

**THE ROLE OF GENDER-NEUTRAL LAWS IN PROTECTING MALE VICTIMS
OF VIOLENCE AND ABUSE**

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Abstract

Male victimization in domestic and intimate partner violence is still under-researched and sociologically ignored especially under gendered law as applied in India. Even though national constitution guarantees equality and international human rights frameworks were developed, law as an institution fails to recognize male victims of domestic violence law. Laws are created to be purposeful, but in many cases where laws are failed to be made gender neutral male victims have been left without legal recourse or legal help. Social expectations of masculinity, stigma and awareness are contributing factors to combat male abuse (physical, emotional, psychological, sexual, and financial). Additionally, media representation and public discourse do not necessarily address male victimization and aggressively promote false narratives derived from objective realities. In making a case for more gender-neutral laws and policies for all victims, the study notes that awareness and education programs about male victims and needs should be created. To ensure male victims receive equitable access to justice a legal reform, awareness and social sensitization programs should operate as a comprehensive system to engage all male and female victims. Ultimately the study indicates that while gender equality is revered the recognition and needs of all victims must be viewed collectively.

Keywords: Gender-neutral laws, male victimization, domestic violence, Abuse, gender equality.

1 Introduction

Gender is a term used to describe men and women, with the Indian Penal Code defining them as male or female. The Indian Constitution aims for equal treatment and protection of law for all citizens. However, there is a growing trend towards gender neutrality, where work is defined based on an individual's capabilities, ensuring equal opportunity for everyone. In India, criminal acts, particularly sexual offenses, do not consider gender neutrality, with statutes being gender-specific or gender-sensitive. Women are not protected from such crimes, while men cannot face or be victims of such offenses. Debates have been conducted on crimes against men, as it is difficult for men to prove their experiences. Crime is a factor of society that can be done against any individual or animal, and the society or judiciary must grant justice to the victim. The Criminal Procedure Code, 1973 defines a victim as someone who has suffered any loss or injury caused by the act or omission for which the accused person has been charged. Being gender-specific or sensitive will not be justifiable under any offense (Singh, 2023). Gender-neutrality aims to provide equal rights to all citizens, while rape laws aim to provide equal justice to all individuals, regardless of gender. However, Indian society often believes that rape victims are women, with male perpetrators only engaging in sexual intercourse for sexual desires. Sections 375 and 376 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860 allow only males to be accused of rape, while victims are females. Additionally, laws related to stalking, voyeurism, and sexual harassment are gender-specific, with the miscreant being male and the victim being female. While gender-neutral laws may not be feasible, it is crucial to create laws that are not gender-biased, as it is unjust to assume that only one gender is affected by a specific crime.

The Gender Forgotten: Male

The phrase "The Gender Forgotten: Male" emphasises masculine difficulties that gender debate generally ignores. Despite recent gender equality gains, both men and women have issues, and gender debates should incorporate all views. Male concerns may be highlighted in these areas. Mental health Cultural influences may deter males from showing vulnerability or seeking mental health help. This may increase male undetected and untreated mental health issues. Social conventions and stereotypes may harm men. Men's behaviours might hinder their capacity to express emotions or pursue non-traditional careers due to societal expectations. Fatherhood and Parental Rights Parenting discussions frequently emphasise maternal rights. Men may struggle to get legal and societal recognition as dads. Education While gender disparities in education have been addressed, issues like male under-representation in higher education or particular academic fields may not have received as much attention. Workplace safety and hazards Men dominate industries with high occupational risks and deaths. Occupational health and safety discussions should incorporate male-specific challenges. Violence against men despite the emphasis on violence against women, violence against men may be underreported or overlooked. Domestic violence, sexual assault, and other abuse are included (Iyer, 2018). Differences in law Males may face legal biases in child care and criminal justice processes. Gender-neutrality promotes equal rights for everyone. Regarding rape legislation, it seeks gender-neutral justice. Indian culture has blindly believed that rape victims must be women and that male rapists force sexual relations to gratify their sexual desires. According to Sections 375 and 376 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860 (the IPC), only men may be charged of rape and only women can be victims. Stalking, voyeurism, and sexual harassment statutes are gender-specific, therefore the perpetrator must be male and the victim female. Although gender-neutral legislation are unlikely, India's present situation need them. Saying a crime affects just one gender is illogical.

1.1 Gender neutral law

The concept of gender-neutral laws has gained prominence in contemporary legal discourse as societies strive for greater equality and inclusivity. Historically, legal frameworks have been designed with gender-specific assumptions, often reinforcing traditional roles that marginalize certain groups. Many legal systems still retain gendered language, classifications, and differential treatment, which can perpetuate discrimination and reinforce systemic inequalities. The push for gender neutrality in laws aims to rectify these disparities by ensuring that statutes, policies, and legal principles apply equally to all individuals, regardless of gender identity or expression (Ezenwobodo & Samuel, 2022). A gender-neutral legal framework is essential to uphold the fundamental right to equality enshrined in various national constitutions and international human rights instruments. Article 7 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and Article 26 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) mandate equal protection and prohibit discrimination based on sex or gender. However, many jurisdictions struggle with implementation due to deeply entrenched societal norms and resistance to legal reforms. The challenge lies in achieving a balance between formal equality and substantive equality, ensuring that all individuals can access legal protections and responsibilities without bias.

1.2 Overview of violence and abuse laws

Domestic violence refers to various violent acts committed by a family member against another, often involving mistreatment of a child or spouse. It includes physical harm, threats, verbal, psychological, and sexual abuse. The abuser's relationship to the victim is the key

distinction between assault crimes and domestic violence (Deshpande, 2019b). In India, domestic violence is traditionally believed to be inflicted on women, but it has been observed that men also suffer from domestic violence. Stereotyped gender roles and false allegations of domestic violence by women have led to many courts commenting on false allegations. Men are often unaware of legal help to avoid such violence. Domestic violence against men covers a broad range of violent acts. It comes in any form of abuse, such as physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, or financial abuse. Unfortunately, these types of abuse are often underreported and overlooked because of the misconceptions that come with men being victims of abuse by their partners.

Domestic violence against men is often overlooked, but the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that 1 in 10 men have experienced intimate partner violence, with 1 in 3 encountering abusive acts. This includes physical, emotional, financial, sexual, assault, and stalking. Underreporting is often due to fear of ridicule or embarrassment. Awareness of domestic violence has grown due to social media, but training and education between law enforcement agencies and the judiciary are still needed. Support for men facing domestic violence is limited, with shelters for men suffering from domestic violence being extremely rare or non-existent (Deshpande, 2019b). Most domestic violence programs are designed for heterosexual men, but it is important to acknowledge that domestic violence can also occur in same-sex relationships and against transgender victims. When a victim of domestic violence is involved, it is crucial to exercise self-restraint unless acting in self-defense. Police officers typically take the "main attacker" or "main aggressor" into custody. Victims should seek help from family members or report abusive behavior. Each state has various organizations for reporting partner abuse or physical harm.

2 Historical Background

India's legal framework has been shaped by colonial rule and indigenous traditions, often reflecting patriarchal values. The British colonial legal system, based on English common law, was not free from gender biases. Prior to colonization, societal norms and legal practices were predominantly patriarchal, with laws governing marriage, property rights, and inheritance often biased against women. Post-Independence, the Indian government sought to reform its legal system to reflect democratic ideals in its newly adopted Constitution (Brain et al., 2024). The Constitution of India, adopted in 1950, guaranteed equality before the law, prohibited discrimination based on religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth, and enshrined the right to equality of opportunity in employment or appointment to office. In the latter half of the 20th and early 21st century, the legal system began to recognize the diverse realities of gender beyond the binary, with a notable shift towards gender neutrality in the case of *National Legal Services Authority vs. Union of India* (2014).

Domestic violence in India stems from human development, with repeated injuries and usurpations of women to establish dictatorship. Domestic violence against women began in ancient times, the Vedic era, mediaeval and British periods, and modern India after 1947. Female physical restrictions were emphasised, although they should have been brief. Domestic violence against males occurs in personal partnerships like marriage, cohabitation, dating, or families. Violence against males is illegal in several places. Male victims of family violence often face barriers to disclosing their abuse, including being told they provoked the abuse, shame, embarrassment, and social stigma, fear that there will be nowhere for them and their children to escape, fear that their partner might become more abusive or take the children, and uncertainty about where to seek help (*A Sociological Study of Domestic Violence*, 2016). Services are less likely to enquire whether a male is a family violence victim and less likely to

believe him. Male victims might be wrongfully detained and taken from their families, leaving children vulnerable to the predator. Men are less likely to report domestic violence than women, while women seldom report violence against them.

The issue of abuse against men, especially in domestic and marital relationships, is often ignored and underreported in India. Societal expectations rooted in patriarchal norms have silenced male victims, making it difficult for them to come forward with their experiences of psychological, verbal, emotional, and financial abuse. The lack of legal safeguards for men against mental and verbal abuse contributes to the perception that such abuse is negligible or non-existent. Indian men face a spectrum of non-physical abuse, including emotional manipulation, humiliation, withdrawal of affection or sex, verbal degradation, and social isolation (De Sousa, 2022). The assumption that women are always the victims and men the perpetrators reinforces a legal and social bias that leaves male victims unprotected. Organizations like the Save Indian Family Foundation have attempted to raise awareness about these injustices, but many men live under constant fear of false accusations under laws like Section 498A of the Indian Penal Code (IPC). The Domestic Violence Act, 2005, is currently gender-specific and only provides protection to women, excluding male sufferers from seeking legal remedy under its provisions.

2.1 Men's Right movement (Suroyo & Putra, 2023)

The International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) conducted a comprehensive research program in 1997 to examine domestic violence in India. The study revealed the widespread nature of domestic violence, with nearly 50% of women reporting experiencing abuse and over 40% reporting physical violence. The research highlighted the need for service-based responses, such as legal counseling cells and police units dedicated to women and children. However, gaps remained, such as inadequate healthcare sector response and lack of preventive strategies. The research emphasized the importance of transforming social attitudes and norms to curb domestic violence. ICRW also emphasized the need to involve men in the dialogue, arguing that meaningful change could only occur if both men and women participated in reshaping cultural attitudes toward violence in relationships (Kumar et al., 2002). The research initiated new studies focusing on men and masculinities in India to bring men's perspectives and experiences into the discourse on domestic violence. However, the historical discourse on domestic violence in India has predominantly excluded male victimization, leading to a growing call for gender-neutral laws. Understanding this historical imbalance is crucial for contextualizing the current legal gaps and societal attitudes surrounding male victimization in India.

The Men's Rights Movement (MRM) is a socio-political movement advocating for the rights and interests of men, focusing on issues they believe disproportionately impact them. The movement emerged in response to concerns over men's discrimination and social difficulties, mirroring elements of the feminist movement. Key issues highlighted by MRM include family court bias, false accusations of domestic abuse and sexual assault, educational disparities, workplace issues, the criminal justice system, health disparities, and selective service. Activists argue that fathers often face systematic bias, leading to inequitable custody agreements. They also highlight the repercussions of false complaints of domestic abuse and sexual assault, arguing that such claims may adversely affect men's lives and reputations (Suroyo & Putra, 2023). The MRM also addresses workplace issues, such as job injuries and hazardous professions, and the criminal justice system's prejudice against males. The movement also challenges the gender-specific aspects of selective service laws, advocating for gender-neutral conscription or the complete abolition of selective service.

2.2 History of Men's Right movement

The men's rights movement (MRM) is a collective term for various groups and individuals who believe that the dignity and rights of men and boys are diminished, threatened, or nonexistent. Adherents to this movement are known as men's rights activists (MRAs), although many prefer the term "advocate." Men's rights are also sometimes referred to as "men's human rights" within these groups. The movement is not exclusively focused on legal rights and reforms, with some members and factions abandoning the legal rights framework altogether. The earliest known use of the term "men's rights" can be attributed to the editorial "A Word for Men's Rights," published in Putnam's Monthly Magazine of American Literature, Science and Art in 1856. The trope that men's rights have dwindled while their gendered duties remain the same persists in the contemporary MRM. The inclusive National Organization of Men Against Sexism (NOMAS) emerged during the 1960s and 1970s, with divorce reform and fathers' rights groups coalescing simultaneously (de Coning, 2020). The Men's Rights Movement (MRM) emerged from a complex relationship with second-wave feminism, expanding and diversifying through the 1980s and 1990s. The early 1980s saw the dissipation of men's liberation, leading to the rise of men's rights discourses that posited women have achieved social, cultural, and economic power, while men are now the true victims of gender oppression. Men's rights groups and media continued to adapt and evolve through the 1990s and into the 2000s, with self-published manifestos, papers, pamphlets, zines, and websites helping disseminate MRM materials and bolstering the movement as an international community. Both feminist-aligned and antifeminist media existed alongside each other, and a variety of sites, blogs, vlogs, podcasts, and online communities have emerged in the digital age.

Men's rights has been a significant debate since the early 20th century, with its origins in Austria during the interwar period. The League for Men's Rights was founded in 1926 to counteract women's emancipation and the influence of the women's movement on social and legal institutions. Three loosely connected men's rights organizations formed in Austria, including the Justitia League for Family Law Reform and the Aequitas World's League for the Rights of Men. The modern men's rights movement emerged from the men's liberation movement in the 1970s, which acknowledged men's institutionalized power while critically examining the consequences of hegemonic masculinity (*Men's Rights Movement*, 2024). The movement was led by psychologists who argued that femininity and masculinity were socially formed behaviors rather than genes. In the mid-1970s, the movement focused on the oppression of men and less on the effects of sexism on women. In the late 1970s, the movement split into two strands: the pro-feminist men's movement and the anti-feminist men's rights movement. A major concern of the men's rights movement has been the issue of fathers' rights. In the United States, the men's rights movement has ideological ties to neoconservatism, with activists receiving lobbying support from conservative organizations and their arguments covered extensively in neoconservative media.

3 Kinds of Victimization

Types of Abuse Against Men:

The term "abuse" is used to describe both physical violence and non-physical forms of abuse. It is often abbreviated as "male abuse" to avoid repeating the longer phrase "intimate partner abuse against men." This document defines "male abuse" as any act by a woman with the intention of causing physical injury, intimidation, or emotional pain to her intimate male

partner (Lupri, 2004). Researchers distinguish between minor and severe types of physical abuse, with minor abuse involving acts like pushing or slapping, and severe abuse involving assaults with a high probability of causing serious injury or pain. Male victims of domestic violence suffer the same types of abuse. Those abuses can be categorized as:

Physical Abuse:

Hitting, slapping, punching, choking, and other forms of physical violence. In fact, though fewer men report physical abuse, studies in this area reveal that it occurs across all age groups and in different types of relationships. In the 1999 GSS survey, Statistics Canada found that 7% of men aged 15 and older experienced spousal abuse, compared to 8% of their female counterparts. The rate of spousal abuse against men is unknown, as comparable data for male victimization had not been gathered by Statistics Canada before 1999. Spousal homicide victimization rates for men generally declined between 1974 and 2000, but the number of spousal assaults against men reported to the police was higher in 2000 than in 1995. A Canadian survey in 1987 asked 528 women aged 18 years or older to report physical abuse of their intimate partners during the previous 12 months (Lupri, 2004). Out of the total sample, 23.3% reported physical abuse. In the 1999 GSS findings, abused men were more likely than abused women to report experiencing physical abuse, while abused women were more likely to report severe forms of violence, such as being beaten, sexually assaulted, choked, or threatened by a gun or knife.

Psychological and Emotional Abuse:

Men often experience manipulation, verbal insults, threats, and isolation from their families or social circles. Psychological abuse is particularly harmful as it erodes self-esteem and mental health, leading to feelings of helplessness, shame, and depression. Psychological abuse, involving demeaning and controlling behavior, is a significant issue in relationships. The 1999 GSS measured emotional abuse through seven items, including limiting contact with outsiders and access to financial information (Lupri, 2004). About one in five men (18%) and women (19%) reported experiencing emotional abuse in their relationships within the past five years. Both men and women were equally likely to experience jealousy and constant information demands. Psychological abuse can escalate to or coincide with physical abuse, with violence rates being 10 times higher among men who reported emotional abuse.

Sexual Abuse:

Additionally, male victims of domestic violence are subjected to sexual assault or physical coercion. A number of studies demonstrate that male sexual assault inside partnerships occurs, despite the fact that it is less often reported; even forced sex is an example of an underreported kind of abuse.

Financial Abuse:

For the most part, male victims are subjected to financial control, which might take the form of their husbands denying them access to money, manipulating their job status, or making it impossible for them to maintain their financial independence. Financial abuse is a significant issue in violence against women (VAW), where men control and limit women's access to money. This abuse is a powerful tool for exercising power, depriving women of basic needs, diminishing their independence, and deterring them from leaving or ending the relationship. The economic hardship can force victims to return, sometimes risking their lives (Eriksson &

Ulmestig, 2021). Many studies of VAW neglect or make financial abuse invisible, possibly due to early feminist researchers' focus on sexuality and the body, or an ideology of marriage and money that assumes partners share financial resources for the common good. Research on financial abuse in VAW is limited, with most studies based on quantitative approaches. To deepen our knowledge, it is essential to explore the relationship between financial abuse and other forms using qualitative methods and other welfare contexts.

Stalking and Harassment:

Stalking and harassment are similar but differ in their severity. Stalking is considered worse due to its prolonged and persistent nature, while harassment can include minor forms of pestering. In some jurisdictions, stalking and harassment are separate offenses. However, behavioral research literature predominantly uses the term stalking. Stalkers are often seen as strangers to the person they stalk, sometimes a celebrity (Heckels & Roberts, 2020). The first anti-stalking legislation was introduced in 1989 in California after the murder of TV actor Rebecca Scheffer by her stalker. Stalking is a behavior experienced equally by women and men. Stalking and harassment are forms of domestic abuse that may occur in certain situations. These are situations in which males are subjected to unwelcome attention, such as continuous following, texting, or threats.

Types of Violence

The categorization of male violence is crucial for prevention and victim care, and this law has been instrumental in validating the feminist movement. However, other international laws and feminist critics' analyses and definitions may also be considered. The text also discusses symbolic and structural violence, which define the nature of male violence. Symbolic violence is based on the discrimination and denigration of identities that deviate from hegemonic power, ensuring the continuity of this power. Structural violence, as described by Johan Galtung, is supported by a social structure and harms individuals or social groups, preventing them from achieving their needs or exercising their rights (Iribarren et al., 2023). Domestic violence has been recognized across the world as a form of violence that affects a person's life in every way, physically, mentally, emotionally, and psychologically, and is a violation of basic human rights. In a recent study by Malik and Nadda, the most common spousal violence was found to be emotional followed by physical violence. These sociological terms examine how hierarchy plays a role in the equation of violence associated with interactions between dominant, oppressive, or privileged subjects and the dominated, oppressed, or subaltern. Examples of violence include racism, classism, and sexism. Law 17/2020 outlines that male violence can be committed on a one-off or repeated basis in various forms.

- Physical violence
- Psychological violence
- Sexual violence
- Obstetric violence and violation of sexual and reproductive rights
- Economic violence
- Digital violence
- Second-order violence
- Vicarious violence

The law states that male violence against women includes physical or psychological violence against women's affective environment, particularly against their children or family members, with the intention of causing harm to the women involved.

The following spheres of male violence are stipulated:

- Intimate partner violence
- Family violence
- Workplace violence
- Social or community violence
- Online violence
- Institutional violence
- Violence in women's political or public life
- School violence
- Any other similar forms of violence that harm or threaten women's dignity, integrity or freedom

Physical Violence

This can include slapping; pushing; hitting by wife, her parents, or relatives; or throwing objects like utensils, cell phones, and crockery at the husband (Malik & Nadda, 2019). In physical violence, slapping was identified as the most common form (98.3%)^{2,6} and the least common was beaten by weapon (3.3%). Only in one-tenth of the cases, physical assaults were severe.

Psychological Violence

Psychological violence is a way of hurting the other through behaviours such as insulting, threatening or frightening. As with physical violence, respondents were asked to indicate the frequency with which these behaviours occurred. In emotional violence, reported 85% abuse against the men was criticism, 29.7% were insulted in front of others, and 3.5% were threatened or hurt. It can also be in the form of mental abuse such as constant threats to the husband and his family under false allegations of dowry and domestic violence.

3.1 Historical background

Domestic violence began in early Roman civilisation when women were the husband's property. The 15th-century Catholic Church's "The Rules of Marriage" advised husbands to judge and beat their wives with sticks to show spiritual care. English common law enabled men to beat their wives with a thumb-sized stick. A guy who battered a lady in 18th-century France had to wear an outrageous costume and ride a donkey backwards around the hamlet. English law heavily affected early American courts. Family violence was illegal under Puritan law, but enforcement was lax. Only in the 1870s did states outlaw fathers beating their children. In the 1980s, most states established domestic violence laws after the 1960s feminist movement

brought domestic abuse to the media's notice. Male victimhood is a long-standing issue, involving physical and emotional abuse. However, societal expectations of masculinity and the belief that men should be strong and unemotional have limited its recognition. The feminist movement in the 1970s brought attention to gender-based violence, but it also dismissed male victimhood. Despite this, studies show that one in six men experiences sexual violence, and domestic violence is also significant. Factors contributing to this invisibility include societal expectations of masculinity, stigma surrounding male vulnerability, and lack of resources. The historical background of male victimhood underscores the need for a more nuanced approach to addressing gender-based violence and trauma, acknowledging the experiences of men based on race, sexuality, and socio-economic status. The FBI claimed in 1999 that men killed 89% of US female murder victims, with 32% involving the spouse or partner (Davis, 2019). US women are most often injured by domestic violence, with one battered every 18 seconds. About 2,000 to 4,000 women die from maltreatment annually. Domestic violence injuries account for 22–35% of women's ER visits. Domestic abuse-related medical bills cost at least 3-5 million dollars annually, while employers lose over 100 million dollars in pay, sick leave, absenteeism, and non-productivity. Employee turnover and absenteeism are linked to spousal abuse. Child abuse is 15 times more common in homes with domestic violence, and men who watch their parents' abuse are three times as likely to beat their spouses. Children under 1 died most from child abuse.

Batterers have family dysfunction, bad communication, women's provocation, stress, drug use, lack of spirituality, and economic concerns, according to Ncadv.org. Domestic violence may not result from these circumstances. Batterers control by violence. Abusive relationships persist owing of fear, constraints, and dogma. Laws keep women with abusive spouses. Many abuse victims are guilty of fleeing because they feared the abuser would kill them. Without property, cash, bank accounts, or outside job, they may have one dependent kid. Traditionalism hurts women too (Barkhuizen, 2015). Many women believe divorce is impossible, single-parent homes are terrible, and they must compromise to fit society. Many women blame stress, intoxication, job issues, unemployment, or other causes for their abuser's acts, and isolation from friends and family may make them feel helpless. The Centre for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence has highlighted religious aspect of domestic violence. Christians often stay in violent relationships because to Scripture, domestic peace pressure, and God's abandonment. Rabbis, priests, and pastors advise women to return to abusive households and become "better wives." Few people desire to be abused, therefore victims may stay in abusive relationships (Tsui, 2014). The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence lists eleven predictors of victim abuse.

These predictors are geared toward the male as the abuser. Some of these signs include:

1. Growing up in a violent family: People raised in families where they have been abused as children or where one parent beats the other have grown up learning that violence is normal behavior.
2. Using force or violence to solve problems: A person with a criminal record for violence, one who gets into fights or likes to act tough, is likely to act the same way with a spouse and children.
3. Abusing alcohol or other drugs: There is a strong link between violence and problems with drugs and alcohol.
4. Having strong traditional ideas about what a man should be and what a woman should be: A man who thinks a woman should stay at home, take care of her husband, and follow his wishes and orders is likely to have access to guns, knives, and other lethal

instruments.

5. Expecting her to follow his orders or advice: A man may get angry if she does not fulfill his wishes or cannot anticipate what he wants.
6. Going through extreme highs and lows: A man may be extremely kind one minute and extremely cruel another.
7. Treating her roughly or physically forcing her to do what she doesn't want to do.

These predictors are strong indications that abusive violence may soon begin and hope to help victims before it is too late. Males experience sexual violence more than females, contrary to popular belief. It happens in homes, communities, and jails, by men and women, during war and peace. In some ways, the situation is as follows:

Male rape victims suffer identical problems as female victims two centuries ago. The comment was made some time ago, but nothing has changed. Despite tremendous success in certain sectors, some others have seen little or no growth (Sivakumaran, 2007). Sexual assault against men during wartime has gotten little attention. Many confrontations lead to complaints of "male sexual violence." These reports may be buried under a lot of other stuff, but they are there. They are in survivor stories and commission and other inquiry conclusions. Since survivors often recall what they saw rather than what they went through and commissions and investigative bodies often document torture rather than sexual violence, they may be hard to find. Still, they can be found. Despite these claims, there is little research on the problem, and the numbers are unclear.

The research examines male-directed violence and abuse, especially sexual assault against males. It emphasises the necessity for a gender-neutral legal framework by comparing research of male victims to conflict-related violence against women. Male sexual violence including rape, forced sterilisation, and other forms is examined as physical actions, weapons of dominance, emasculation, feminisation, and dehumanisation. These behaviours express control, restrict procreation, and humiliate people, like assault against women. Despite large incidents underreporting, guilt, and lack of discovery by authorities keep male victims invisible. The research shows the extent, manifestations, and institutional neglect of male victimisation, emphasising the necessity for inclusive legal frameworks that recognise and treat violence and abuse regardless of gender.

4 Conceptual Framework of Male victimization

The 2010 UN Convention on Justice and Support for Victims of Crime and Abuse defines victims as individuals or groups who have suffered harm, including physical or mental injury, emotional suffering, economic loss, or violations of fundamental rights. Victimization is defined as an abusive, painful, destructive, parasitical, and unfair interpersonal relationship between the victim and the victimizer (Andreescu, 2024). Direct or primary victimization refers to those who experience the criminal act firsthand, while indirect or secondary victimization refers to family members and loved ones close to the primary victim. Secondary victimization may also refer to further suffering caused by unfair treatment by the criminal justice system. While many types of victimization have been outlawed, not all hurtful acts and deceitful practices are forbidden by law. Criminal victimization refers only to victims of illegal acts and is the focus of victimology. Victimology is the scientific study of the extent, nature, and causes of criminal victimization, its consequences for the involved, and the reactions of society, including the police, criminal justice system, voluntary workers, and professional helpers.

Gender refers to the physical and mental characteristics of men and women, with the pronoun "he" used to refer to any person, including transgender individuals. The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita 2023 defines gender as the difference between males and females, with distinct mental and physical appearances. The Indian constitution, Article 14, provides equal rights for men and women, prohibiting discrimination based on religion, sex, caste, race, color, or place of birth. Gender neutrality aims to treat all genders in a neutral and unbiased manner, allowing individuals to perform various tasks without classifying or specifying anything on gender. This approach is not gender-specific or sensitive, but rather aims to treat all genders in a neutral and equal way (Shivdasiya, 2024). Gender-specific or sensitive policies do not contribute to the welfare of society, as everyone deserves a fair chance. A crime is a wrong committed by an individual but has societal effects due to the actus reus committed by the accused. If a crime is committed against someone, there will be justices for that individual criminal act. Gender neutrality is a crucial aspect of the Indian constitution, aiming to provide equal opportunities for all individuals, regardless of their gender.

Male victimhood is a complex issue that significantly impacts society, often misunderstood or overlooked. It encompasses various forms of violence, sexual assault, and emotional abuse. Society's expectations of masculinity and stigma surrounding male vulnerability often prevent male victims from seeking help or receiving the support they need. Toxic masculinity, a term used to describe harmful attitudes and behaviors associated with traditional notions of masculinity, reinforces the idea that men should be dominant, aggressive, and in control (Agrawal, n.d.). This leads to a culture of silence and a barrier to seeking help and support. The impact of male victimization extends beyond the individual to society as a whole, contributing to higher rates of domestic violence, sexual assault, and other forms of gender-based violence. Support systems for male survivors of gender-based violence must be more inclusive, accessible, and challenge gender roles and stereotypes. Addressing gender inequality is critical to promoting social justice for male victims.

Honor-based violence/abuse (HBV/A) and forced marriages are major patriarchal violence issues. Fathers, senior male figures, mothers, extended families, in-laws, spouses, and intimate partners commit these atrocities. Patriarchal ideologies of violence relate to male and female victims, including sexual deviancy (Idriss, 2022). If their sexual orientation is revealed, family and religion legitimise and promote young men's subordination to older males, causing them to feel inferior. Patriarchy labels gay males "not being masculine enough," making them feel inferior. Patriarchy gives all males the "patriarchal dividend," which includes authority, respect, institutional power, and life control. Men have more freedom and power than women, yet they may also break these conventions. Male victims of forced marriages may have a "second" wife, an English girlfriend or boyfriend, with family consent provided they outwardly fulfil the manly husband role and take use of their privileges. This view of men's experiences applies patriarchal theory to male victims. Gender stereotypes in patriarchal settings prolong gender inequity for some. Modern scholars question the "gender conspiracy" notion, which blames males for oppressing women. They contend that patriarchy affects men too. Digital surveillance in romantic relationships, seeing controlling behaviours, and adopting gender stereotypes are positively connected with teenagers' perpetration of such behaviours. Abused victims may be mocked, arrested, or stigmatised (Alsawalqa & Rawashdeh, 2022). Men in Jordan who have undergone intimate partner violence, especially physical assault, face societal shame, insults, and humiliation. They dread being held responsible and cannot disclose abuse because their self-image as males changes. They utilise violence to protect masculinity, avoid societal shame, and end female intimate partner abuse.

Some examples of laws and acts that provide protection to men who are victims of violence

1. Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005: This act recognizes that men can also be victims of domestic violence and provides legal protection and support for them. The act defines domestic violence broadly to include physical, sexual, emotional, verbal, and economic abuse.
2. Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013: Although the title of the act specifically mentions women, it also covers male victims of sexual harassment at the workplace. The act mandates employers to provide a safe working environment for all employees and lays down procedures for addressing complaints of harassment.
3. The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013: This act amended the Indian Penal Code (IPC), the Indian Evidence Act, and the Code of Criminal Procedure to enhance the punishment for sexual offenses against both men and women. The act recognizes various forms of sexual assault and includes provisions for punishment for offenses such as stalking, voyeurism, and acid attacks.
4. Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012: This act is specific to child victims and covers boys as well as girls. It defines various forms of sexual abuse of children and provides for stringent punishment for the offenders.
5. Mental Healthcare Act, 2017: This act recognizes that mental health is an important aspect of overall well-being and lays down provisions for the treatment and care of persons with mental illnesses. The act also recognizes that men can be victims of mental health issues due to various forms of abuse and violence.
6. Indian Penal Code (IPC): The IPC is the primary criminal code of India, which defines various forms of crimes and their punishments. It includes provisions for offenses such as rape, sexual harassment, stalking, and domestic violence, which can be committed against both men and women.
7. The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019: This act recognizes the rights of transgender persons and prohibits discrimination against them. It includes provisions for the protection of transgender persons from violence, abuse, and exploitation.
8. Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015: This act deals with juvenile justice and lays down provisions for the care and protection of children in need of care and protection. It recognizes that boys and girls can be victims of abuse and violence and provides for their protection and rehabilitation.
9. The Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993: This act provides for the constitution of a National Human Rights Commission, State Human Rights Commissions, and Human Rights Courts. It aims to protect and promote human rights, including the rights of male victims of violence and abuse.
10. The Prevention of Atrocities Act, 1989: This act provides for the prevention of atrocities against marginalized communities, including men who belong to socially and economically disadvantaged groups. It includes provisions for the punishment of offenses such as assault, rape, and exploitation of these communities.

5 Comparative Study with Other Countries in Relation to Male Victimization

Male domestic violence and intimate partner abuse are marginalised in global academic and legal debate. Despite gender-neutral laws in many countries, cultural stigmas, social preconceptions, and institutional biases prevent male victims from being seen and supported. Men may not disclose abuse for fear of mockery, distrust of judicial institutions, or the belief

that domestic violence laws protect women. Countries including the US, UK, Canada, Australia, Sweden, and Norway have gender-inclusive policies and support systems for male victims, but they typically fail to execute them. Men lack specialised shelters, legal help, and rehabilitation resources due to structural issues. This chapter compares legislative frameworks and support systems across countries to examine male victimisation worldwide and emphasises the need for more inclusive, egalitarian, and effective legal remedies.

USA:

In recent years, there has been a greater awareness of domestic violence against males in the US. States have different legal systems, but many have laws that are gender-neutral. Male victims may get assistance from organisations such as the National Domestic Violence Hotline (Choudhary et al., 2019).

United Kingdom:

Awareness of domestic abuse against males is rising in the UK. Organisations like Mankind Initiative provide resources and assistance to male victims, and the legislation is gender-neutral (Sharon, 2014).

Canada:

When it comes to domestic abuse, Canada has gender-neutral legislation. Organisations like as the Canadian Centre for Men and Families provide support services, and efforts have been made to raise awareness of male victims (Dubey, 2023).

Australia:

Domestic abuse against males is acknowledged there, and gender-neutral legislative solutions are often implemented. Male victims get assistance and awareness from groups like the One in Three Campaign (Awsthi, 2023).

Sweden:

The country's laws on domestic abuse are gender-neutral. All victims may access support services, and efforts are taken to dispel myths and promote male victims' reporting (Deshpande, 2019a).

Norway:

The country's legal system for dealing with domestic abuse is gender-neutral. All victims, including males, are intended to be helped by awareness campaigns and support services like the Alternative to Violence organisation (Kaur & Gulati, 2024).

Thurman v. City of Torrington (1985) (*Thurman v. City of Torrington*, n.d.)

In *Thurman v. City of Torrington*, Tracey Thurman claimed the police failed to protect her from her divorced husband, Charles Thurman. Police failed to protect her despite several complaints and a restraining order, stabbing her to death. Thurman said police discriminated against domestic abuse victims, especially women, by providing insufficient protection. Claims of constitutional rights infringement were made under 42 U.S.C. 1983, 1985, 1986, and 1988. The City's move to dismiss Tracey Thurman's claims was granted by the U.S. District Court because her complaint properly asserted a constitutional right deprivation and a discriminatory policy or custom. Because Charles Thurman, Jr. did not demonstrate a pattern of police inactivity or failure to protect him, his claims were rejected.

(Sita & Dear, 2021) **Case Study of Male Victimization in an Abusive Intimate Relationship. Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma, 29(1), 1–18.**

In this study, Matthew, a 63-year-old male, endured extensive emotional, physical, and psychological abuse at the hands of his wife, Susan, who used threats, deception, and

intimidation to exert control over him. The maltreatment resulted in PTSD, despair, anxiety, and suicide thoughts. Despite pursuing counselling and law enforcement assistance, Matthew felt ensnared by fear of retribution and societal disgrace. Following the breakup, he stays alienated from his children, shaped by Susan's depiction of him. The case underscores cultural disregard for male victims and the intergenerational consequences of female-perpetrated violence.

R v. Dhaliwal (2006) EWCA Crim 1139 United Kingdom (Kayanath Parveen, 2025)

This lawsuit addressed the issue of psychological abuse perpetrated by males. The Court of Appeals recognized that psychological and emotional abuse may also be categorized as domestic violence. The verdict was significant in affirming that not all abuse is physical and that men may sometimes be victims of coercive control. The significance of psychological abuse was established as a foundation for initiating legal cases.

Silverman v. Silverman, 2010 (United States, Minnesota Supreme Court):

The primary concern is that male victims of domestic abuse need safety from an aggressive partner. The court issued a restraining order against the wife, recognizing that males may also be victims of domestic abuse. It set a precedent for the gender-neutral enforcement of domestic abuse legislation in the United States.

The Case of Ankur Mittal v. State (2018) (Mondaq, 2024)

In this case, the Delhi High Court observed that male victims of sexual assault should also be afforded the same protection as female victims. It suggested that Parliament should consider amending the law to ensure that male victims of sexual offences get adequate protection. This judgement rekindled the debate around gender-neutral rape laws.

Jyoti Alias Kittu v/s The State Govt. of NCT of Delhi (Sharma, 2025)

The Delhi High Court decided that men and women should be protected from abuse and violence equally. A woman who badly burnt her spouse with chili-laced water was granted anticipatory bail. The judge denied the wife's gender-based leniency request. The court says the case highlights a societal concern. Men who are assaulted by their marriages confront societal disbelief and victim stigma. The court also found that these stereotypes promote the myth that men are immune to domestic abuse. Thus, the courts must provide gender-neutral consideration of these matters by treating men and women equally.

Raj Talreja v/s Kavita Talreja (Sharma, 2025)

The husband claimed mental abuse against his wife. The question was whether the wife's defamatory charges against the husband were harsh enough to end the marriage. Before the Supreme Court intervened, the trial and appellate courts rejected the husband's divorce appeal because the claims were not cruelty. Supreme Court overruled previous courts' findings, ruling that the wife's intentional and malicious efforts to ruin the husband's image via false claims and defamatory utterances constituted mental cruelty under Section 13(1)(i) of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955. The Court stressed that cruelty in marriages is determined by the totality of circumstances and how one spouse's behaviour affects the other's mental health. Therefore, the marriage ended.

Manju Ram Kalita v/s State of Assam (Sharma, 2025)

The woman filed a Section 498A IPC complaint against her husband for physical and emotional torture, but he rejected all charges. The court ruled that cruelty must be assessed by the man's conduct, the depth and seriousness of his acts, and if it would drive the lady to suicide. The lady must be shown to have been mistreated regularly. Petty fights are not cruel.

Atul Subhash Case (Bengaluru Engineer, 2024) (Bajpai, 2025)

Bengaluru software engineer Atul Subhash, 34, killed himself in December 2024. His long suicide note and video accused his wife, Nikita Singhanian, and her relatives of harassment, false claims, and mental anguish. Atul's case raised concerns regarding Section 498A IPC and PWDVA, 2005 misuse. His murder triggered discussion on law reform to protect male victims. An expert committee is asked to amend laws in a Supreme Court PIL. Despite the severity of the case, the Supreme Court awarded Atul's wife custody, dismissing the paternal grandmother's appeal. This case underscores India's need for gender-neutral domestic abuse laws.

Many countries are now beginning to recognize male victimization through gender-neutral law and support, but there are still discrepancies. The United States and the United Kingdom have recognized males as victims of domestic violence via landmark rulings such as *Silverman v. Silverman* and *R v. Dhaliwal* as well as by virtue of supportive organizations, such as the National Domestic Violence Hotline and the ManKind Initiative. Also, Canada, Australia, Sweden, and Norway have gender-neutral legislation and non-gender-based services for male victims of domestic violence even though India has also passed The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, which is gender specific. Courts in India, though, have recognized males as victims in cases such as *Ankur Mittal v. State* and *Jyoti Alias Kittu v. NCT of Delhi*. Tragic cases like Atul Subhash illustrate the consequences of gendered victimization and the urgency to reform societal and legislative gender bias. While we see an emerging understanding of male victimization coming from the judicial system we need to address many barriers, such as stigma, limited services for males, and the scope of gender neutrality in our legislation when seeking justice for male victims in India, and we need to reform our systems moving forward by raising public awareness and ensuring a gender sensitive framework is delivered uniformly by law enforcement.

6 Judicial and Media Role in Relation to Male Victimization

The judicial viewpoint on domestic violence against males in India encompasses the interpretation and implementation of current legislation, namely the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005. It is crucial to acknowledge that legal interpretations may vary, and there may have been advancements since that time. Indian courts have sometimes adopted a gender-neutral approach in the interpretation of statutes pertaining to domestic abuse. Certain judgements have underscored the need of safeguarding all persons, regardless of gender, against domestic abuse (Nayak, 2021). The Indian Supreme Court has typically acknowledged that males may be victims of domestic violence. The court has consistently underscored the need for gender-neutral legislation and the imperative of safeguarding all victims of domestic violence, regardless of gender. In "*Hiralal P. Harsora v. Kusum Narottamdas Harsora, 2016*," the court noted that "violence knows no gender" and that domestic abuse may also be perpetrated against males. The court underscored the need of gender neutrality in domestic violence cases (Gupta, 2023).

Sushil Kumar Sharma vs Union of India and Ors on 19 July, 2005 (Agarwal, 2024)

In *Sushil Kumar Sharma v. UOI (2005)*, the Supreme Court determined that complaints filed under section 498A of the Indian Penal Code were sometimes lodged with the ulterior motive of personal vendetta. Section 498A of the Indian Penal Code has faced much criticism due to its growing use as a tool for domestic extortion against husbands and their families. The main factors contributing to its usage are the vague and expansive vocabulary associated with the husband's family, health (both mental and physical), and the potential for suicidal tendencies.

The definition of cruelty, particularly mental cruelty, under Section 498A of the IPC is very ambiguous, susceptible to misuse, and challenging for the accused spouse to contest. The main issue with the misuse of Section 498A (IPC) is that it gives law enforcement officers the discretionary power to arrest the husband and his family based only on the wife's allegations, without any preliminary investigation. The prevalent notion is that when the husband is apprehended, the wife has more agency and influence on domestic matters. To exert pressure on the spouse, it has become more common to detain the husband's most reputable relative.

(Sakshi Gupta, 2025) The Supreme Court in *Rajesh Sharma v. State of Uttar Pradesh* raised apprehensions over the gender-specific character of domestic abuse legislation and its potential for exploitation. The Court recommended that Parliament contemplate more equitable strategies for domestic violence laws.

Cases Reported by Various Media Houses (MENDHE, 2025)

Male rape cases in India are often overlooked by mainstream media, but recent cases have brought attention to the issue. In 2018, a 14-year-old boy was raped by older boys in Bihar, highlighting the commonality of sexual abuse on boys. In 2021, a 17-year-old boy was gang-raped by five men in Madhya Pradesh, highlighting the malady of sex crimes committed against young males. However, social stigma often hinders reporting or discussing the situation among male survivors. The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, passed in 2012, is gender-neutral and covers all forms of sexual offenses committed on children, regardless of gender. Many cases involve boys, often by family members, teachers, or peers. A 2018 study by Save the Children revealed that nearly 53% of boys in India were exposed to different patterns of sexual abuse.

Social Stigma of Male Rapes:

Justice Krishna Iyer's landmark judgment in *Rafiq v. State of U.P.* highlighted the deep-rooted stigma and shame surrounding male rape in India. This underreporting of male rape is a result of societal values that marginalize the experience of sexual violence, and the fear of ridicule and victimization. Male survivors often fear being ridiculed or disbelieved, leading to a society where incidents of sexual violence against men remain unseen. To overcome this stigma, awareness efforts, such as mass media, social networking, and access to schools and colleges, can be implemented. Normalizing reporting encourages male victims to report sexual violence, and case studies should be mentioned after consent from the victim. Gender-based stereotypes further aggravate the stigma attached to male rape, making it difficult for victims to accept or claim their experiences. This results in extreme underreporting of incidents, shame, isolation, and confusion for survivors.

Rampant Misuse of Gender- Specific Law (Akshat Aryan, 2025)

The essential need for gender-neutral legislation is underscored by the pervasive abuse of gender-specific regulations, such as those pertaining to cruelty and rape (Sections 63 and 86 of the BNS). With a conviction rate as low as 15%, the court has admitted that laws like Section 498A have been abused, citing cases like *Arnesh Kumar v. State of Bihar*. This worry is further highlighted by incidents like the Rajasthan DGP's assertion that 45% of rape charges were fraudulent. By fostering scepticism and eroding public confidence in the judicial system, such abuse overburdens the court, destroys lives, and compromises justice for real victims. William Blackstone emphasised that the protection of the innocent is the first priority of the justice principle, yet laws that discriminate against women often go against this objective. By giving everyone, regardless of gender, the same legal rights and obligations, gender-neutral legislation would guarantee that justice is founded on facts rather than conjecture, permit stringent action against unfounded allegations, and advance true equality.

Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India (2018) (Agrawal, n.d.): The landmark judgement that decriminalised homosexuality in India acknowledged the rights of those who identify as LGBTQ+ to live with dignity and without being subjected to discrimination or harassment. By bringing attention to the problem of male victimisation within the LGBTQ+ community, the case brought to light the fact that many men are subjected to violence and abuse because of their sexual orientation.

State of Punjab v. Gurmit Singh (1996) (Agrawal, n.d.): The subject of male rape, which is often ignored and underreported in India, was brought to light by this particular criminal case. The highest court in India acknowledged that females are not the only people who may be victims of rape and that the crime is not exclusive to females alone. By bringing attention to the issue of male victimisation and the need of providing assistance and resources to male survivors of sexual assault, the case contributed to raising awareness.

Hiral P. Harsora & Ors v. Kusum Narottamdas Harsora & Ors (2016) 10 SCC 165 (India):

The primary concern is gender discrimination under the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 (PWDVA). The Decree was issued. The Supreme Court removed the term adult male from Section 2(q) of the PWDVA, enabling women to lodge complaints against other female relatives as well. Protection for male victims was not provided, therefore preserving the gender-specific nature of the legislation. Importance The court broadened the definition of offenders but neglected to include males as victims of domestic abuse.

P.Sasikumar v. Union of India (2018)

In this particular instance, the Madras High Court made the observation that there are no legislative provisions that are favourable to males in order to protect them from domestic violence. Furthermore, the court made the observation that the primary reason why men do not disclose their cases is because of the stigma that might be attached to them by society.

7 Discussion

The question of male victimization of violence and abuse is tragically under-explored across legal systems and social discourse. Though men and women share constitutional equality in India, legal principles remain dominantly gendered, especially in the context of domestic violence and sexual assault laws. The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, serves an imperative purpose of protecting women; However, its scope and putting safely exclude male victims. Its very structure continues to inform claims that men and men only are

perpetrators while women and women only are victims, a claim that increasingly begs to be challenged by the evidence of experience and social condition.

To be a male victim of violence, entails dealing first with the trauma of the abuse and secondly, the social implications of (hardly) admitting to being a victim of "male" violence. Social norms consistent with the masculine subconscious resist vulnerability, and deter men from asking for support. "Men don't cry" affects men daily; men don't have shelters to escape to, there are few private counselling services that specifically address male victimization of violence both the physical and emotional components., and there continues to be a cultural ingrained institutional lack of sympathy and understanding when it comes to men as victims of violence. When men do step forward to report abuse, they face stigma and substantial disbelief from police and judicial institutions. The courts have been starting to recognize that men can also be victims, but they are still slow to move away from stereotypical judgments of women and men. The improper application of gender based laws such as Section 498A IPC has been criticized by the judiciary for being used for vengeance not justice. The dramatic cases of human catastrophes such as Atul Subhash, clearly demonstrate the real issues and end consequences of improper usage of the law. The judiciary appears to be beginning to change in cases such as Ankur Mittal v. State and Raj Talreja v. Kavita Talreja, where the courts acknowledged that

there can be male victims and that mental cruelty can also be a legal ground for claims made in the courts.

Media has an important influence on public beliefs. Most of the portrayals of domestic violence reinforce gender stereotypes regarding male aggression and female victimization with limited portrayals of men's suffering. The overwhelming portrayal is likely skewed to a general societal understanding that does not recognize or include the male victim in the issue of domestic violence and gender equality for legal protections for men. While countries like the USA, UK, and Australia have moved ahead with gender-neutral provisions and systems focusing on men's needs, India's stance on this issue is a very slow movement mostly due to cultural ambivalence and system inertia. Addressing male victimization calls for a multifaceted approach: legal reform to create truly gender-neutral laws, societal change to dismantle toxic masculinity, and robust support services for all victims, irrespective of gender. Recognizing that violence and abuse know no gender is essential to ensuring justice, healing, and dignity for every individual.

8 Conclusion

Male victims of domestic violence and intimate partner violence are often neglectfully and marginally researched issue for a long time. Particularly in the case of India with its gendered laws. To emphasize implications of victimisation of male, constitutionally lies equality and even gender-neutral principles in certain international or human rights instruments. But their application is limited. Male abuse victims, whether it be physical, psychological, sexual, or financial, suffer in silence when faced with stigma, expectations of masculinity, a lack of institutional support. Contemporary laws like the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, provides no legal recourse, or recognition of abuse. While progressive rulings in cases like Ankur Mittal v. State, 2015 and Jyoti Alias Kittu v. State have highlighted the need for gender neutral application of law, the legal map has still not changed for male victims/abusers. Recent cases highlighting misuse of laws like Section 498A IPC, have demonstrated a need for all law to reform to not only protect genuine victims/flase allegations, and that all genders should have equal access to justice. Male victims continue to experience not only systemic hurdles in terms of access to legal remedy, but also barriers to recognition of their pain in society as a whole. The pervasive notion that men cannot be victims or that the admission of any kind of trauma or abuse is somehow a sign of weakness prevents many

potential male victims from talking about their experience at all.

The media and public narratives typically do not take the idea of male victimization seriously or provide sufficient context, perpetuating harmful stereotypes and keeping the wrongs of male victimization and abuse in ignorance. The public provision of some model of gender-neutrality which address male victimization, within a modern understanding of the response to the male, female gender binary, particularly in the US, UK, and Australia to date, has not made much of an impact within India. The tragic case of Atul Subhash and others like him highlight that major systemic reform and reform legislation is long overdue. There is an urgent need to move beyond gender in understanding this issue of violence and victimization. Legal frameworks should be changed with the purpose of accessibility for all victims and to ensure equitable provisions for achieving equitable protection and justice for all victims regardless of gender. Gender neutrality in the law is not a threat to gender based law which will ultimately lead to equality. In addition to law there is a need for sensitization programs, a public awareness campaign to stimulate social change, and for media to act responsibly as too often what is seen as socially acceptable today is portrayed in the media. Justice will only be done right if we take a broad, all-encompassing method based on changing the law, promoting social acceptance, and getting help from institutions. Only then will the opinions of male victims finally be considered and recognised.

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