

REVIEW ARTICLE

An Anthropological Study of Violence against Women in Indian Urban Slums: A Review Article

Pooja Yadav¹, Prashant Khattri²**HOW TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:**

Pooja Yadav, Prashant Khattri. An Anthropological Study of Violence against Women in Indian Urban Slums: A Review Article. *Ind J Res Anthropol* 2026; 12(1): 69-83.

ABSTRACT

Objective: Poverty, overcrowding, and inadequate resources are major factors in the vulnerability of women in slums. Women are victims of verbal, psychological, and physical abuse from their partners. The hostile condition of urban slums, social marginalisation, and subdued jobs in a patriarchal world make women easy targets for such abuses. This review paper aims to explore the multifaceted dimensions of violence, underlying causes such as Physical, Sexual, Emotional, or Psychological harm, Verbal, and it also shows how poverty and the constructed subjugation of women are prevalent in such an urban and modernised part of a city.

Social marginalisation, patriarchal norms, and subdued economic opportunities reinforce women's subjugation, while children growing up in such households face intergenerational risks. Addressing violence against women in slums requires an anthropological perspective to understand how cultural norms, socio-economic conditions shape women's resilience and access to support systems.

Methodology: This research was searched on PubMed, Scopus, WHO, Google Scholar, and other relevant search engines to identify articles that focused on violence against women in urban slums of India. This research includes 47 studies that satisfied the inclusion criteria for this review. Narrative Review and thematic & content analysis were used for detecting themes, which gives a theoretical and analytical perspective of the study.

Results: The prevalence of any form of violence against women, as reported in the studies, ranged from 15% to 59.3%. Violence can lead to physical and mental health problems, including injuries, anxiety, and depression. The major risk

AUTHOR'S AFFILIATION:

¹ Research Scholar, Department of Anthropology, University of Allahabad, Prayagraj, India.

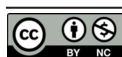
² Assistant Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Allahabad, Prayagraj, India.

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:

Prashant Khattri, Assistant Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Allahabad, Prayagraj, India.

E-mail: prashant_khattri@allduniv.ac.in

➤ **Received:** 08-12-2025 ➤ **Accepted:** 07-02-2026



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factors identified were husband's alcohol abuse, women justifying the violence inflicted on them, low educational levels of women and men, dowry issues, and age differences between the spouses. It is evident from the review that urban slum women experience persistent violence.

KEYWORDS

• Violence Against Women • Gender-Based Violence • Intimate Partner Violence and Health • Urban Slums

INTRODUCTION

Anthropology, as a social science, has a comparative approach that emphasizes the variance in human behavior and the significance of culture in the explanation of this multiplicity and difference of conduct, ideas, and moral standards. Anthropology sees law as contested, hybridized, and dynamic, as a cultural issue that displays the interaction between discourse (rule of law), practice, and symbolic thought, beliefs, and values (Roulant, 1992).

Violence against women is not a new phenomenon, nor are its consequences to women's physical, mental, and reproductive health. What is new is the growing recognition that acts of violence against women are not isolated events but rather form a pattern of behavior that violates the rights of women and girls, limits their participation in society, and damages their health and well-being. Actually, the most astonishingly widespread, serious, and insidious form of violence against women is domestic violence (WHO, 2013).

Since anthropology is a unique field of academic learning, anthropologists have focused their scholarly efforts on topics related to "violence" or those closely associated with it, developing concepts and theories to better understand various facets of violence. Notably, the term "violence" as a specific area of study within anthropology, such as in the phrase "anthropology of violence," has gained significant attention since the 1980s and has sparked much debate among leading figures in the discipline. In 2004, anthropologist Neil Whitehead challenged his peers, arguing that anthropology has often not come forward to address some of the major acts of violence in the twentieth century and may have even been complicit in perpetuating violence; he cautioned that unless the field evolves

conceptually, theoretically, and methodologically, anthropology "risks becoming intellectually marginal to both the subjects and consumers of its texts." This thought-provoking concern has shaped contemporary discussions around the anthropology of violence and its impacts on society. (Patton, 2000).

In the past, violence against women was primarily confined to private spheres, resulting in minimal awareness of the issue. Today, the scope of this social problem has expanded from families to neighborhoods and includes workplaces and educational institutions. India has acknowledged the issue of violence against women and has established provisions, committees, national policies, and various organizations aimed at empowering women. Nevertheless, the reality for women on the ground remains exceedingly difficult, despite the existing constitutional, legislative, and administrative frameworks. The failure to enforce protective measures, coupled with ongoing gender, caste, and class prejudices in society, renders constitutional and legal protections ineffective for many. (Samiti, 2014).

Violence against women (VAW) dates back to the history of mankind. Several forms of abuse have been described in our ancient epics, like Mahabharat and Ramayana. There have been efforts at the global level to eliminate VAW. The United Nations (UN) Declaration on the Elimination of VAW (1993) states that "VAW is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and to the prevention of the full advancement of women, and that VAW is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men." (United Nations, 2014).

Tritiya Samhita says that the woman is only an object of sexual enjoyment. Women can be treated like a shuttlecock in a game played by menfolk (Moitra, 1996). In the Ramayana, Sita was wrongfully suspected and insulted with cutting words in public, and Rama's unprotesting silence consigned her to the flames. Rama's treatment of a wholly chaste and emotionally devoted wife is the limit of mental violence. The Mahabharata has so many instances of physical and mental cruelty to women. The most crucial incident is the public insult of Draupadi in Dasharatha's Court. The physical and mental cruelty involved in the episode shows the object helplessness of the woman who could be subjected to violence with the society condoning, even approving it.

Worldwide, domestic violence is as serious a cause of death and incapacity among women aged 15–49 years as cancer and a greater cause of ill health than traffic accidents and malaria combined (The World Bank 1993). In addition to causing injury, violence increases women's long-term risks of a number of other health problems, including chronic pain, physical disability, drug and alcohol abuse, and depression (Ranganathan and Heise, *et al.*, 1999).

In India, the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-4) reports 28.8% and 22% of women being subjected to physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence in their lifetimes and in the twelve months preceding the survey, respectively. (NFHS 2015-16). The partial findings from the fifth round of the survey indicate a rise in domestic violence among married women in some states of the country. (NFHS 2017). Similarly, the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) 2019 data show that around 31% of the 4.05 lakh cases under crimes against women/cruelty by husbands are registered under Section 498A of the Indian Penal Code. (Ranganathan and Heise *et al.* 2021)

METHODS

Using the Google search engine, PubMed, Scopus, WHO, and Google Scholar, the search began with the key phrase 'Anthropology of Violence,' 'Violence against women in India,' OR 'Intimate partner violence,' OR 'Spousal violence in informal settlements,'

'Anthropological perspective on violence OR 'Wife beating in urban areas,' OR 'Spousal beating in slums,' OR 'Violence in big cities, women's issues in the slums.

For articles to be considered eligible for inclusion in this review, they were required to meet the following criteria: (1) they should deal with the topic of violence against women; (2) the studies should be conducted in urban slum communities in India; (3) they should be empirical studies using qualitative data; (4) the studies must be published in English. (5) the studies should include violence within the household; (7) they must satisfy the methodological quality.

This review employs a systematic review methodology, comprehensively covers all the topics, and synthesizes updated existing literature; it also combines research done using quantitative and qualitative methods for a comprehensive understanding of the topic. This review provides an anthropological approach to find out practical implications and socio-economic determinants for violence against women for a more holistic understanding of the topic. (See figure 1. Author-Own)

This review paper aims to make a methodological contribution by collecting research papers and analyzing the different ways the researchers have studied violence against women in urban slums. Many studies focus on violence against women on a general basis, while others examine its quantitative and qualitative aspects, focusing on particular objectives. This review uses methods such as focus group interviews, case studies, interviews, documentaries, and government reports.

In addition to its methodological value, this review paper also provides a heuristic contribution. By bringing together all the findings of different disciplines and examining them. It provides a clear understanding of how structural factors like overcrowding, informal settlement, poverty, and social marginalization play a critical role in manifesting violence against women by men. This integrated perspective is helpful for future research to have a broader view of violence in slums rather than individual-level explanations.

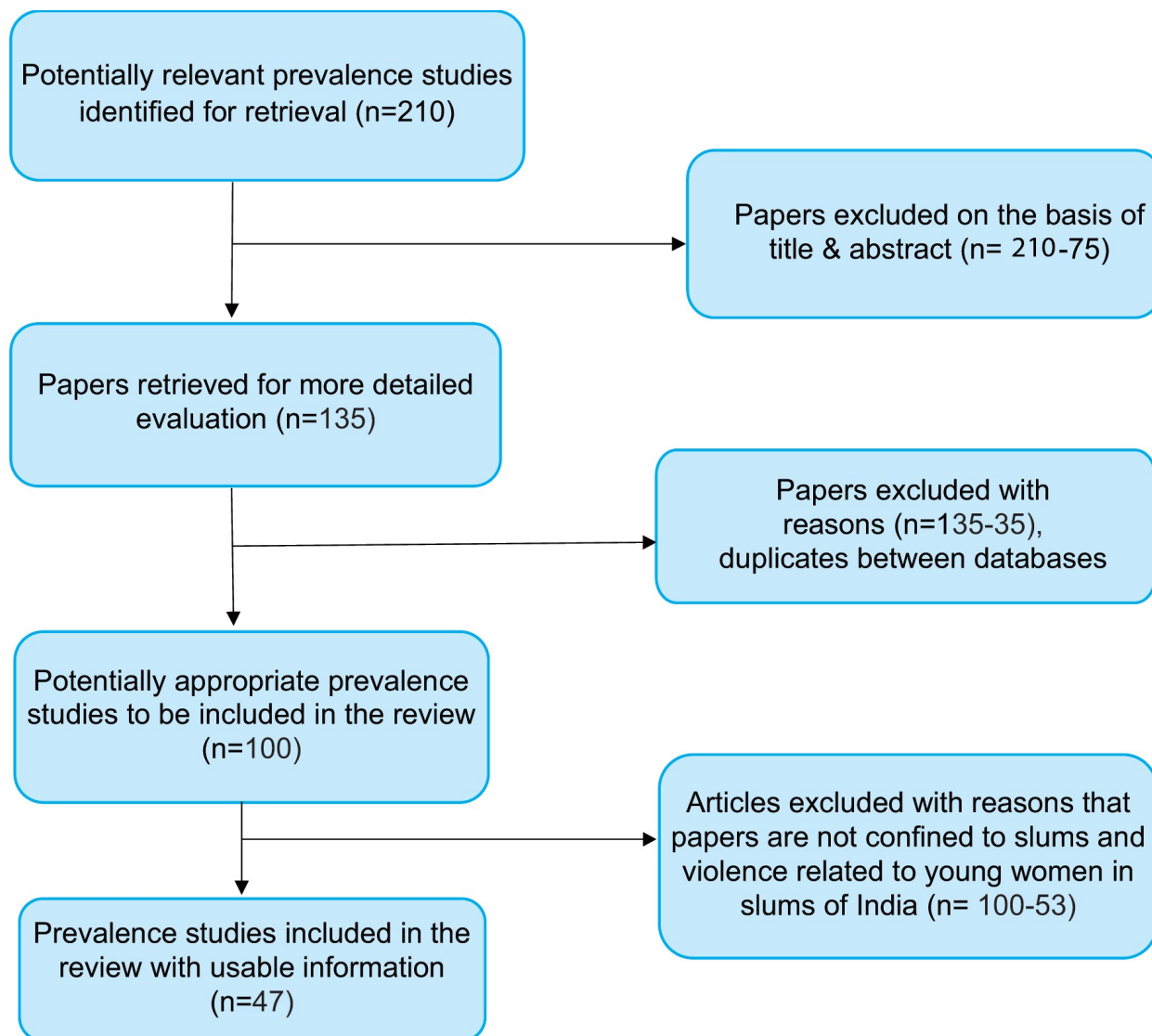


Figure 1: Inclusion Criteria (Author- Own)

Research Gaps

This review highlights the considerable literature on the socio-demographic risk factors, challenges, consequences, and mythological manifestations of violence against women in urban slums, but important gaps remain. These include a lack of focused research on the mental health impacts of psychological violence, limited insights into perpetrators' attitudes and motivations, and insufficient exploration of how cultural and religious narratives perpetuate the normalization of violence. The role of structural poverty, caste, religion, and marginalization is not addressed frequently.

While many studies focus on socio-demographic aspects and risk factors, few

address the psychological violence that affects the mental health of women. Many studies, like Silverman and Balaiah and Ritter *et al.* (2016), have played a significant role in showing the seriousness of 'intimate partner violence,' as it not only harms women physically but also refers to a pattern of behavior used to gain or maintain power over an intimate partner. But many more studies need to focus on the particularities of violence, perpetrators' attitudes towards women in society, and how women see this violence as part of their lives.

Study of Violence in Anthropology

Before continuing, it is important to acknowledge a debate among anthropologists about the role and nature of theory in anthropology. Interestingly, until the 1960s,

theories directly dealing with violence were fairly scarce, except for evolutionary theories (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois, 2004; Whitehead, 2004).

Socio-cultural anthropologists from the 1880s to the 1950s produced limited research on subjects directly concerning violence and did not significantly enhance anthropological theories related to violence. Although cultures characterized by violence were frequently examined and violent practices documented in ethnographic works during this period, the focus on cultural and moral relativism (which promoted anti-theoretical and non-comparative methods) and salvage anthropology resulted in few viable theories and concepts regarding violence being put forward.

Anthropologists from the 1950s to the 1970s tended to move away from attributing violence to "traditional" or "tribal" societies and began to acknowledge that violence occurs in all societies (Whitehead, 2004). The focus of studies shifted from small, contained communities to studying larger, more complex communities that were dealing with the effects of globalisation, colonialism, and capitalism.

Modern theories and concepts of violence (1950s-1970s) focused more on physical violence. They started to recognize that the definition of violence is always relative and dependent on who is involved and that cultures might define violence differently, bringing up concepts of legitimacy versus illegitimacy and the rationality of violence. Riches (1986) published an early collection of writings on an "anthropology of violence" reflecting the growing attention given to violence through *Anthropology of Violence* 545 out the 1950s to 1970s and led up to current, post-modern anthropological concepts of violence. Riches proposed a theory of rational pre-emption to explain why violence is utilized; in essence, perpetrators of violence always have choices, but they pick violence because it secures an advantage over an opponent before the opponent can act. Though violence has both expressive (violence is a performance in that it communicates a message to all involved) and instrumental (violence serves a specific purpose in the moment) motives, he suggests that violence is usually utilized rationally and strategically by perpetrators and with the intention to send a message to those involved and also to the community at large.

Riches (1986) also introduces the concept of a "triangle of violence," suggesting that every act of violence involves three parties: the perpetrator, the victim, and the observer. He claims that while the perpetrator views their actions as justified, the legitimacy of the violence is not necessarily perceived the same way by the victims or witnesses.

Postmodern anthropologists have suggested various theories and ideas regarding violence, encompassing the effects of colonialism and globalization on the field of anthropology, symbolic violence, structural violence, a continuum of violence, the role of anthropologists as activists, and the examination of violence definitions alongside the usefulness of theoretical frameworks.

Many post-modern anthropologists have asserted that violence previously observed in "tribal" or "primitive" cultures was actually directly a result of colonialism (Ferguson, 2004; Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois, 2004; Whitehead, 2004).

Two important concepts, symbolic violence and structural violence, have gained popularity and are related to the idea of the colonial impact on cultures. The concept of symbolic violence was explored extensively by anthropologist Bourdieu (1977) in his fieldwork in Algeria and other parts of Africa.

Similarly, Symbolic violence refers to "the violence that is enacted upon a social agent with their consent" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2004). The notion of symbolic violence is compelling for many anthropologists as it addresses the interconnected dynamics involving a perpetrator, a victim, and a witness, when all parties unconsciously accept their established customs and patterns as part of their worldview. Bourdieu and Wacquant illustrate that male dominance over women no longer requires validation through displays of physical power; rather, it functions as an unconscious, symbolic construct that both men and women adhere to, since it is ingrained within a shared cultural norm. This notion has been pivotal in prompting anthropologists to recognize the violence embedded in various structures deemed "normal," and the commonplace nature of this violence often contributes to its "invisible" characteristics (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois, 2004).

Studying Slums in Anthropology

As a discipline, anthropology has always been associated with studies of so-called primitive people, remote tribal groups, and people with simple technology but exotic practices. Another stereotype is that, among the disciplines, only anthropology bothers with old things, digs up buried objects, reconstructs history from pieces of potsherds, and makes a big fuss about a mammalian tooth.

In American anthropology, for example, Horace Miner studied a city in Africa in the 1930s in order to test Redfield's rural-urban continuum hypothesis. Lloyd Warner studied Yankee City, which is well-known in sociology. Raymond Firth studied kinship systems.

Recently, the necessity for research into urban poverty and interpersonal dynamics in cities has become increasingly acknowledged in the 20th century, prompting a rising number of scholars to investigate urban poverty, particularly slums, from an anthropological perspective. A central question in slum research has been whether slums are a consequence of urbanization and what type of connection exists between slums and the broader society. It is essential to explore what factors contribute to a slum becoming a hotbed for crime, immorality, and various social issues. Additionally, can we deconstruct, isolate, and scrutinize some of the variables linked to life in slums? (Khan, 2016)

An anthropologist who tested the hypothesis on Oscar Lewis's theory "the culture of poverty" in slums for three years found the new perspective of human adaptation. What to the outsider is a slum, for example, is to the residents a home. What appears to be threatening behavior is to them a simple coping mechanism for handling difficult or unfamiliar situations. The difference between the slum dwellers' view and that of the outsider is traceable to the level of social reality that is focused on. People are happy in unrelieved misery by limiting their wants to the capacity of their resources. It is amazing how changes in the outlook of human affairs bring about changes in the complex relationship between the environment and man. Slum dwellers have learned to take a positive approach in life; they enjoy the so-called good things in life, and they would not waste a moment but grab opportunities, regardless of the means to achieve them. It was normal for the slum dwellers to have two meals a day or to have

none on lean days. While aspirations for better days of life were verbalized. The attitude towards being poor was set and accepted, and people took their economic deprivation with ease and comfort (Jocano, 1973).

Over the last century there has been tremendous growth in the urban population. This growth, however, has not been uniform. Growth in urban areas in less developed regions of the world has been especially rapid, increasing at an average rate of 2% annually compared with 0.5% in more developed regions. This trend is expected to continue, with most of the less developed countries faced with the challenge of absorbing the majority of the future population growth (United Nations, 2015). Increased urbanization is a major concern for less developed countries since they often lack the infrastructure and basic services (e.g., water, sanitation, and healthcare) necessary to absorb the increasing number of people (Cohen, 2006 and Montgomery, 2008).

Unable to adequately meet the demands of the growing population, slums have emerged and continue to proliferate in many less developed countries. Currently, about 1 billion people live in slums, with most slum dwellers located in less developed countries, which accounts for about 30% of their urban population (United Nations, 2015). The number of slum dwellers is projected to increase to 2 billion by 2030 and to 3 billion by 2050 if current trends persist (UN-Habitat, 2010). The presence of slums has regional and global implications, impacting areas such as education, health and child mortality, and political and social exclusion, among many other things (UN-Habitat, 2003).

Slums have been in existence since the time of cities, and their presence has long been documented in the literature (e.g., Booth, 1903). The word 'slum' has mainly been used to describe people living under substandard conditions and squalor. For example, Cities Alliance (2006) describes slums as 'neglected parts of cities where housing and living conditions are appallingly poor.' Often the terms 'slum' and 'informal settlements' are used interchangeably in the literature (UN Habitat, 2012).

UN-Habitat (2003) states that most characteristics of these environments, whether slum or informal settlement, are not found in isolation, leading to multiple levels of

deprivation for slum dwellers. Whether slums and informal settlements are viewed separately or as a single entity, they represent disadvantaged communities continuing to have a large impact on the physical and economic landscape.

Anthropological and Other Theoretical Perspectives of Violence Against Women

The research on the comprehension of violence against women can generally be divided into two main types: a) research that investigates specific risk factors and b) research that offers theoretical models to clarify the mechanisms that result in violence. The elements that affect a perpetrator's choice to engage in violent acts against women have attracted the attention of researchers for two main reasons: first, to understand violence and aggression in human actions, and second, to create intervention programs aimed at addressing and preventing violence against women in society.

Several theories, models, and frameworks have been proposed that explain the phenomenon of violence against women based on one or more factors of influence.

Attitudes and beliefs play a crucial role in predicting behavior (Taylor and Peplau and Sears, 2006). Attitudes and beliefs that support violence stem from an individual's socio-cultural background (Nayak and Byrne and Mutsumi and Abraham, 2003) and are influenced by media and pornography (Hald and Malamuth and Yuen, 2010). Research has focused on the characteristics of these violence-supportive attitudes as well as how they relate to factors like substance use and socio-cultural background.

A study by Johnson *et al.* (2005) revealed the attitude, thoughts, and beliefs of the participants regarding violence against women. Men saw the use of violence by other men as maintenance of power and dominance in the relationship. This was regarded as acceptable behavior. Women interpreted acts of violence as commitment and reflection of love and influence of beliefs of both perpetrators and victims. Beliefs and attitudes are often a reflection of the social fabric, which accepts and permits the perpetration of violence and defines help-seeking behavior in the face of violence.

Evolutionary psychologists offer explanations regarding violence and its evolution. Aggression serves a function in specific contexts

in social living. It suggests that men are cross-culturally more aggressive than women (Buss and Shackelford, 1997). The psychological perspective of causes of domestic violence is based on personality theories, attachment theory, ill temper and hostility, low self-esteem, and substance use. Individuals with antisocial, borderline, and psychopathic personality dimensions are more aggressive towards their partners (Ali and Naylor, 2013).

Anthropological approaches to violence against women describe cultural beliefs and norms and the political, economic, and social structures that underlie tolerance of violence against women. With their depth of knowledge about a society, anthropologists offer culturally resonant ways for ideas about protecting women from gender-based violence to be introduced into social discourses in that society.

Anthropological research highlights the role of power imbalances in perpetuating violence against women. This includes examining how patriarchal structures, economic dependence, and social hierarchies can create vulnerabilities and opportunities for violence.

Anthropology, as a field within the social sciences, utilizes a comparative method that highlights the diversity of human behavior and the crucial role of culture in explaining this variety and differences in actions, beliefs, and ethical standards. This discipline views law as a subject of contention, fusion, and evolution, regarding it as a cultural matter that reflects the interplay among discourse (the rule of law), practice, and symbolic thought, alongside beliefs and values (Rouland, 1992). As a result, a legal anthropological perspective specifically seeks to emphasize the socially constructed nature of common perceptions and laws, often adopting a critical stance towards prevalent ideas, general beliefs, and popular opinions.

One anthropologist who describes both the positive and negative effects of the human rights framework is Sally Engle Merry (2006). Focusing on gender-based violence, she highlighted some of the complexities of applying international human rights standards to this problem. Through her ethnographic research on the human rights system, she analyzed the complex ways that human rights principles such as women's right to live free of violence and to maintain bodily integrity are "translated into the vernacular" in diverse

societies. As a result of her ethnographic study of the human rights system, she concluded that some human rights advocates have different understandings of “culture” from anthropologists.

Anthropologists perceive culture as encompassing both dominant social norms and the challenges to those norms. This perspective elucidates how those in power may see changes as breaches of “their” culture, whereas marginalized groups within the same society may view them as positive developments. Merry suggested that, instead of interpreting culture as a barrier to change, human rights advocates adopt a more contemporary view of culture as a dynamic, open, and adaptable system. This definition acknowledges that by understanding how meanings are shaped by context, individuals can modify and transform local practices. (Dauer, 2014)

Violence Against Women in Urban Slums

Slums have been defined as those residential areas where dwellings are unfit for human habitation for reasons of dilapidation, overcrowding, faulty arrangements and designs of buildings, narrowness or poor arrangement of streets, lack of ventilation, light, sanitation facilities, or any combination of these factors that are detrimental to safety, health, and morals.

Slums, in the Indian census, have been defined as residential areas that are unfit for human habitation by reason of dilapidation, overcrowding, or lack of ventilation, electricity, or sanitation facilities (Johnson K., 2014).

The neighborhoods are so densely populated that intimate partner violence, though deemed a “private” matter, is often witnessed by neighbors and passers-by. However, because of community, family, and individual acceptance of intimate partner violence, women in the slums are often rendered more vulnerable and stigmatized for leaving abusive relationships. (RTI International, 2014).

Various studies show the ubiquity of domestic violence in slums in India. The estimates of ever-experienced domestic violence faced by women living in such settings have ranged from 21.2%, 36.9%, and 54% to as high as 61.2%. (Begum and Donta *et al.* 2015).

Alcoholism, poverty, illiteracy, unemployment

of husbands, accusations of failing to become an ideal wife, extramarital affairs of husbands, suspicions of wives, dowry, and the expectation of a son have been demonstrated as key reasons for perpetrating domestic violence against women in slums. (Shrivastava and Shrivastava, 2013).

Less educational attainment of spouse, less satisfaction with wedding-related gifts provided by the bride's family, poorer conflict negotiation skills, and greater acknowledgment of domestic violence occurrence in family and friends have also been found to increase the risks of violence. (Sinha and Malik *et al.* 2012).

A large number of studies documented the higher prevalence of IPV among the slum residents in India. A study by Silverman and Balaiah and Ritter *et al.* (2016) conducted in Mumbai slums found that one in every three women (34.0%) and 48.5% reported gender-based household maltreatment by husbands and in-laws during the pre-pregnancy period. The study conducted in Kolkata slums found that more than half of the surveyed women had experienced the violence. A study conducted in Pune slums during 2008 found that about 60% of women have ever experienced wife beating (Ruikar & Pratinidhi, 2008). Das and Bapat *et al.* (2013) held that 35% of the women reported that violence is justifiable if a woman disrespected her in-laws or argued with her husband, failed to provide good food, housework, and child care, or went out without permission (Jungari and Chinchore, 2020).

The recent round four of the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) reported that 31% of women of reproductive age experience violence (IIPS and ICF, 2017).

Although the prevalence of violence against women had decreased during the period between NFHS-3 (2005) and NFHS-4 (2015), it remains considerably high in socioeconomically disadvantaged communities (Ahmad and Khan *et al.*, 2019).

Urban slums are home for urban poor and migrant workers who work for meager wages. Megacities like Delhi and Mumbai received large numbers of migrants from rural areas and underdeveloped states, such as Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. (Mili, 2011).

Urban slum structures are known for inadequate hygiene and sanitation, accommodating more people in small spaces,

and high population densities. This deprivation of space, poverty, lack of education, and lack of permanent jobs often leads to stress, which is frequently expressed in the form of violence against women in the households (Pandey, Dutt, and Banerjee, 2009).

Alcohol abuse is rampant in slum communities, which is largely due to stressful living and working conditions, as most slum dwellers work long hours and are engaged in hard manual labor (Agarwal and Satyavada *et al.*, 2007; Roy and Lees *et al.*, 2018).

The high levels of alcohol consumption by men also trigger violence against vulnerable women (Berg and Kremelberg *et al.* 2010).

Risk Factors Associated with Violence Against Women in Urban Slums

Violence against women takes many forms that may result in physical, sexual, and psychological harm, as recognized by the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1993). These are further elaborated as follows: (UN Declaration, 1993)

a) Physical violence and aggression such as slapping, hitting, kicking, and beating; biting; burning; dowry-related abuse; honor killings; and murders.

b) Sexual violence such as rape by a partner or stranger and other forms of sexual coercion, unwanted sexual advances or harassment, refusal to use condoms, forced prostitution and trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation, and dating and courtship abuse, e.g., date rape, acid attacks, and other practices harmful to women.

c) Psychological/emotional violence such as intimidation, belittling, and humiliation; a range of controlling behaviors such as isolating women from their family and friends, monitoring their movements, or restricting their access to information, assistance, and other resources; threat of physical or sexual violence; partner homicide; and differential access to food and medical care for girl infants.

Research from various environments indicates that, although partner violence spans all socioeconomic classes, women facing poverty are particularly vulnerable (Ellsberg *et al.* 1999).

Another study (Hilberman, 1980) indicated that spousal abuse is not limited to particular social classes, but the highest incidence rates

were found among individuals with lower income levels. This study highlighted that elements like increased household crowding, insufficient household appliances, and the lack of a toilet in the home—each reflecting lower socioeconomic status—were notably associated with the risk of experiencing physical abuse from a spouse.

Studies associated with domestic violence have suggested that lower levels of education may be related to insufficient communication abilities, which are connected to occurrences of domestic violence. (Dutton and Strachan, 1987)

Jejeebhoy (1998) discovered that the impact of education was significantly more pronounced in the southern state of Tamil Nadu, which possesses a more equal society, compared to the northern state of Uttar Pradesh. Consequently, the influence of both primary and secondary education empowered women to defend themselves against violence and intimidation.

Alcohol has repeatedly been identified as a significant indicator of partner violence, showing a consistent pattern across various environments. (McCauley and Kern *et al.*, 1995).

Certain researchers propose that alcohol acts as a contextual factor, increasing the likelihood of violent behavior by reducing self-control, clouding judgment, and hindering an individual's ability to read signals. (Flanzer, 1993).

An additional significant finding is that the likelihood of violence against women was particularly elevated when husbands who consumed alcohol also had low levels of education (up to the 10th standard), in contrast to those who drank alcohol but were more educated. Although both alcohol consumption and low educational attainment in men were independently associated with an increased risk of violence against women, the combination of these factors amplified the risk by eleven times.

Harassment related to dowry by in-laws is a significant risk factor for physical violence against spouses, particularly in the Indian context. The dowry system has been present for many years and has sparked considerable debate and legislative interventions (Agnes, 1992).

Women suffering from serious mental

illnesses represent an extremely vulnerable group at risk of various forms of violence. Often, women with mental health issues are abandoned by their families, particularly when the illness appears shortly after marriage or when the truth about the mental illness comes to light, mainly due to the prevalent stigma surrounding mental health. Indian laws such as the Hindu Marriage Act of 1955 (The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955) and the Special Marriage Act of 1954 regard severe, recurrent, and debilitating mental illness as sufficient grounds for annulment of marriage. Consequently, many husbands reject their wives with mental health conditions, knowing that in a patriarchal society, they can easily remarry.

Consequences of Violence against Women in Urban Slums

Violence against women and girls has important health and well-being consequences. It has recently drawn attention as a leading cause of preventable morbidity and mortality. In the past two decades, research has begun to document the grave repercussions of violence on the health of abused women and that of their children. Many studies conducted worldwide now show that abused women and their dependents have significantly worse physical and mental health than non-abused women.

Physical health consequences

Injuries arising from physical abuse are the most obvious health impact of violence. The injuries sustained may be to the extent of being extremely serious and may require medical treatment ranging from minor bruises, burns, cuts, wounds, swelling, contusions, and fractures to spleen or liver trauma and chronic disabilities. Often the women also have tufts of hair pulled out, split eardrums, black eyes, broken noses, and fractures of the jaw. (Eliasson, 1997)

The head, neck, face, thorax, breasts, and abdomen are the most common locations of injuries, followed by musculoskeletal injuries and genital injuries (Grisso and Schwarz *et al.*, 2014).

In addition to specific associations between violence and longer-term illnesses, there is evidence that abused women remain less healthy over time. (Campbell and Jones *et al.*, 2002) It has been suggested that abused women's increased vulnerability to illness may partly be due to lowered immunity because of

stress resulting from the abuse.

Gynaecological and Reproductive Health Consequences

According to Campbell, "gynecological problems are the most consistent, long-lasting, and largest health difference between battered and non-battered women." (Campbell, 2002)

This may include immune system problems and increased risk of bacterial infection, external or internal vaginal or anal injuries, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), fibroids, sexual dysfunction, decreased sexual desire, genital irritation, pain on intercourse, chronic pelvic pain, vaginal bleeding or infection, and urinary tract infections. (McCauley and Kern *et al.*, 2000)

Psychological form of consequences

There is a positive association between mental health problems and violence. (Campbell and Soeken, 1999). Women who are subjected to abuse state that the psychological outcome has a more prolonged effect than the physical outcome. Scars on the body heal more easily, while scars on the soul take much longer to fade. International research finds that female victims of abuse have a significantly higher rate of common health problems, even after abuse ends, compared to women who have never been abused. (Campbell, 2002)

Researchers show that women who are subjected to violence experience multi-trauma. They often apply for medical care based on symptoms such as sleeping problems, anxiety, paranoia, a negative self-image, low self-confidence, and depression quite a long time after the violence has ended without realizing the connection between their experience of violence and their mental health problems. (Eliasson, 1997)

The acute psychological effects may include shock, confusion, extreme fear, and incoherent speech. Depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are the most prevalent mental health outcomes of violence against women.

Women may engage in health-damaging behaviors such as unsafe sex, alcohol and drug misuse, smoking, and eating disorders and develop some short-term physical and emotional problems, such as suicidal tendencies, preoccupation with violence, emotional withdrawal, irritability, feelings of hopelessness, or an inability to respond to the

needs of their children adequately. (Ambrosio, 2008)

Locating Debate on Violence against Women in Urban Slums

Urban slums are characterized by poverty, overcrowding, lack of resources, and social marginalization. This marginalization is so well ingrained that it led to serious outcomes that changed the women's lives in all aspects.

As an anthropologist, after studying the existing literature on violence against women in urban slums. One theme became frequently evident: that violence is deeply rooted in the socio-economic conditions of the household, and social marginalization and the patriarchal structure of the family make women more vulnerable and easier targets for such abuses. The condition of women in urban slums shows how structural poverty, cultural norms, and lack of resources intersect and give rise to new, deprived living conditions for a woman.

Studies by Shrivastava and Shrivastava (2013) show the key reasons for violence against women, such as unemployment of the husband, illiteracy, poverty, alcoholism of the man, dowry, etc. These are the basic reasons why women are beaten up by their partners, from physical injuries to sometimes death.

In the study of Ali and Naylor (2013), evolutionary psychologists offer explanations of the more aggressive nature of men than women: temper and hostility, low self-esteem, and substance use make men more engaged in violence and brutality against women.

What stood out the most is the normalization of violence in households from a victim and their family. Some women think it is normal for a husband to be violent because they believe it is a Patni dharma (wife's duty) to accept it, as taught by some religious ideas. The concept of "lawful wife" or "wife in accordance with dharma" is deeply rooted in Hindu traditions, in which a wife is seen as a partner for life who fulfills her duties and responsibilities according to dharma. Women fear that if they raise their voice against their husband's behavior, their religion or dharma will not be followed.

In ancient India, the status of women has changed over time. Women held higher status in the Rigvedic period, but this declined in the later Vedic and epic periods. According to Hindu mythology, the Manusmriti is classified

as the most authoritative statement of dharma, which reflects the historical context of the condition of women in the society. According to the Manusmriti, "A wife, a son, a slave, a pupil, and a younger brother of full blood, who have committed faults, may be beaten with a rope or a split bamboo." In other words, Manu allows the husband the right to beat his wife.

There are other examples as well that show the declining position and rights of women in society. The famous epic Mahabharata shows the character of Draupadi as a strong woman who dares to challenge the norms of society of that period. Whereas in another epic, the Ramayana, the character Sita shows both the strength and limitation within a patriarchal society. Over a period of time, the condition of women has become questionable in the Indian context.

Historical conditions have significantly shaped the current position of women, with societal norms and cultural expectations developed over the centuries, influencing their choices and roles in the society.

Even today women are not subject to having their opinion in the deep-rooted patriarchal household because women are taught to feel virtuous by being tolerant towards any violence by their husband and their in-laws. Her husband is considered to be her Pati Parmeshwar (most important deity), and his biological family becomes her own after marriage. She accepts her fate and stays in their marriage.

This structural silence allows violence against women to persist in households for years.

As it is said that movies are the mirror of our society, for example, Bollywood movies like Parched, Thappad, Darling, Provoked, etc. Shows the experiences of survivors, societal norms, and normalization of violence against women in contemporary society.

Recently, the Ministries of Women and Child Development and Rural Development, with support from UN Women, launched the National Campaign #AbKoiBahanaNahi (No Excuse), which draws attention to the alarming escalation of violence against women to revitalize commitments and call for accountability and action. It aims to empower women to break free from shame and societal constraints, enabling them to report the

atrocities they have faced and fight for their dignity.

Recently, a 20-year-old student immolated herself as a result of negligence in justice. If we look at this incident anthropologically, this incident shows how patriarchy shapes women's experiences in educational institutions. It shows how modern educational institutions are meant to empower women, but the cultural realities are opposite to them. The student's act of self-immolation can be viewed as exposing the structural failure, silencing victims, and misuse of authority through male dominance. This manifestation of immolation shows her protest within cultural and social norms and her long battle for justice and women's dignity in contemporary society.

This deep and structural silence of women lets violence occur and appears to be a part of everyday life. While some high-profile cases of honor killing, rape, or the self-immolation case of Odisha came to light and got public attention, many cases may remain hidden.

Cultural silence is an important factor that helps in sustaining violence against women in urban slums. Anthropologically, this silence normalizes the violence and tolerant attitude towards violence by framing it as a 'family matter' rather than a 'crime' that deserves the public and judicial intervention.

In urban slums where houses are stacked with overcrowding, with little privacy, the silence becomes stronger to maintain their family's dignity and respect. Because women are unaware of their rights, they fear shame and gossip.

From an anthropological perspective, it is important to study how this silence works as a social norm based in patriarchy and as a way for a woman to cope with this violence. Ethnographic research in the future could explore how women manage to stay silent when they need help or how they handle such pressure for themselves and their family. We are sure there might be a consequence, which is to be studied in further studies.

CONCLUSION

Anthropological study on violence against women shows the profound impact of cultural norms, societal structure, and systemic inequalities in perpetuating violence against women. This study reveals that such violence is deeply rooted in socio-cultural norms, economic hardships, systematic hardships,

and gender inequalities prevalent in these communities. Factors like early marriages, lack of financial autonomy, and limited control over reproductive choices exacerbate women's vulnerability to violence against them.

Violence against women is a practice that has persisted for centuries, often justified by religion, culture, society, or patriarchal beliefs. In addition to its historical context, violence against women has the distinct characteristic of being universally present and accepted. In every society, to varying degrees, women experience physical, sexual, and psychological abuse that spans across income, class, and cultural divides. This form of violence not only constitutes a violation of women's human rights but also hinders their development. Women encounter violence not just in public spaces but also within the confines of their own homes. This review article focuses on 'violence against women' – a form of violence that leaves women vulnerable within their own 'homes,' perpetrated by individuals who are connected to them in some way.

Violence against women in the urban slums of India is a complex problem that is fundamentally linked to socio-economic, cultural, and systemic issues. The combination of poverty, limited educational opportunities, unemployment, and patriarchal values intensifies the risk faced by women in these underserved areas. Although there have been government programs, legal measures, and community-based efforts aimed at tackling these issues, shortcomings in enforcement, public awareness, and access impede notable advancements.

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