.

1.1 Definition and Scope of Gender Based Violence (GBV)

GBV refers to harmful acts directed at individuals based on their gender, often rooted in unequal power relations and systemic discrimination. The United Nations defines GBV as “any act of 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.” The scope of GBV extends beyond physical violence to include structural violence, such as economic deprivation, limited access to education and healthcare, and political marginalization. In India, GBV is governed by laws such as the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (2005), the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act (2013), and the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act (2013). However, challenges in enforcement, lack of awareness, and socio-cultural barriers often limit the effectiveness of these legal provisions.

1.2 Importance of Political Institutions in Addressing GBV

Political institutions play a crucial role in addressing gender-based violence (GBV) through the enactment of laws, implementation of policies, and facilitation of justice delivery. Their responsibilities encompass several key areas. Firstly, they are responsible for legislation and policy formulation, ensuring the enactment of gender-sensitive laws and policies aimed at preventing and addressing GBV. Secondly, they oversee law enforcement and judicial mechanisms to guarantee the effective implementation of legal frameworks and ensure that survivors have access to justice. Additionally, political institutions contribute

to enhancing women's political representation by encouraging their participation in governance structures, including state legislatures and local bodies, thereby promoting gender-responsive policies. Furthermore, these institutions play a pivotal role in community engagement and awareness by organizing public awareness campaigns, promoting education on gender equality, and strengthening local governance mechanisms such as Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) to address GBV at the grassroots level. However, despite the presence of policies and legal frameworks, political institutions often encounter significant challenges, including ineffective implementation, lack of political will, corruption, and socio-cultural resistance, which impede their ability to effectively combat GBV.

1.3 Rationale for Choosing Jharkhand and Rajasthan

Jharkhand and Rajasthan have been chosen for this study due to their notably high incidence of gender-based violence (GBV), which is shaped by socio-economic conditions, entrenched patriarchal norms, and governance frameworks. The key reasons for selecting these states are as follows:

- **High Incidence of GBV:** According to data from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), both states report a substantial number of cases related to domestic violence, child marriage, honor killings, and human trafficking.
- **Socio-Cultural and Economic Determinants:** The prevalence of traditional gender roles, caste-based hierarchies, and economic inequalities contribute to the persistence of GBV in these regions.
- **Significance of Panchayati Raj Institutions:** With well-established local governance mechanisms, these states offer an opportunity to examine the role of community-led initiatives in addressing GBV.
- **Diverse Political and Policy Approaches:** Jharkhand and Rajasthan have introduced various policies and programs to combat GBV, making them valuable case studies for assessing institutional responses and policy effectiveness.

2. GENDER BASED VIOLENCE: AN OVERVIEW

GBV is a global issue affecting individuals across all societies, irrespective of economic, social, or cultural backgrounds. It has severe consequences, including physical injuries, mental trauma, economic dependency, and in extreme cases, loss of life. It also hinders development by limiting access to education, employment, and political participation, thereby reinforcing cycles of poverty and marginalization.

2.1 Types and Forms of GBV

Gender-Based Violence manifests in various forms, each with distinct characteristics and consequences. The major types include:

- **Physical Violence** – Infliction of bodily harm through hitting, beating, burning, or use of weapons. This includes domestic violence, honor killings, and acid attacks.
- **Sexual Violence** – Any act of sexual coercion, harassment, or assault without consent. This includes rape, marital rape, child sexual abuse, female genital mutilation (FGM), and trafficking for sexual exploitation.
- **Psychological and Emotional Abuse** – Behaviors that cause psychological distress, such as threats, coercion, humiliation, and manipulation. Cyberbullying and online harassment are emerging forms of this abuse.
- **Economic Violence** – Restricting access to financial resources, employment, education, or inheritance,

leading to dependency and vulnerability. Examples include workplace discrimination and denial of property rights.

- Harmful Traditional Practices – Cultural practices that inflict harm, such as child marriage, dowry-related violence, forced sterilization, and witch-hunting.

2.2 Causes and Socio-Cultural Factors Contributing to GBV

Several factors contribute to the prevalence of GBV, ranging from structural inequalities to deeply ingrained social norms.

- Patriarchy and Gender Inequality – Societal structures that prioritize male dominance reinforce GBV by legitimizing control over women and marginalized groups.
- Cultural Norms and Traditions – Practices that condone violence in the name of tradition, such as child marriage and honor killings, perpetuate GBV.
- Lack of Education and Awareness – Limited education restricts knowledge about rights and legal recourse, making individuals more vulnerable to abuse.
- Economic Dependency – Financial constraints force victims to endure violence due to lack of alternative means of survival.
- Weak Law Enforcement and Judicial Gaps – Inadequate legal implementation, victim-blaming attitudes, and impunity for perpetrators discourage survivors from seeking justice.
- Conflict and Displacement – In times of war, migration, or humanitarian crises, women and marginalized groups face heightened risks of GBV due to weakened legal protections and displacement-related vulnerabilities.

2.3 International and National Legal Frameworks to address GBV

INTERNATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Several international conventions and treaties have been established to combat GBV, including:

- **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)**

CEDAW is a landmark international treaty adopted by the United Nations General Assembly to eliminate discrimination against women in all forms. It defines discrimination as any distinction, exclusion, or restriction made based on sex that affects women's human rights and fundamental freedoms. The treaty mandates that ratifying countries take legal and policy measures to promote gender equality, including reforms in family law, workplace policies, and measures to prevent gender-based violence (GBV). The CEDAW Committee monitors compliance, and countries must submit periodic reports on their progress.

- **Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (1993)¹**

This declaration was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly to recognize gender-based violence as a violation of women's human rights and a significant obstacle to gender equality. It provides a comprehensive definition of violence against women, including physical, sexual, and psychological harm in public and private life. The declaration urges states to take proactive measures to prevent violence, punish perpetrators, and support survivors. While it is not legally binding, it has influenced national policies and international conventions.

- **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995)²**

¹ General Assembly. (1993). Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women.

² World Conferences on Women. (n.d.). UN WOMEN.

The 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing was a pivotal moment for the global gender equality agenda. The unanimously adopted Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, endorsed by 189 countries, remains a key policy framework for women's empowerment. It outlines strategic objectives and actions across 12 critical areas, including poverty, education, health, violence, economic participation, decision-making, human rights, media, and the environment, aiming to advance women's rights and achieve gender equality.

- **Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) (2011)³:-**

The Istanbul Convention is the first legally binding European treaty specifically focused on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. The Istanbul Convention recognizes violence against women as gender-based violence committed due to their gender. It mandates states to take comprehensive measures to prevent such violence, protect victims, and prosecute offenders, holding them accountable for any failure. The convention asserts that true gender equality is unattainable if large-scale violence against women persists and state institutions remain indifferent. While acknowledging that men can also face domestic violence, it emphasizes that women constitute the majority of victims, reflecting broader patterns of discrimination and inequality.

NATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK

- **The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA), 2005:-**

This is a landmark law in India that provides comprehensive protection to women from domestic violence. Unlike traditional criminal laws, this act is civil in nature and focuses on providing immediate relief and protection to women facing abuse. It defines domestic violence broadly to include physical, sexual, emotional, verbal, and economic abuse. The act allows women to seek protection orders, residence orders, monetary relief, custody of children, and compensation. It also mandates the appointment of Protection Officers and the establishment of Shelter Homes for victims. The law aims to ensure that women have access to swift justice and rehabilitation without requiring them to initiate criminal proceedings against the perpetrator.

- **The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act, 2013:-**

This act, commonly known as the POSH Act, 2013, was enacted to address sexual harassment in workplaces, ensuring a safe and dignified work environment for women. It defines sexual harassment broadly, covering unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. The law mandates the establishment of Internal Complaints Committees (ICCs) in organizations with more than ten employees and Local Complaints Committees (LCCs) in districts for workplaces without structured grievance mechanisms. The act provides a complaint mechanism, outlines strict penalties for offenders, and emphasizes preventive measures such as workplace sensitization and training programs. It was inspired by the Vishaka Guidelines laid down by the Supreme Court of India in 1997.

- **The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013:-**

Passed in response to the 2012 Nirbhaya gang-rape case, this amendment made significant changes to India's criminal laws, including the Indian Penal Code (IPC), Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), and the

³ Global norms and standards: Ending violence against women. (n.d.). UN WOMEN.

Indian Evidence Act. It introduced stricter punishments for rape and sexual assault, including the death penalty for repeat offenders. The amendment broadened the definition of rape to include non-penetrative acts and criminalized new offenses such as stalking, voyeurism, and acid attacks. It also reduced the age of consent from 18 to 16 years. The Act strengthened victim protection by mandating that hospitals provide free first aid and medical treatment to rape survivors.

3. Political Institutions and Their Role in Combating Gender-Based Violence (GBV)

Political institutions play a crucial role in addressing gender-based violence (GBV) by shaping policies, implementing laws, and ensuring justice for victims. These institutions, including legislative bodies, political parties, and local governance structures, influence the socio-political framework that determines the effectiveness of interventions against GBV. Their role extends from enacting laws to ensuring their enforcement, creating awareness, and fostering a gender-sensitive governance environment. In states like Jharkhand and Rajasthan, where gender disparities are deeply rooted, political institutions serve as a key mechanism to challenge patriarchal norms and promote gender justice.

3.1 Legislative Bodies and Policies on GBV

Legislative bodies at the national and state levels formulate and enforce laws to combat GBV. In India, critical legal frameworks such as the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (2005), the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act (2013) addressing sexual violence, and the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (2006) provide the necessary legal provisions to address gender violence. In states like Jharkhand and Rajasthan, legislative assemblies have debated and enacted state-specific measures to strengthen women's safety, such as fast-track courts for sexual violence cases and helpline services. However, gaps remain in the implementation of these policies due to inadequate funding, weak law enforcement, and socio-cultural resistance. Effective legislation must be supported by strict enforcement mechanisms and gender-sensitive training for law enforcement agencies.

3.2 Political Parties and Their Role in Promoting Gender Justice

Political parties serve as influential actors in shaping public discourse and policy responses concerning gender justice and the eradication of GBV. Their stance on these issues is often reflected in their election manifestos, policy proposals, and the level of women's representation in party leadership structures. In states such as Jharkhand and Rajasthan, both regional and national political parties have introduced initiatives aimed at advancing women's empowerment. These measures include gender-based reservations in local governance structures, awareness campaigns on domestic violence and women's rights, and advocacy for stronger legal protections against GBV.

However, despite these commitments, gender-related concerns are frequently reduced to symbolic gestures rather than being translated into substantial and systemic reforms. Political parties often leverage gender issues for electoral gains rather than prioritizing concrete policy implementation. A genuine commitment to gender justice requires political entities to integrate gender-sensitive policies into their governance strategies, actively promote and support female political candidates, and ensure internal accountability by addressing cases of gender-based misconduct within party structures.

3.3 Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and Women's Representation

Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) serve as grassroots political bodies that play a pivotal role in addressing GBV at the local level. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act mandated the reservation of one-third of seats for women in PRIs, which has significantly increased women's participation in governance. In states like Rajasthan, where traditional gender norms are strong, and Jharkhand, with its diverse tribal

population, PRIs have facilitated women's leadership in addressing local cases of GBV. Women-led Panchayats have initiated community-driven awareness programs, strengthened local grievance redressal mechanisms, and improved women's access to justice.

Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) have played a crucial role in fostering positive change at the grassroots level. India remains a global leader in this regard, with 1.4 million women serving as elected members of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) / Rural Local Bodies, accounting for 46% of the total elected representatives in PRIs.⁴

3.4 Role of Women MLAs and MPs in Addressing GBV Issues

Women Members of Legislative Assemblies (MLAs) and Members of Parliament (MPs) play a crucial role in shaping policies, advocating for gender-sensitive laws, and ensuring that gender-based violence (GBV) remains a priority on the political agenda. Their presence in legislative bodies brings lived experiences, fosters discussions on women's safety, and strengthens the implementation of laws aimed at preventing GBV. In states like Jharkhand and Rajasthan, where patriarchal norms and gender disparities persist, women legislators have actively worked to bring about policy changes and enhance institutional responses to GBV.

Women legislators have been at the forefront of pushing for stronger laws and better enforcement mechanisms to address gender-based violence (GBV). For example, Mahua Maji, a Rajya Sabha MP from Jharkhand, has raised concerns about increasing sexual violence against tribal women and demanded stricter legal action against perpetrators. Similarly, Vasundhara Raje, former Chief Minister of Rajasthan, implemented various schemes like the Rajshree Yojana to promote women's welfare and the Mahila Suraksha Yojana to enhance women's safety.

4. Gender Based Violence in Jharkhand

Gender-based violence (GBV) remains a pressing concern in Jharkhand, driven by socio-cultural norms, economic inequalities, and systemic gender discrimination. Women and girls in the state experience various forms of violence, including domestic abuse, dowry-related harassment, child marriage, trafficking, and sexual violence. Despite legal safeguards and government interventions, GBV remains widespread, severely impacting the physical, psychological, and socio-economic well-being of women. Jharkhand's predominantly tribal and rural population poses distinct challenges in combating GBV. Deep-rooted patriarchal traditions, limited awareness, weak law enforcement, and economic hardships contribute to the continued prevalence of violence against women. Data from the National Family Health Survey-5 (NFHS-5) and the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) indicate a rise in domestic violence, dowry-related offenses, and child marriages, highlighting persistent gender inequalities in the state.

Despite the prevalent issue of underreporting, data from the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) indicate that cases of violence against women in the state surged by 211.71% between 2001 and November 2013. In 2013 alone, reported cases included 324 incidents of dowry-related deaths, 45 murders linked to allegations of witchcraft, 1,693 cases under the Dowry Prohibition Act of 1958, 1,157 cases of rape, 346 cases of sexual harassment, 908 cases of kidnapping, and 693 cases under the Prevention of Witch (DAAIN) Practices Act. Furthermore, the Jharkhand Human Rights Report (2001-2010) highlights that over the past decade, 7,563 women have been victims of rape, while 3,398 have endured dowry-related

⁴ Ministry of Panchayati Raj. (2024). Elected women representatives of Panchayati Raj institutions to participate in CPD57 side event.

atrocities.⁵

A study on domestic violence in Eastern India reveals that Jharkhand records the highest lifetime prevalence of physical violence against women at 21.1%, with 54.5% of women reporting psychological violence, 27.4% experiencing sexual violence, and 58.9% subjected to any form of violence during their lifetime. Notably, the same study reports that 26.4% of men admitted to committing physical violence, 65.9% to psychological violence, 19.3% to sexual violence, and 66.1% to any form of violence over their lifetime. Reports of domestic violence doubled in 2012 and crimes against women overall doubled between 2006 and 2013.⁶

Additionally, instances of physical and sexual violence, including rape, perpetrated by law enforcement agencies, security personnel, and Maoist groups remain a significant issue, often going unreported. For instance, In August 2011, 30-year-old Sukhmi Bankira, wife of Shree Khujuri Guria and a resident of Trilposi village, was reportedly subjected to repeated sexual violence by security personnel over the course of a week. According to her account, COBRA Jawans occupied her residence for over a week, during which she was compelled to live with them and prepare meals for them. However, she has refrained from making any direct statements regarding the alleged sexual assault. Villagers and her husband, Shree Khujuri Guria, assert that she was raped by five security personnel during this period. It is speculated that her reluctance to speak out may stem from concerns regarding the safety of her son, who had been arrested and incarcerated on allegations of Maoist involvement. Nevertheless, she had disclosed details of the incident to her husband when he visited the village on August 14, 2011.⁷

4.1 Government and NGO Initiatives in combating Gender Based Violence in Jharkhand

In Jharkhand, both governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have implemented various initiatives to combat gender-based violence (GBV) and promote women's empowerment.

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

- **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP):**

Launched in 2015, this scheme aims to protect, educate, and empower girls, addressing gender imbalances and the declining child sex ratio in India.

The Union Ministry of Women and Child Development commemorated the 10th anniversary of the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) Scheme on 22 January 2025. In Jharkhand's Palamu district, the 10th anniversary of BBBP was celebrated with activities such as inauguration ceremonies, awareness meetings with adolescents, rallies, and discussions on child marriage and GBV. These events saw significant participation.

The campaign recorded 180,965 participants, including women, men, and individuals from marginalized groups. Extensive documentation confirmed its impact, contributing to increased awareness and anticipated reductions in child marriage rates. Recognized by the Central Government, the initiative demonstrated effective collaboration between the Government, schools, and NGOs, fostering long-term community engagement in gender equality efforts.⁸

⁵ CID data reveals rise in crime against women. (n.d.). The Times of India.

⁶ Babu BV, Kar SK. Domestic violence against women in eastern India: a population-based study on prevalence and related issues. BMC Public Health.

⁷ Jharkhand - Police atrocities on Adivasis of Saranda Forest: a fact sheet. (2011). Jharkhand Human Rights Movement.

⁸ ("Ten Years of Beti Bachao Beti Padhao: Jharkhand's Efforts in Palamu," 2025)

- **Jharkhand State Commission for Women:**

Established in 1993, this statutory body addresses issues related to crimes against women in the state. It ensures the protection and welfare of women, handles gender-based issues, and recommends policies to the state government. The commission also creates public awareness regarding women-related legislation.

NGO INITIATIVES⁹

- **Aahan Foundation:**

Rashmi Tiwary established the Aahan Foundation, which is dedicated to eliminating gender-based violence (GBV) in Jharkhand's tribal communities. The organization focuses on tackling socio-cultural factors that contribute to domestic violence, such as old traditional practices and alcoholism. Via specific efforts, awareness campaigns, and community engagement, the organization aims to help individuals, particularly women, and promote a violence-free and equitable society.

- **Shakti Vahini:**

Shakti Vahini is a New Delhi-based NGO actively working to combat gender-based violence (GBV) in Jharkhand, particularly focusing on issues like witch-hunting, human trafficking, and domestic violence. The organization collaborates with tribal communities to raise awareness, provide legal aid, and support survivors of such violence. Rishi Kant, co-founder of Shakti Vahini, highlighted to VOA that domestic violence is deeply embedded within the cultural practices of many tribes. This form of violence may not always align with conventional understandings of domestic abuse.

He emphasized that superstitions are prevalent among Jharkhand's tribal communities, often resulting in severe consequences for women and girls. A particularly distressing manifestation of domestic violence in this context is witch-hunting. When families encounter hardships such as illness or unemployment, the blame is frequently placed on a female member—whether a daughter-in-law, a young girl, or an elderly woman. Such women are often accused of being "possessed," subjected to physical assault, and, in extreme cases, tortured through mutilation or suspension from trees.

4.2 Challenges in Combating GBV

From my perspective, the key challenges in combating gender-based violence can be categorized as follows:

- **Political and Legal Challenges:** There is a lack of political commitment to effectively address the issue. The continued reliance on traditional or customary laws and courts, particularly in rural areas and certain ethnic communities, further complicates the situation. Additionally, the absence of regional or international mechanisms to hold states accountable weakens enforcement efforts.
- **Financial Constraints:** Budgetary limitations or complete lack of funding within government departments and NGOs affect staffing, training, and service delivery. Additionally, inadequate infrastructure further restricts the reach and effectiveness of interventions.
- **Problems with logistics and coordination:** Main implementing institutions are not well identified, which frequently leads to ambiguous roles and duties. Effective implementation is hampered by poor coordination and communication amongst important parties, particularly between NGOs and government institutions. Furthermore, insufficient coordination with NGOs, particularly women's rights organizations (WROs), both throughout the legislative process and during implementation,

⁹ ("Activists Warn About Intergenerational Domestic Violence in Indian Tribes," 2024)

exacerbates these issues.

- **Procedural Gaps:** Implementing agencies, particularly law enforcement, social services, legal aid providers, and the judiciary, are often burdened with additional responsibilities without adequate training or guidelines. The lack of standardized protocols on handling violence cases from a human rights perspective results in an approach that often prioritizes family welfare over justice for survivors.
- **Cultural Barriers:** Deeply ingrained social norms and attitudes continue to perpetuate and normalize violence. These beliefs influence not only the general public and survivors but also key implementing actors, including law enforcement personnel and the judiciary, further impeding justice and support for victims.

4.3 Recommendations in addressing GBV

To successfully address gender-based violence (GBV), a broad, multi-sectoral approach is required. Politically, governments must demonstrate strong commitment by implementing and enforcing progressive laws and eliminating unfair customary practices. The establishment of regional and international accountability structures can help to improve compliance. To improve policy implementation, important parties such as government agencies, NGOs, and women's rights organizations (WROs) must work together more effectively. This necessitates clear role definition, efficient communication, and active interaction with relevant groups both before and after legislation is passed. Adequate financial resources must be set aside to assure the availability of trained staff, infrastructure, and critical services for survivors. Procedurally, law enforcement, social service providers, and the judiciary should receive specialized training on handling GBV cases with a human rights-based approach, supported by well-defined guidelines and protocols. Culturally, efforts should focus on changing harmful social norms through awareness campaigns, community engagement, and education programs that challenge attitudes that normalize violence.

5. Gender Based Violence in Rajasthan

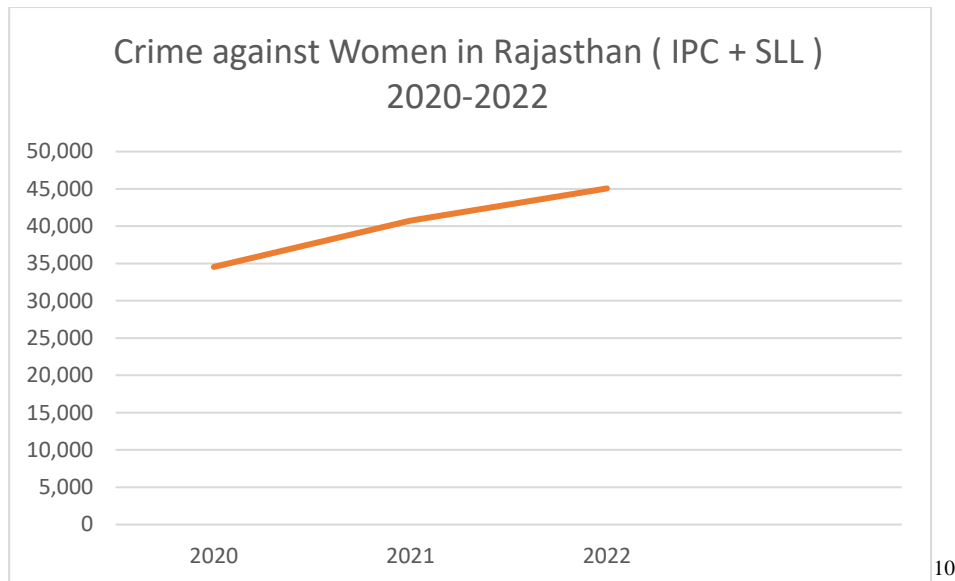
Gender-Based Violence (GBV) is a major social issue in Rajasthan, reflecting well ingrained customs of patriarchy, discrimination based on gender, and sociocultural preconceptions. Rajasthan, famed for its rich legacy and customs, but has a high rate of female violence, which includes domestic violence, honor killings, child marriage, trafficking, and workplace harassment. The state's long-standing gender norms and power inequalities contribute to common discrimination and violence against women and other groups.

The patterns of GBV in Rajasthan reveal that rural areas, where traditional customs hold strong influence, often witness a higher prevalence of practices like child marriage and honor-based violence. Additionally, caste and community-based hierarchies further exacerbate vulnerabilities, with Dalit and tribal women facing compounded discrimination and violence. Urban areas, while offering better access to legal and institutional redressal, still report significant cases of domestic violence and workplace harassment. Societal stigma, lack of awareness, and inadequate implementation of protective laws contribute to the underreporting of such cases.

According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), Rajasthan has continuously reported a high rate of crime against women, including rape, dowry-related violence, and domestic abuse. Women's low literacy rates, economic reliance, and a lack of access to legal and support mechanisms all compound the situation. Rural communities, in particular, experience greater rates of GBV due to a lack of awareness,

societal stigma, and effective institutional treatments.

Political institutions have a critical role in combating gender-based violence in Rajasthan. While the state government has established laws and policies such as the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (2005) and the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (2006). Initiatives such as the Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls (SABLA) face execution and outreach issues. Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) play an important role in grassroots awareness and intervention, although their effectiveness is sometimes limited by sociopolitical limitations.



The line graph illustrates the trend in crimes against women in Rajasthan from 2020 to 2022, considering cases registered under the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and Special & Local Laws (SLL). The data reveals a steady increase in reported crimes over the three-year period.

- In 2020, the number of cases was approximately 34,535, indicating a significant prevalence of gender-based crimes in the state.
- By 2021, the reported cases increased, crossing 40,738, reflecting a rise in incidents or improved reporting mechanisms.
- In 2022, the upward trend continued, with cases nearing 45,058, highlighting persistent challenges in addressing gender-based violence.

5.1 Government and NGO Initiatives in combating Gender based Violence in Rajasthan

The government and various non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Rajasthan have undertaken multiple initiatives to address Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and provide support to survivors.

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

- **Mahila Salah Suraksha¹¹:**

MSSKs in Rajasthan work to protect women's interests across the state. They are managed by registered

¹⁰ NCRB_STATS.pdf (Table 3A.1). (n.d.). National Crime Records Bureau.

¹¹ Mahila Salah Suraksha. (n.d.). Govt of Rajasthan.

NGOs to ensure comprehensive grievance redressal. These centers serve as service providers, ensuring the safety of affected women and assisting district protection officers in filing Daily Incidence Reports (DIR) for domestic violence cases.

Funding for MSSKs is allocated by the Women Empowerment Department through the Zila Sahayata Samiti, which disburses funds in quarterly installments. The Zila Sahayata Samiti, led by the Zila Pramukh, reviews applications, selects organizations for fund allocation, disburses quarterly funds, and conducts periodic monitoring.

- **One-Stop Centers (Sakhi Centers):**

These centers provide integrated support, including medical aid, legal assistance, and shelter, for women affected by violence. Rajasthan now has 33 functioning Sakhi Centers according to official data from the government of India.

NGO INITIATIVES

- **Rajasthan Samgrah Kalyan Sansthan (RSKS India)¹²:**

RSKS India is a grassroots organization founded in 1992 with the objective of addressing critical social issues such as illiteracy, poverty, and violence against women. Headquartered in Rajasthan, India, the organization actively implements various women empowerment programs aimed at fostering self-reliance and enhancing economic independence.

Through initiatives such as self-help groups, awareness campaigns on women's rights, and skill development training, RSKS India works to build confidence among women and equip them with financial capabilities. By promoting education, economic opportunities, and social awareness, the organization strives to create a more equitable and just society for women.

- **Gram Chetna Kendra (GCK)¹³:**

Gram Chetna Kendra (GCK) is a dedicated organization operating in rural Rajasthan with the mission of addressing gender discrimination and supporting survivors of gender-based violence (GBV). It provides comprehensive assistance through legal aid, counseling, and livelihood support, ensuring that affected individuals receive the necessary resources to rebuild their lives with dignity and independence.

5.2 Challenges in Combating GBV

- Patriarchal Social Norms – Deep-rooted patriarchal attitudes often normalize violence against women and discourage victims from reporting incidents due to fear of social stigma and backlash.
- Weak Implementation of Laws – Despite stringent laws like the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (2005) and the POSH Act (2013), enforcement remains weak due to police apathy, corruption, and lack of gender sensitivity among law enforcement officials.
- Underreporting of Cases – Many GBV cases go unreported due to fear of retaliation, lack of trust in the legal system, and pressure from families to maintain social harmony. This leads to inadequate data and ineffective policy responses.
- Political Influence and Impunity – In many cases, perpetrators with political or economic influence evade justice, which weakens public trust in the system and emboldens offenders.
- Caste and Class Barriers – Dalit and tribal women face intersecting vulnerabilities, experiencing not

¹² Rajasthan Samgrah Kalyan Sansthan (RSKS India). (n.d.). Girls Not Brides.

¹³ Gram Chetna Kendra. (n.d.). GIRLS NOT BRIDES.

only gender-based violence but also caste-based discrimination, making it harder for them to access justice and support services.

5.3 Recommendations in addressing GBV

To effectively combat gender-based violence (GBV) in Rajasthan, a multi-faceted approach is required, focusing on legal, institutional, social, and economic reforms. Strengthening the implementation of existing laws through enhanced training and sensitization of law enforcement agencies, judiciary, and local governance bodies is crucial to ensuring swift justice for survivors. Establishing more one-stop crisis centers, shelter homes, and dedicated helplines with adequate funding and trained personnel will provide essential support services to victims. Increasing female representation in law enforcement and governance can help create a more gender-sensitive approach to policymaking and enforcement. Public awareness campaigns, particularly in rural areas, should be intensified to educate communities on legal rights, gender equality, and the importance of reporting violence. Special attention must be given to vulnerable groups, such as Dalit and tribal women, through targeted interventions that address intersectional discrimination. Encouraging community participation through self-help groups, women's collectives, and local governance institutions will enhance grassroots-level accountability and prevention efforts. Lastly, integrating gender-sensitive curricula in educational institutions and promoting economic empowerment programs for women can address the root causes of GBV by challenging patriarchal norms and reducing women's financial dependence on perpetrators. A comprehensive and coordinated effort involving the government, civil society, and community stakeholders is essential to creating a safer and more equitable society in Rajasthan.

6. CONCLUSION

Gender-based violence (GBV) remains a significant challenge in Jharkhand and Rajasthan, reflecting deep-rooted socio-cultural norms, economic inequalities, and institutional gaps. Political institutions play a crucial role in addressing GBV by shaping policies, ensuring law enforcement, and fostering social change. However, their effectiveness depends on political will, administrative efficiency, and societal engagement. Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) have the potential to drive grassroots change by empowering women and ensuring local governance responsiveness. However, structural barriers, including patriarchal mindsets and underrepresentation of women in decision-making roles, hinder their impact. Jharkhand and Rajasthan have seen efforts from political institutions, including women's reservation in local governance, state-led welfare schemes, and collaboration with civil society organizations. Nevertheless, sustainable change requires stronger political commitment, better resource allocation, and more effective monitoring mechanisms. Strengthening institutional frameworks, promoting gender-sensitive governance, and enhancing community participation can significantly contribute to reducing GBV and ensuring justice for survivors.

Ultimately, addressing GBV necessitates a multi-pronged approach, integrating legal, political, and socio-economic interventions. Political institutions in Jharkhand and Rajasthan must evolve to become more gender-responsive, ensuring that policies translate into tangible change at the grassroots level.

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