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From Victimisation to Perpetration: Social Change and the Pathways to Female-Perpetrated Intimate Partner Homicide in India

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Central Research Theme: The transition of women from victims of intimate partner violence to perpetrators of lethal violence, particularly where prolonged abuse, coercive control, social pressures and failures of institutional protection contribute to a reactive pathway towards homicide.

Abstract

Intimate partner homicide is generally examined through the lens of male violence against women. However, female-perpetrated intimate partner homicide remains a comparatively underexplored area of criminological and socio-legal research in India. The issue becomes particularly significant where women who have experienced prolonged domestic violence, coercive control, physical abuse, emotional exploitation or economic dependency subsequently become perpetrators of lethal violence against their intimate partners.

This research examines the possible pathways through which a woman may transition from victimisation to perpetration. It explores the influence of changing gender roles, marital expectations, patriarchal structures, economic dependency, social stigma, family pressures and the accessibility of legal and institutional remedies. Particular attention is given to the possibility that, in certain cases, lethal violence may emerge as an extreme form of resistance following prolonged victimisation and perceived failure of available protective mechanisms.

The study adopts a criminological and socio-legal approach to examine whether female-perpetrated intimate partner homicide can, in a significant subset of cases, be understood through a reactive pathway involving prolonged intimate partner violence and systemic failure. It also distinguishes reactive violence from premeditated homicide, revenge, financial motives and other independent motivations.

The research seeks to contribute to a more balanced understanding of female criminality by examining the social circumstances, individual experiences and institutional conditions that may precede such offences, without overlooking criminal responsibility or the rights of homicide victims.

Keywords: Female-perpetrated homicide, intimate partner violence, domestic violence, victimisation, violent resistance, coercive control, patriarchy, systemic failure, criminology, India.

1. Introduction

Crime committed by women has historically received comparatively less attention in criminological literature than crime committed by men. Traditional criminological theories have often associated women with passive, submissive and non-violent social roles. Consequently, female criminality, particularly violent criminality, has frequently been treated as exceptional or inconsistent with conventional expectations of femininity.

However, changing social structures, evolving gender relationships, economic pressures and transformations in family institutions require a broader examination of women's involvement in serious violent offences.

One such area is female-perpetrated intimate partner homicide, which refers to the unlawful killing of a husband, male partner or other intimate partner by a woman with whom she shares or has shared an intimate relationship.

The subject presents an important criminological question: Can a woman who has experienced prolonged intimate partner violence eventually become a perpetrator of lethal violence against the very person responsible for her victimisation?

This question requires an examination beyond the immediate criminal act. In certain circumstances, homicide may be preceded by years of physical abuse, psychological intimidation, coercive control, sexual violence, economic deprivation, threats and social isolation. A woman may remain in an abusive relationship because of financial dependence, children, social stigma, family expectations or the absence of effective institutional support.

The research therefore examines whether some instances of female-perpetrated intimate partner homicide represent an escalation of prolonged victimisation into violent resistance. At the same time, it recognises that female-perpetrated homicide is not necessarily a consequence of victimisation and that each case must be examined on its own facts.

The Indian context is particularly relevant because marriage and intimate relationships frequently operate within wider family, community and social structures. Patriarchal expectations, economic inequality, pressure to preserve marriage and the social consequences of separation may influence the choices available to women experiencing domestic abuse.

The central concern of this research is therefore not merely why women commit homicide, but what circumstances, social conditions and institutional failures may contribute to the transition from victimisation to perpetration.

2. Statement of the Research Problem

Female-perpetrated intimate partner homicide presents a complex problem because the criminal act may sometimes be the final event in a prolonged history of domestic victimisation.

The conventional criminal justice approach primarily examines the immediate circumstances of the homicide, including the weapon used, intention, motive, preparation and conduct of the accused. Although these factors are essential to determining criminal liability, they may not fully explain the social and psychological circumstances preceding the offence.

A woman accused of killing her intimate partner may have experienced years of abuse, threats, humiliation, coercive control or economic exploitation. In some cases, she may have attempted to seek assistance from family members, police authorities or other institutions without obtaining effective protection.

The research problem arises from the need to understand whether the transition from victimisation to perpetration is, in certain cases, connected with prolonged abuse, accumulated psychological strain, perceived entrapment and the failure of protective mechanisms.

The study also addresses an important gap in Indian criminological research: the limited availability of systematic, gender-specific research examining women who kill their intimate partners, their backgrounds, their experiences of victimisation and the circumstances surrounding the homicide.

Accordingly, the research seeks to examine the relationship between social change, domestic violence, women's agency, institutional responses and female-perpetrated intimate partner homicide in India.

3. Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the major social, psychological, economic and situational factors contributing to female-perpetrated intimate partner homicide in India?
2. To what extent does prolonged intimate partner violence contribute to the transition of women from victimisation to perpetration?
3. How do patriarchal structures, changing gender roles, economic dependency and social expectations influence women's responses to abusive intimate relationships?
4. Does the failure of family support systems, police authorities, legal remedies and protective institutions contribute to the escalation of domestic violence into lethal violence?
5. Can female-perpetrated intimate partner homicide, in certain circumstances, be understood as reactive violent resistance rather than conventional instrumental or premeditated criminal behavior?
6. How adequately does the Indian criminal justice system consider the history of domestic violence and the circumstances of female accused persons while determining criminal responsibility?

4. Objectives of the Study

The principal objectives are:

1. To examine the criminological dimensions of female-perpetrated intimate partner homicide in India.

2. To identify the social, economic, psychological and situational factors associated with female-perpetrated intimate partner homicide.
3. To investigate the relationship between prolonged domestic violence, coercive control and reactive violent behavior.
4. To analyse the impact of patriarchy, changing social structures and evolving gender relationships on women's experiences of intimate partner violence.
5. To examine the role of institutional failures, including inadequate police intervention, ineffective legal protection and limited access to support services.
6. To evaluate the Indian legal framework concerning domestic violence, private defence, culpable homicide and murder.
7. To suggest appropriate legal, institutional and preventive measures for addressing domestic violence and reducing the circumstances that may lead to lethal outcomes.

5. Research Hypothesis

Violent Resistance and Systemic Failure Hypothesis (Reactive Pathway)

Female-perpetrated intimate partner homicide in India may, in a significant subset of cases, represent an extreme form of reactive violent resistance arising from prolonged intimate partner violence, coercive control and accumulated psychological distress. The inability to access effective legal protection, family support, economic independence and institutional intervention may contribute to a situation of perceived entrapment, thereby increasing the possibility of an escalation from victimisation to lethal violence.

The hypothesis does not presume that all women who commit intimate partner homicide are previously victimised. Instead, it proposes that prior victimisation and systemic failure should be investigated as potential explanatory factors in an identifiable subset of cases.

6. Review of Literature

The existing literature provides an important foundation for examining the relationship between domestic violence, gender relations and homicide.

6.1 Domestic Violence and Women's Victimisation in India

The National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5), conducted during 2019–2021, provides important evidence concerning domestic violence in India. NFHS-5 reports that approximately 29.3% of ever-married women aged 18–49 experienced spousal physical or sexual violence at some point, while approximately 24.4% reported such violence in the preceding 12 months. These are survey measures of victimisation, not figures for female-perpetrated homicide; the exact survey indicator and denominator must be preserved when citing them.
Source: International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS) and ICF, National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5), 2019–21, India Report (2021).

This evidence establishes the importance of examining intimate partner violence as a social and criminological concern. However, the prevalence of domestic violence cannot itself establish a causal relationship with female-perpetrated homicide.

6.2 Bushra Sabri, Maria V. Sanchez and Jacquelyn C. Campbell

Their study, Motives and Characteristics of Domestic Violence Homicides and Suicides Among Women in India (2015), examined 100 cases using newspaper reports from 2011–2012.

The research identified dowry demands, previous domestic violence, harassment and family conflict among the reported circumstances associated with domestic violence-related homicides and suicides.

The study is relevant because it highlights the relationship between violence within domestic relationships and extreme outcomes. However, its primary focus was on women as victims of homicide and suicide, rather than women as perpetrators of intimate partner homicide.

6.3 Bushra Sabri and Anna Marie Young

In their 2022 study, Contextual Factors Associated with Gender-Based Violence and Related Homicides Perpetrated by Partners and In-Laws: A Study of Women Survivors in India, the researchers examined experiences reported by 27 women.

The study identified factors operating at different levels, including:

- Societal factors, such as dowry-related expectations.
- Community factors, including inadequate resources.
- Relationship factors, including abuse by in-laws.
- Individual factors, including internalised powerlessness.

This research is significant because it demonstrates that domestic violence cannot always be understood as an isolated interpersonal dispute. It may be influenced by wider social and institutional circumstances.

6.4 International Research on Female Intimate Partner Homicide

A systematic review by Sally Crosland, Calli Tzani and Maria Ioannou, published online in 2025, examines literature concerning female perpetrators of intimate partner homicide between 2003 and 2023.

The review is particularly relevant to the present research because it focuses specifically on female perpetrators, stereotypes and factors associated with intimate partner homicide. It also provides an international comparative foundation for examining the Indian context.

6.5 Research Gap

The existing Indian literature has substantially examined violence against women, dowry-related deaths, domestic violence and intimate partner victimisation. However, there remains a need for more focused research on women who kill their intimate partners, particularly research that investigates:

- Whether the accused woman had experienced previous domestic violence.
- Whether there was a history of coercive control or repeated abuse.

- Whether she had attempted to obtain institutional protection.
- Whether the homicide was reactive, impulsive, retaliatory or premeditated.
- Whether economic dependency and social pressures restricted her ability to leave the relationship.

The present study seeks to address this gap by examining female-perpetrated intimate partner homicide through a combined criminological, social and legal framework.

7. Theoretical Framework

Conceptual Flowchart: Proposed Reactive Pathway

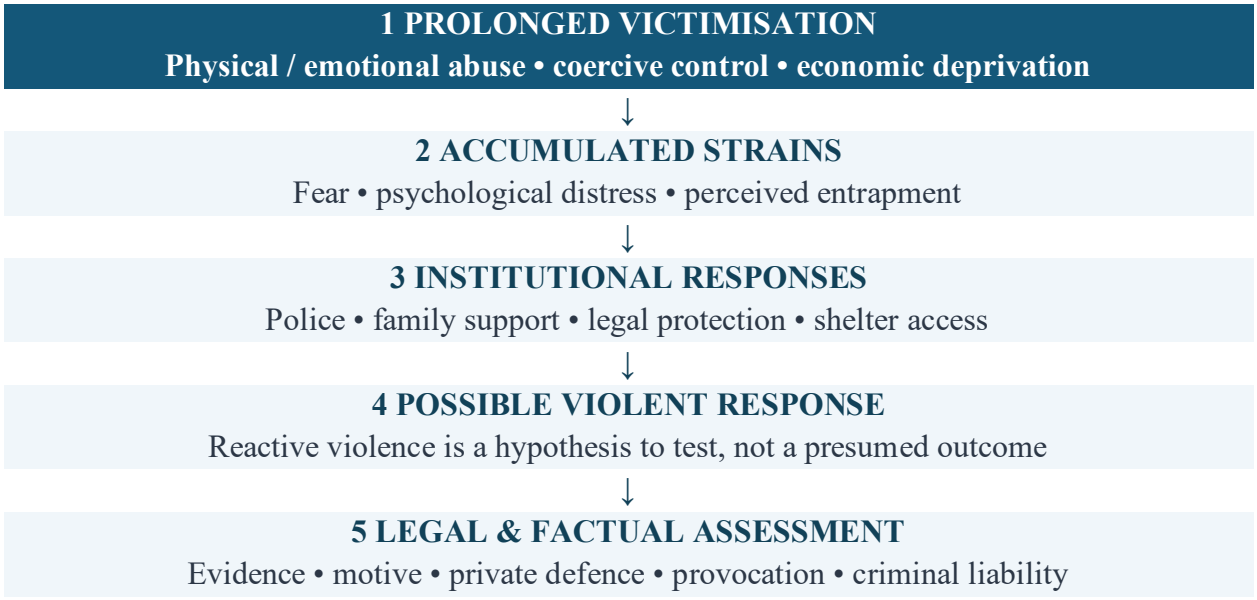


Figure 1. Analytical model proposed for investigation; no causal relationship is assumed.

The research will employ the following criminological theories.

7.1 General Strain Theory

Robert Agnew's General Strain Theory explains how negative experiences, stressful relationships and the inability to achieve desired goals may generate negative emotions, including anger and frustration, which can sometimes contribute to criminal behavior.

In the present research, prolonged domestic violence, humiliation, threats, economic deprivation and coercive control may operate as sources of strain.

The theory provides a framework for examining whether accumulated strain, combined with inadequate coping resources and perceived absence of alternatives, may contribute to violent responses.

However, strain does not inevitably produce violence. Individual circumstances and intervening factors must be considered.

7.2 Feminist Criminological Theory

Feminist criminology examines how gender inequality, patriarchal institutions, power relations and social expectations influence women's experiences of crime and the criminal justice system.

This theory is central to the present study because women may experience intimate partner violence within relationships characterized by unequal power, financial dependency and social restrictions.

It also helps explain why conventional interpretations of female criminality may overlook the broader social circumstances preceding the offence.

7.3 Cycle of Violence

The concept of the cycle of violence, associated with Lenore E. Walker's work, provides a framework for understanding recurring patterns of abuse, tension and reconciliation in abusive relationships.

The research can examine whether repeated cycles of violence, rather than isolated incidents, contribute to accumulated fear, psychological distress and perceived entrapment.

The cycle should be treated as an analytical framework, not as a universal pattern applicable to every abusive relationship.

7.4 Coercive Control Framework

Evan Stark's work on coercive control examines patterns of domination through intimidation, isolation, regulation of everyday activities, economic restrictions and psychological abuse.

This framework is particularly useful because intimate partner violence may extend beyond physical assaults.

A woman may experience continuous restrictions on her freedom, financial independence, social interaction and personal decision-making, even where physical violence is not consistently present.

The research will investigate whether coercive control can help explain the circumstances preceding certain instances of female-perpetrated homicide.

7.5 Integrative Application

These theories will be examined together to understand the possible transition:

Prolonged Intimate Partner Victimisation

Physical abuse, emotional abuse, coercive control and economic deprivation

Accumulated Strain and Psychological Distress

Fear, anger, helplessness and perceived entrapment

Systemic and Institutional Failure

Inadequate protection, inaccessible support and economic dependence

Possible Reactive Violent Response

An explanatory pathway in certain cases, not an inevitable outcome
Proposed conceptual model for testing the research hypothesis.

8. Social Change and the Changing Position of Women in Indian Society

Social change is an important component of this research because women's roles within Indian families and intimate relationships have undergone significant transformation.

Increasing access to education, employment, financial resources and legal awareness has expanded women's opportunities for independent decision-making. However, these developments have not necessarily resulted in the complete disappearance of traditional patriarchal expectations.

In several relationships, women may experience a conflict between emerging expectations of autonomy and established expectations of obedience, domestic responsibility and marital adjustment.

The following factors require examination.

8.1 Changing Gender Roles

Educated and economically independent women may increasingly assert their rights, personal choices and independence within intimate relationships. In certain circumstances, this may create conflict where a partner expects traditional gender-based obedience and control.

However, economic independence does not automatically eliminate domestic violence. Even employed women may experience physical, emotional and psychological abuse.

8.2 Patriarchal Family Structures

Traditional family structures may discourage women from reporting domestic violence or leaving abusive relationships. The pressure to preserve marriage, maintain family honour and protect children may restrict their choices.

8.3 Economic Dependency

Financial dependence can prevent women from leaving abusive relationships. Limited employment opportunities, lack of independent housing and responsibility for children may create conditions of vulnerability.

8.4 Social Stigma and Marital Expectations

Divorce, separation and marital breakdown may carry social consequences, particularly in communities where marriage is considered a lifelong obligation.

The fear of social isolation, family rejection and loss of financial security may discourage women from seeking separation or reporting abuse.

8.5 Increased Legal Awareness and Women's Agency

The expansion of legal awareness has enabled women to understand and assert their rights. Nevertheless, awareness alone cannot ensure protection where enforcement mechanisms, financial resources and social support remain inadequate.

The research will examine whether the changing position of women has influenced their responses to intimate partner violence and whether some extreme responses can be understood within the wider context of social transformation.

9. Indian Legal Framework

The Indian legal framework must be examined from two perspectives: protection of women experiencing domestic violence and determination of criminal responsibility where a woman is accused of killing her intimate partner.

9.1 Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005

The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 provides an important statutory framework for addressing domestic abuse.

Section 3 recognises different forms of domestic violence, including:

- Physical abuse.
- Sexual abuse.
- Verbal and emotional abuse.
- Economic abuse.

The Act also provides mechanisms for protection orders, residence orders, monetary relief, custody orders and compensation.

Sections 12 and 18 to 23 are particularly relevant to the present research because they provide mechanisms through which an aggrieved woman may seek judicial protection and other reliefs.

The research will examine whether these protective mechanisms are accessible, effectively implemented and capable of preventing the escalation of domestic violence.

9.2 Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023

The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 provides the substantive criminal law framework governing murder, culpable homicide and private defence for offences committed after its commencement, subject to applicable transitional principles.

Important provisions include:

Provision	Legal significance
Section 100	Culpable homicide
Section 101	Murder
Section 105	Punishment for culpable homicide not amounting to murder
Section 34	Acts done in private defence
Section 35	Right of private defence of body and property
Section 37	Restrictions on the right of private defence
Section 38	Circumstances in which private defence of the body extends to causing death

9.3 Right of Private Defence

The right of private defence is particularly relevant to this research.

Sections 34–38 of the BNS recognise the right of an individual to defend their own body and the body of another person against unlawful threats, subject to statutory restrictions.

However, the existence of a history of domestic violence does not automatically establish a legal right to cause the death of an intimate partner.

The court must examine the circumstances of the particular incident, including the apprehension of danger, necessity, proportionality and the statutory conditions governing the exercise of private defence.

An important research question is whether the criminal justice system adequately considers the history of abuse when determining the circumstances in which the alleged homicide occurred.

9.4 Grave and Sudden Provocation

The legal principles concerning grave and sudden provocation are also relevant.

In K.M. Nanavati v. State of Maharashtra, AIR 1962 SC 605, the Supreme Court examined the doctrine of grave and sudden provocation.

The judgment recognised that the previous conduct of the victim may be relevant in understanding the mental background of the accused. However, the court must also consider whether the accused had regained self-control and whether the fatal act was attributable to the provocation or involved subsequent deliberation.

This principle may provide a relevant legal lens for examining certain cases involving accumulated domestic abuse. Nevertheless, prolonged abuse does not automatically satisfy the legal requirements of grave and sudden provocation.

9.5 Constitutional Perspective

Articles 14 and 21 of the Constitution of India provide an important constitutional foundation for this research.

- Article 14: Equality before the law and equal protection of the laws.
- Article 21: Protection of life and personal liberty.

The research will examine the relationship between women's right to live with dignity and security, the State's responsibility to provide effective protection against violence, and the rights of individuals accused of serious offences.

The study must also recognise that the rights of the homicide victim and the principles of a fair criminal trial remain essential.

9.6 Judicial principles relevant to the research

In K.M. Nanavati v. State of Maharashtra, AIR 1962 SC 605, the Supreme Court examined grave and sudden provocation, including the interval between provocation and the killing. The decision does not create a general defence for homicide following prolonged domestic abuse; it requires close attention to the facts and the applicable exception to murder.

In Darshan Singh v. State of Punjab, (2010) 2 SCC 333, the Supreme Court summarized principles governing private defence. The right is preventive, arises from a reasonable apprehension of danger, and is subject to legal limits. The fact that an accused person previously suffered violence is relevant context, but cannot by itself satisfy the conditions for causing death in private defence.

In Hiral P. Harsora v. Kusum Narottamdas Harsora, (2016) 10 SCC 165, the Supreme Court struck down the words “adult male” from the definition of respondent under the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005. The decision illustrates the breadth of the protective framework, although legal entitlement does not establish that relief was practically accessible in any particular case.

In Lalita Kumari v. Government of Uttar Pradesh, (2014) 2 SCC 1, the Supreme Court addressed mandatory registration of an FIR where information discloses a cognizable offence, subject to the principles explained in that judgment. For this study, the decision provides a benchmark against which reported police responses to complaints of violence can be evaluated.

A recent decision, Saurabh Kumar Tripathi v. Vidhi Rawal, 2025 INSC 734 (Supreme Court, 19 May 2025), examines the High Court’s inherent jurisdiction to quash proceedings initiated under Section 12 of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005. It is relevant to the availability and judicial supervision of protective remedies, not as direct evidence of the causes of female-perpetrated homicide. The judgment is therefore considered under institutional protection rather than under private defence or the legal exceptions to murder.

9.7 Evidentiary caution and research design

A reported judgment is not a complete social history. Silence about previous abuse in a judgment cannot safely be coded as proof that abuse never occurred. The case review should distinguish allegations, findings proved by the court, medical or documentary corroboration, and matters on which the record is silent. Likewise, the presence of a prior complaint does not, without further evidence, prove that an institution failed to act.

For each case, the researcher should record the relationship between accused and deceased, date of offence, governing penal statute, evidence of prior violence, available protective steps, immediate circumstances of the killing, alleged motive, legal defence raised, judicial findings and outcome. This approach makes the proposed reactive-pathway hypothesis capable of being challenged rather than merely illustrated.

10. Criminological Pathways to Female-Perpetrated Intimate Partner Homicide

An important contribution of this research will be the identification of different pathways through which female-perpetrated intimate partner homicide may occur.

It would be academically inappropriate to treat all female perpetrators as victims of domestic violence. The study therefore proposes the following analytical classification.

No.	Pathway	Potential contributing factors	Analytical characterisation
1	Reactive / Defensive	Prior physical abuse, threats, coercive control and perceived danger	Possible violent resistance; legal private defence must be assessed separately
2	Accumulated Strain	Repeated humiliation, economic exploitation, psychological pressure and perceived entrapment	Violence potentially associated with accumulated strain
3	Retaliatory / Revenge-Based	Resentment, jealousy, marital conflict or previous conduct	Retaliatory violence, not necessarily defensive
4	Instrumental / Premeditated	Financial gain, property disputes, extramarital relationships or other independent motives	Planned or deliberately motivated homicide
5	Joint / Third-Party Involvement	Alleged conspiracy or assistance by relatives or other persons	Homicide involving third-party participation

10.1 Reactive or Defensive Pathway

This pathway concerns women who may have experienced prolonged physical abuse, threats, coercive control or repeated violence.

In certain circumstances, the homicide may occur during an episode of confrontation or perceived danger.

The study will investigate whether such incidents represent extreme reactions to prolonged victimisation, while separately examining whether the legal requirements of private defence or any applicable mitigating exception are satisfied.

10.2 Accumulated Strain Pathway

In this pathway, repeated abuse, humiliation, economic exploitation and psychological pressure may produce accumulated strain.

The homicide may not necessarily occur during an immediate physical attack. Instead, the study will investigate whether prolonged stress and perceived entrapment contribute to the circumstances preceding the offence.

10.3 Retaliatory or Revenge-Based Pathway

Some homicides may be motivated by revenge, resentment, jealousy or retaliation arising from marital conflict or previous conduct.

These cases must be distinguished from reactive defensive violence because the presence of previous abuse does not automatically establish that the killing was defensive or a consequence of victimisation.

10.4 Instrumental or Premeditated Pathway

In certain cases, homicide may be planned and motivated by financial gain, property disputes, extramarital relationships or other personal interests.

Such cases may have little or no connection with prior victimisation.

10.5 Joint or Third-Party Involvement

The research should also consider cases involving alleged conspiracy, assistance from another person, family members or third parties.

The circumstances of such cases may be substantially different from those involving an individual reactive response.

11. Research Methodology

The study will adopt a doctrinal and non-doctrinal socio-legal research methodology, supported by criminological analysis.

11.1 Nature of Research

The research will be descriptive, analytical and exploratory in nature.

It will examine the legal framework, criminological theories, available empirical material and selected cases involving female-perpetrated intimate partner homicide.

11.2 Doctrinal Research

The doctrinal component will involve examination of:

- The Constitution of India.
- Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023.
- Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005.
- Relevant judicial decisions of the Supreme Court and High Courts.
- Legal literature, commentaries and academic publications.

11.3 Non-Doctrinal Research

The empirical component may involve:

- Analysis of selected reported criminal cases.
- Examination of publicly available judicial judgments.
- Analysis of NCRB reports and government statistics.
- Review of newspaper reports, subject to verification.
- Qualitative interviews with legal practitioners, criminologists, counsellors and relevant professionals, if ethically and practically feasible.

11.4 Sources of Data

Primary sources:

- Statutes and judicial decisions.
- Official government publications.
- NCRB reports.
- NFHS reports.
- Publicly accessible court records, where available.

Secondary sources:

- Research journals.
- Books on feminist criminology.
- Publications on domestic violence and coercive control.
- Dissertations and academic papers.
- Relevant international comparative studies.

11.5 Research Limitations

A major limitation is the absence of readily identifiable, comprehensive national statistics specifically categorizing women who kill their intimate partners and linking their alleged offences with histories of domestic victimisation.

NCRB's general murder statistics provide information about murder cases, motives and victim characteristics, but should not be treated as a direct measurement of female-perpetrated intimate partner homicide.

The research will therefore rely on carefully selected case material and triangulation of available sources rather than making unsupported national prevalence claims.

12. Findings Expected from the Study

The available material supports several questions for investigation, rather than definitive findings about female-perpetrated intimate partner homicide. The following propositions require testing against judicial records and, where feasible, interview evidence.

The analysis will examine:

1. The importance of examining the accused woman's history of domestic violence rather than focusing exclusively on the immediate incident.
2. The possible relationship between coercive control, accumulated strain and reactive violent behaviour.
3. The influence of economic dependency, family pressures and social stigma on women's ability to exit abusive relationships.
4. The importance of timely institutional intervention and effective implementation of domestic violence protection mechanisms.
5. The need to distinguish between reactive violence, legally recognised private defence, provocation, retaliation and premeditated homicide.
6. The importance of a gender-sensitive but evidence-based approach to criminal investigation and adjudication.

These are anticipated research outcomes, not established findings. Their validity will depend upon the case material and empirical evidence examined.

13. Recommendations

On the basis of the proposed research, the following recommendations may be examined:

1. Strengthening preventive mechanisms, domestic violence complaints should receive timely and effective attention, particularly where repeated threats, physical assaults or coercive behaviour are reported.
2. Improved institutional coordination, police authorities, Protection Officers, legal services authorities, medical institutions and shelter services should coordinate to provide effective protection to women experiencing domestic violence.
3. Gender-sensitive criminal investigation, investigations involving female accused persons in intimate partner homicide should examine the complete history of the relationship, including prior complaints, medical records, threats, witness accounts and previous incidents of violence.
4. Improved judicial understanding, courts should be able to consider relevant evidence of prolonged abuse, coercive control and psychological circumstances while applying the established principles of criminal law.
5. Economic and social support, greater access to financial assistance, employment opportunities, legal aid, counselling and safe accommodation may help women leave abusive relationships without resorting to extreme responses.
6. Better criminological data, there is a need for more systematic research and data collection concerning female homicide offenders, their relationship with victims, previous histories of domestic violence and the circumstances surrounding the offences.

14. Conclusion

Female-perpetrated intimate partner homicide is a complex criminological phenomenon that cannot be adequately understood by examining the act of homicide in isolation.

Although women are frequently studied as victims of domestic violence, their involvement as perpetrators of lethal violence requires a separate and more comprehensive academic examination.

This research seeks to understand the circumstances in which prolonged victimisation, coercive control, psychological strain, economic dependency and institutional failures may contribute to a transition from victimisation to perpetration.

The proposed reactive pathway provides an important framework for examining whether some instances of female-perpetrated intimate partner homicide represent extreme forms of violent resistance arising from prolonged abuse and perceived entrapment.

However, it is equally important to distinguish such circumstances from cases involving revenge, financial motives, premeditation or other independent criminal intentions. A history of victimisation cannot automatically excuse homicide, nor can it establish the legal defence of private defence or provocation without satisfying the applicable legal requirements.

The central argument of this research is that understanding female-perpetrated intimate partner homicide requires examining not only the individual who commits the offence but also the relationship, social environment and institutional circumstances that may have preceded it.

A comprehensive criminological approach can therefore contribute to a more balanced understanding of female criminality, strengthen preventive mechanisms and improve the administration of criminal justice in India.

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