

Original article

SCENARIOS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN EAST INDIA

Sreeparna Banerjee¹, Chaiti Sharma Biswas²,
Manoranjan Pal², Susmita Bharati³,
Premananda Bharati^{4*}

ABSTRACT

Background:

Violence against women (VAW) is a widely prevalent social problem in India, which is rooted in patriarchal norms that contribute to many forms of abuse. Utilizing the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data, the present study tried to identify the overall trend of VAW as well as specific categories of crime during the years 2015 through 2022 against women in East India. East Indian states cover West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand, and Odisha.

Results:

Results show a consistent rise in VAW at both national and regional levels. Odisha reported the highest crime rates, followed by West Bengal, then Jharkhand, and finally Bihar. Cruelty by husband is particularly high in West Bengal, while Odisha leads in rape, kidnapping, abduction, and assault on women with intent to outrage modesty. Bihar and Jharkhand show comparatively low figures in this respect, possibly due to underreporting.

Conclusion:

NCRB data depicts that the crime rate against women is gradually increasing over the period 2013-2022 with state-wise variation in East India, where certain states like Odisha and West Bengal face vulnerabilities. Bihar and Jharkhand reflect lower incidences or underreporting of the incidences. The findings indicate that existing laws and policies have not been successful in reducing VAW. So, there is an urgent need for stronger enforcement, social reforms, and support systems to address women's safety. Besides, legal system must be much faster to punish the perpetrators.

KEY WORDS: Violence against women, East India, Cruelty by husband, Rape, Kidnapping

INTRODUCTION

Violence against women (VAW) is a burning issue and is an age old phenomenon in Indian society that women and girls endure silently. Except virulent violence like rape, attempt to rape, dowry death etc., any sort of violence like cruelty by husband, abetment to suicide, slapping, insulting them in front of other person are not considered as VAW, rather it is considered as a part of normal life. Within patriarchy, male dominated orthodox Indian society both instigates and condones men for violence against women. The Government of India and NGOs tried in various ways to control VAW or to eliminate it but all the violence controlling policies and laws failed to tackle this problem. Therefore, identifying the root causes that create hindrance in the way to combat VAW is extremely important. In this regard, more and more

¹Department of Anthropology, West Bengal State University, Barasat, Kolkata 700126,

²Economic Research Unit, Indian Statistical Institute, 203 BT Road, Kolkata 700108, West Bengal, India

³Sociological Research Unit, Indian Statistical Institute, 203 BT Road, Kolkata 700108, West Bengal, India

⁴ Biological Anthropology Unit, Indian Statistical Institute, 203 BT Road, Kolkata 700108, West Bengal, India

*Corresponding author: pbharati@gmail.com

studies are required both at individual and Government level to pinpoint the causal factor(s) of VAW. Addressing those factors may help policy makers to adopt efficient policies at Government level to tackle this social evil.

In this context, the present study tried to portray the scenario of violence overtime based on the data provided by National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) and type of VAW in East Indian states where East Indian states comprise West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand and Odisha.

OBJECTIVES

The present study tries to-

- (i) explore the types of VAW prevailing in East India where East India states cover West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand, and Odisha,
- (ii) investigate the scenario of violence overtime based on the data provided by National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB).

Literature Review

Crime against women (CAW) or Domestic Violence (DV) is a major public issue (Heise, 1993; Ellsberg et al., 2001) and acknowledged as "Global Hidden Pandemic" by World Health Organization (WHO, 2021). Globally, domestic violence is a common phenomenon found in every society. It is reported that approximately 35 percent of women worldwide experience domestic violence in their lifetime. But it varies from 15 percent in Japan to 71 percent in Ethiopia (Garcia-Moreno et al., 2006). The data about CAW and DV against women are mainly collected through NCRB data or other all India data like NFHSs. A study by Babu and Kar (2009) found that 16 percent, women face physical, 52 percent psychological, 25 percent sexual and 56

percent experience other form of violence in East India. Husbands mainly and sometimes in-laws are responsible for those violence.

To locate the trend of crimes against women during 2010 to 2019 in the states of eastern India (Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa and West Bengal), it is observed that Orissa and Bihar are significantly high in crimes like women assault through internet, an insult to the modesty of women, kidnapping and rape compared to other states of study. Cruelty by husbands and cases under the immoral traffic act are significantly higher in West Bengal compared to other states and the Dowry death, kidnapping and abduction are significantly high in Bihar (Paul et al., 2021).

NCRB data during the period 2014 to 2019 depicts a decreasing trend in 'total crime' but shows an increasing trend in 'total crime against women' at India level. In this period, crime against women was very high to too high in Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, and Madhya Pradesh and also was high in Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Telangana, and Karnataka. Dowry system is the prime reason for bride killing irrespective of the economic status (rich or poor) and level of education (uneducated or highly educated) of the families (Pushpam, 2022). 'Child marriage' and 'honour killing' are also the crime against women in many states like Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, and Haryana (Newme, 2018).

CAW data depicts that in the year 2020, about 30 percent of women are victimized by their husband or in-laws, whereas it rises to 31 percent in 2022. Significant hotspots are found in parts of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Telangana, and Odisha. (Pooja et al., 2024). In India,

approximately 27 percent ever-married women encounter physical attacks, 13 percent are mentally abused, and 6 percent are sexually assaulted by their spouses (IIPS, 2015-16 & ICF, 2017).

Lastly, many scholars have proposed the idea of "coercive control" which is considered as the most effective way to understand violence against women in India. Coercive control is the multi-faceted form of oppression rooted within the patriarchal social structure that harms women's autonomy, dignity, and equality and is designed to secure and expand gender-based privileges by establishing a regime of male domination (Stark, 2007).

DATA

The current study is based on the data provided by NCRB over the period (a) 2013 to 2022 for overall VAW in East India and (b) type of VAW in East India for the period 2015 to 2022. In each case rate of crime is taken into account where crime rate for a particular crime is calculated by crime rate against women per one lakh population.

FINDINGS

Various reports of NCRB approve that VAW in India is increasing over the period 2013 to 2022. Following the overall Indian trend, VAW in East Indian states also increased during the same period both in the number of reported cases and the rate of crimes per 100,000. Among the four states, VAW is alarmingly high in Odisha followed by West Bengal, Jharkhand and Bihar, where VAW is seemingly less in Bihar (Table 1). VAW in Odisha, records the highest rate of rise during 2013 to 2022 from 69 to 103 with a peak of 138 in 2021. In West Bengal, VAW depicts an uneven trend, the rate sometimes rises and in some years declines. On an average VAW in

West Bengal rose from 69 in 2013 to 72 in 2022 with a peak of 85 in 2014. Jharkhand is the next state having high rate of VAW and excluding some years, it varies from 41 in 2013 to 40 in 2022 with a peak of 48 percent in 2019. Bihar consistently records the lowest rates, ranging between 26 in 2020 to 34 in 2022, which may reflect either a lower incidence or underreporting or lack of awareness about various types of VAW. Overall, the rate of VAW in India increases from 52 to 65, indicating an upward trend across the country.

Table 2 shows crime scenarios by type against women in East India during the period 2015 to 2022. According to NCRB report, women generally experience cruelty by husband, dowry death, abetment to suicide, rape, kidnapping and abduction, kidnapping and abduction for forced marriage, human trafficking, assault on women with intent to outrage her modesty, and insult to the modesty of women. Among all these crimes committed against women, they mainly experience cruelty of husband in every East Indian States followed by kidnapping and abduction of women and rape. However, data depicts that almost every type of crime against women in Odisha is higher than other three East Indian States. Regarding cruelty by husband West Bengal is in top position among the four East Indian States and is above the national average, though it decreases from 45 in 2015 to 36 in 2019 and then it rises to 42 in 2022. Except 2021 (22), cruelty by husband gradually decreases from 17 in 2015 to 16.2 in 2022. Highest cruelty by husband is observed in 2015 (10) in Jharkhand after that it declines steadily up to 5. Cruelty by husband drastically reduces from 8 in 2015 to 3 in Bihar. Except 2021 (20), cruelty by

husband reduces from 18 (2015) to 17 (2022) at India level. Overall rate of dowry death is higher in Bihar followed by Jharkhand and Odisha. Relatively, the rate of dowry death is less in West Bengal and remains within the range of 0.9 to 1.1. Rate of dowry death reduces gradually at India level from 2015 to 2021 and slightly increases in 2022.

Rate of abetment to suicide is higher in West Bengal throughout the period 2015 to 2022 and is almost equal to national level. From 2015 to 2022 abetment to suicide in West Bengal rises from 0.5 to 1.0. In Bihar, excluding the 2020 (1.8) rate of abetment to suicide is observed as 0 during the period 2015 to 2022. While Jharkhand shows an upward trend in abetment to suicide from 2016 to 2022. On the other, abetment to suicide rate is low in Odisha. Abetment to suicide is observed to be high (1.1) in 2020 at national level otherwise in other years it varies from 0.7 to 0.8.

In general, rate of rape is high in Jharkhand and Odisha; even it is higher than national rate. In Jharkhand, rate of rape rises gradually from 6.5 to 7.1 during the years of 2015 to 2022. Though high, but rape declines in Odisha from 11 to 5 over the period 2015 to 2022. Incidence of rape is relatively less in Bihar among the East Indian states, where this rate reduces from 2.1 to 1.4 between 2015 and 2022. West Bengal shows low rates of rape and it reduces from 3 to 2 during the period of 2015 to 2022.

Kidnapping and abduction of women is noticeably high in Odisha and Bihar and is higher than national level rate. Next stands West Bengal, where this crime rate is high followed by Jharkhand. This sort of crime against women is highest in Odisha which rises from 12 to 17 over the period 2015 to 2022. Second highest rate of such

incidences occurred in Bihar where kidnapping and abduction rises from 10 to 11 during 2015 to 2022. In West Bengal, this crime rate increases alarmingly from 9 to 16 over 2015 to 2022. Comparatively, Kidnapping and abduction of women is less, it reduces from 6 in 2015 to 5 in 2022. At national level rate such incidence reduces slightly from 9.2 in 2015 to 9.1 in 2022. Bihar tops in kidnapping and abduction of women to compel her for marriage among East Indian states and far higher from national average. This crime increases from 9 to 12 during 2015 to 2019 and again reduces to 9 in 2022. In Jharkhand and Odisha this sort of crime is high, but depicts a reducing trend from 2015 to 2022. Such incidence at national level also reduces from 5 to 4 over the period 2015 to 2022.

Rate of human trafficking (another heinous crime) is not very high among East Indian states as well as at India level. For Jharkhand it ranges from 0.8 to 0.2, in Odisha it ranges between 0.3 to 0.2, in West Bengal it varies from 0.3 to 0.1, at national level it lies within 1.0 to 0.1 and in Bihar it is only 0.0.

‘Assault on women with intent to outrage her modesty’ is a common crime that women frequently face and, in this regard, Odisha secured the highest rank among the East Indian states and India level. Relatively, women in Bihar faces less of this incidence may be due to less awareness, therefore they find it as a common phenomenon in daily life. In West Bengal reporting of this sort of assault is common though it reduces from 11 to 5 during 2015 to 2022. Conversely, in Jharkhand this sort of assault rises from 5 to 7 over the period 2015 to 2022. ‘Insult to the modesty of women’ is also common to them and it is highest in Odisha followed by West Bengal. At national

level, this type of assault varies between 1.2 in 2015 to 1.0 in 2022. Rather, women in Bihar and Jharkhand face relatively less insult to their modesty which ranges from 0.2 to 0.0 in Bihar and 0.1 to 0.0 in Jharkhand within 2015 to 2022.

For better understanding the results of Tables 1 and 2 are shown in Diagram

1.Though, the trends are not smooth enough for most of the VAW forms and sometimes show spikes, but there are increasing trends for most of the forms of VAW in the four States considered in the study.

Table1: Crime against Women in East India

Year	Number					Rate of Total Crime against Women *				
	WB	Bihar	Jharkhand	Odisha	India	WB	Bihar	Jharkhand	Odisha	India
2013	29826	13609	6506	14173	292421	67.1	28.1	41.3	68.9	52.2
2014	38424	15393	6086	14651	320142	85.4	31.3	37.4	70.4	56.3
2015	33318	13904	6568	17200	307906	73.4	27.9	40.2	81.9	52.0
2016	32513	13400	5453	17837	320099	71.2	26.6	33.2	84.5	53.6
2017	30992	14711	5911	20098	342860	67.3	28.8	35.6	94.5	56.8
2018	30394	16920	7083	20274	360339	64.4	29.8	39.2	91.3	57.5
2019	29859	18587	8760	23183	387997	64.0	32.3	47.8	103.5	61.3
2020	36439	15359	7630	25489	357363	76.2	26.3	41.0	112.9	55.9
2021	35884	17950	8110	31352	409273	74.6	30.2	43.0	137.8	63.3
2022	34738	20222	7678	23648	426433	71.8	33.5	40.2	103.3	65.4

Source: Crime in India, various reports; *Per lakh population

CONCLUSION

NCRB data approves that the crime rate against women is gradually increasing over the period 2013 to 2022 with state-wide variation in East India. It also ascertains that except cruelty by husband all sorts of crimes rates are low in West Bengal but they are alarmingly high in

Odisha followed by Jharkhand and Bihar. By type of VAW, cruelty by husbands is very high in West Bengal which is above the national average. Among East Indian states, various crime rates are higher in Odisha particularly, rate of assault on women to outrage her modesty and kidnapping/ abduction of women are much high in Odisha.

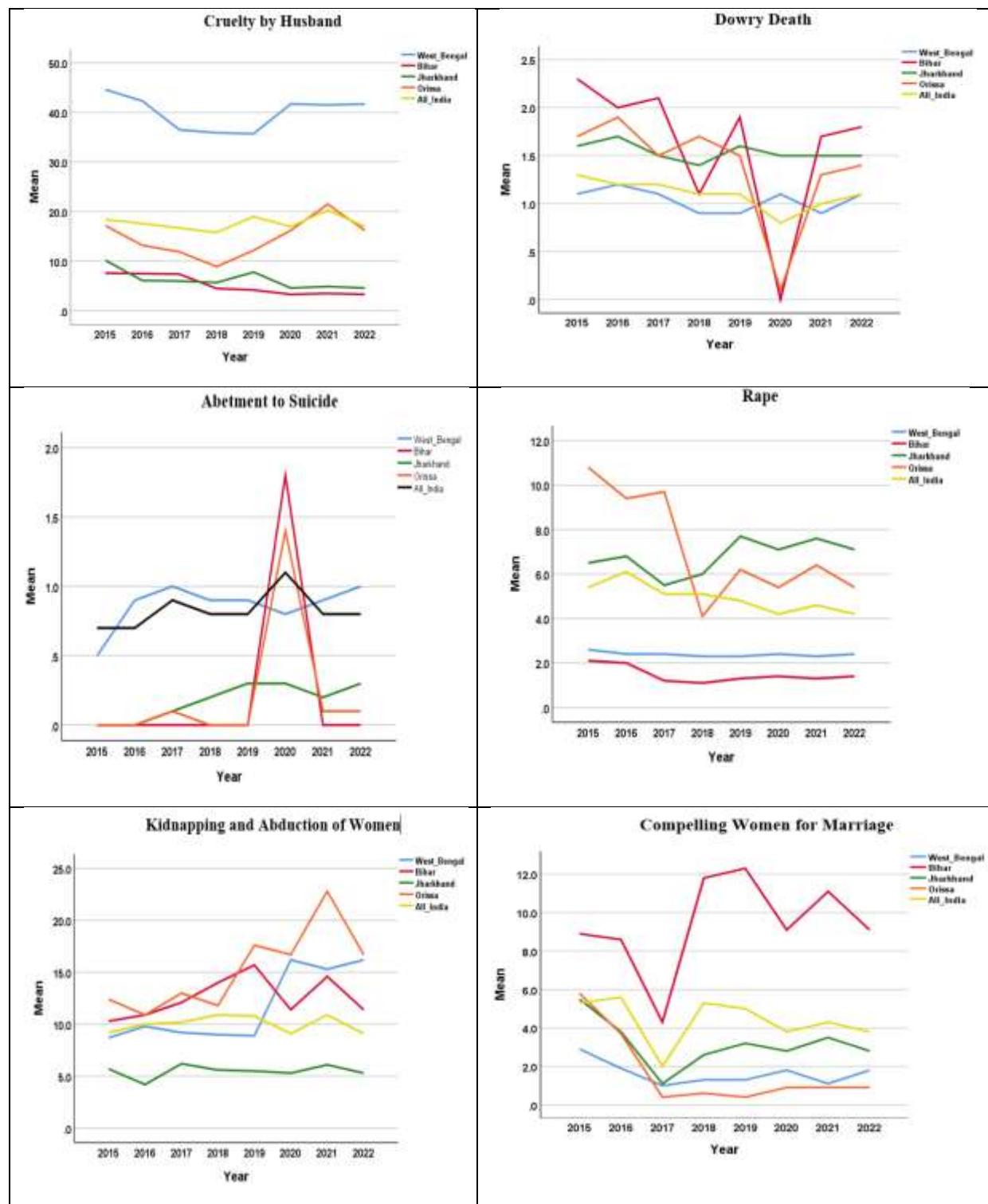
Table 2: Crime Rate in East India by type of Crime over the years 2015-2022

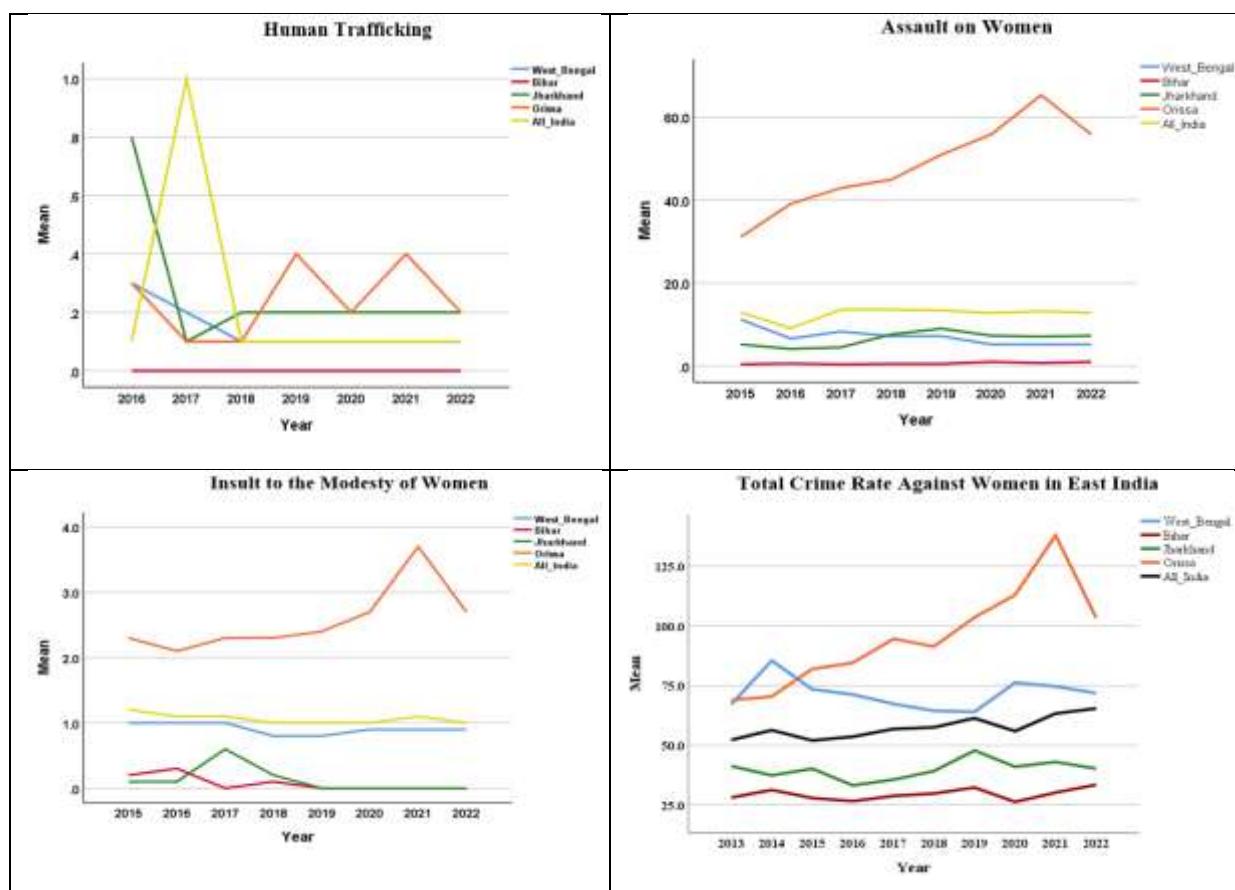
Types of Violence	Year	Number				
		WB	Bihar	Jharkhand	Odisha	India
Cruelty by husband	2015	44.6	7.6	10.2	17.2	18.4
	2016	42.3	7.5	6.1	13.2	17.6
	2017	36.5	7.4	6.0	11.9	16.7
	2018	35.9	4.5	5.7	8.9	15.8
	2019	35.7	4.2	7.8	12.2	19.0
	2020	41.7	3.3	4.6	16.2	17.0
	2021	41.5	3.5	4.9	21.5	20.3
	2022	41.7	3.3	4.6	16.2	17.0
Dowry death	2015	1.1	2.3	1.6	1.7	1.3
	2016	1.2	2.0	1.7	1.9	1.2
	2017	1.1	2.1	1.5	1.5	1.2
	2018	0.9	1.1	1.4	1.7	1.1
	2019	0.9	1.9	1.6	1.5	1.1
	2020	1.1	0.0	1.5	0.1	0.8
	2021	0.9	1.7	1.5	1.3	1.0
	2022	1.1	1.8	1.5	1.4	1.1
Abetment to suicide	2015	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.7
	2016	0.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.7
	2017	1.0	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.9
	2018	0.9	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.8
	2019	0.9	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.8
	2020	0.8	1.8	0.3	1.4	1.1
	2021	0.9	0.0	0.2	0.1	0.8
	2022	1.0	0.0	0.3	0.1	0.8

Rape	2015	2.6	2.1	6.5	10.8	5.4
	2016	2.4	2.0	6.8	9.4	6.1
	2017	2.4	1.2	5.5	9.7	5.1
	2018	2.3	1.1	6.0	4.1	5.1
	2019	2.3	1.3	7.7	6.2	4.8
	2020	2.4	1.4	7.1	5.4	4.2
	2021	2.3	1.3	7.6	6.4	4.6
	2022	2.4	1.4	7.1	5.4	4.2
Kidnapping &	2015	8.7	10.3	5.7	12.4	9.2
Abduction of Women	2016	9.8	10.9	4.2	10.9	10.0
	2017	9.2	12.1	6.2	13.0	10.2
	2018	9.0	14.0	5.6	11.8	10.9
	2019	8.9	15.7	5.5	17.6	10.8
	2020	16.2	11.4	5.3	16.7	9.1
	2021	15.3	14.6	6.1	22.8	10.9
	2022	16.2	11.4	5.3	16.7	9.1
Kidnapping &	2015	2.9	8.9	5.5	5.8	5.3
Abduction of Women to	2016	1.9	8.6	3.8	3.7	5.6
compel her for marriage	2017	1.0	4.3	1.1	0.4	2.0
	2018	1.3	11.8	2.6	0.6	5.3
	2019	1.3	12.3	3.2	0.4	5.0
	2020	1.8	9.1	2.8	0.9	3.8
	2021	1.1	11.1	3.5	0.9	4.3
	2022	1.8	9.1	2.8	0.9	3.8

Human Trafficking	2015	--	--	--	--	--
	2016	0.3	0.0	0.8	0.3	0.1
	2017	0.2	0.0	0.1	0.1	1.0
	2018	0.1	0.0	0.2	0.1	0.1
	2019	0.1	0.0	0.2	0.4	0.1
	2020	0.1	0.0	0.2	0.2	0.1
	2021	0.1	0.0	0.2	0.4	0.1
	2022	0.1	0.0	0.2	0.2	0.1
Assault on Women with Intent to Outrage her Modesty	2015	11.2	0.4	5.2	31.1	12.9
	2016	6.6	0.6	4.1	39.1	9.1
	2017	8.3	0.4	4.5	42.9	13.6
	2018	7.2	0.5	7.6	44.9	13.6
	2019	7.2	0.5	9.0	50.9	13.4
	2020	5.2	1.0	7.3	55.8	12.8
	2021	5.2	0.7	7.1	65.3	13.2
	2022	5.2	1.0	7.3	55.8	12.8
Insult to the Modesty of Women	2015	1.0	0.2	0.1	2.3	1.2
	2016	1.0	0.3	0.1	2.1	1.1
	2017	1.0	0.0	0.6	2.3	1.1
	2018	0.8	0.1	0.2	2.3	1.0
	2019	0.8	0.0	0.0	2.4	1.0
	2020	0.9	0.0	0.0	2.7	1.0
	2021	0.9	0.0	0.0	3.7	1.1
	2022	0.9	0.0	0.0	2.7	1.0

Source: National Crime Records Bureau. Note: figures denote crime rate per one lakh population

Diagram 1: Different Forms of Violence against women



However, Bihar had low figures for most of the crimes, such as low rate of rape and no reported cases of abetment to suicide, but high kidnapping/ abduction of women and kidnapping and abduction of women to compel her for marriage. Jharkhand's crime rates were generally low in most VAW categories. Such low rate of VAW in Bihar may be due to underreporting or lack of awareness. Nationally, crime rates

RECOMMENDATIONS

From the tabular and graphical presentation of data, it is clear that VAW is prominently present in India and it needs to be addressed through appropriate Government policies to eradicate it. Though many acts have been enacted in the past which apparently failed to curb VAW, we should concentrate on raising

against women showed minor fluctuations, with no overall decline in crime against women. Nationally, crime rates against women remained persistent with no major decline, reflecting ongoing challenges in safety and legal enforcement. Overall, data highlights challenges in East India, where certain states like Odisha and West Bengal face vulnerabilities, while Bihar and Jharkhand reflect either lower incidence or underreporting of the incidence.

awareness and if necessary, enforce stronger laws. Thus, our recommendations are as follows:

1. Conduct awareness programmes to change the outlook of men towards women.
2. Women should be trained for self-defense.

3. Men should be trained from their childhood about the equality of male and female.
4. There is an urgent need for stronger enforcement of laws,
5. Initiate social reforms,
6. Support systems to address women's safety and
7. Legal system must be much faster to punish the perpetrators.

It is expected that all the above recommendations may help to eradicate VAW from the society.

REFERENCES

Babu BV, Kar SK. (2009) Domestic violence against women in eastern India: a population-based study on prevalence and related issues. *BMC Public Health*.9: 29. doi:10.1186/1471-2458-9-129.

Ellsberg, M., Jansen, H. A., Heise, L., Watts, C. H., Garcia-Moreno, C., & WHO Multi-Country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence against Women Study Team. (2008) Intimate partner violence and women's physical and mental health in the WHO multi-country study on women's health and domestic violence: an observational study. *The Lancet*, 371(9619): 1165-1172. DOI: [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(08\)60522-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(08)60522-X)

Garcia-Moreno, C., Jansen, H. A., Ellsberg, M., Heise, L., & Watts, C. H. (2006) Prevalence of intimate partner violence: findings from the WHO multi-country study on women's health and domestic violence. *The Lancet*, 368(9543):1260-9. DOI: [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(06\)69523-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(06)69523-8)

Heise, L. L. (1993) Violence against women: the hidden health burden. *World Health Statistics Quarterly*, 46(3): 78-85

International Institute for Population Sciences and ICF(2017) National Family Health Survey(NFHS-4), 2015-16: India. Mumbai: IIPS

Newme W. 2018. Honour Killings in India. *Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research*. 5: 333–338

Paul R, Goswami A & Pal B. (2021) An Analysis of Reported Crime against Women and Girls in Eastern India. *South Asian Journal of Social Studies and Economics*. 12: 258–264.OI:<https://doi.org/10.9734/sajsse/2021/v12i430332>

Pooja BS; Guddattu V; Rao KA. (2024) Crime against women in India: district-level risk estimation using the small area estimation approach. *Front public health*.12: 1362406. DOI 103389/fpubh.2024.1362406

Pushpam (2022) Dowry System in India. *International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts (IJCRT)*. 10: 431–440

Stark, E. (2007) *Coercive Control: The Entrapment of Women in Personal Life*. New York: Oxford University Press.

WHO (2021) Violence against women prevalence estimates, 2018: global, regional, and national prevalence estimates for intimate partner violence against women and global and regional prevalence estimates for non-partner sexual violence against women. World Health Organization, Geneva. URL: <https://www.who.int/publications/item/9789240022256>