Gender-Based Violence and Legal Responses: Analyzing the Effectiveness of Legal Frameworks

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Abstract

Many international legislation, public education campaigns, and legal action programs have been launched in response to the United Nations' recognition of gender-based violence against women as a pressing global health and development concern. This article discusses new conceptual frameworks, methodological problems, and selected research findings to guide these endeavours. Recent research has shown links between sexuality, gender, power, and intimate violence in a variety of nations, and this article reviews such studies. Further, it draws attention to cultural elements—like media depictions of sex and violence—that can make women more susceptible to abuse. Unwanted pregnancies and abortions are just two of the many harmful behavioral, emotional, and physical health outcomes of victimization that are discussed in the article. More research is urgently needed to fill gaps in our knowledge about gender-based violence, its dynamics, and its impacts, particularly the role of the media, as well as to explain why different forms of violence have different consequences in different cultural settings.

Keywords: Gender-based Violence; Intimate Partner Violence; Domestic Violence.

Introduction

Honour killings often occur among Asian and Middle Eastern women. Genital mutilation is a culturally sanctioned practice in West African countries. In Western Europe, women who are migrants or refugees face violence because they do not conform to local norms. Because of the widespread belief among sexual predators in southern Africa that having sexual relations with uninfected girls will cure their HIV/AIDS, many young girls fall victim to sexual assault. Even in the wealthiest and most advanced nations, domestic violence is a major problem and often results in fatalities for the victims (Amnesty International, 2004). Several public education campaigns and policies have been implemented worldwide with the goal of decreasing gender-based violence against women since the United Nations recognized it as a worldwide health and development concern (United Nations, 1989). This essay focuses on recent theoretical developments, methodological questions, and research results that can guide these kinds of endeavors, especially concerning domestic abuse. This is not to say that women never commit acts of violence against men; rather, we are focussing on violence that is exclusive to gender. According to (Kishor & Johnson, 2004), there is a significant cultural gap in the prevalence and manifestations of violence.

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Archer (2000) and McHugh (2005) are among the recent studies that found that violent acts like pushing, hitting, and throwing objects against each other are common among both men and women in the US. The prevalence rates of these acts did not differ by gender.

However, the significance of violent acts is shaped differently by gender for men and women, and this meaning change significantly depending on cultural and contextual factors. For instance, according to (Marshall, 1992), the severity of certain physical acts can vary based on the offender's gender. Beyond looking at how men and women rank and discuss particular acts of violence, we need to look at how different parts of gender impact the causes, dynamics, and consequences of violence against women and men. Only then can we have a complete picture of gender-based violence. Due to the multi-level nature of this investigation, an interdisciplinary study will provide invaluable insights. The situational, structural, and cultural context will determine the psychological significance of acts and experiences for all parties involved, including the perpetrator, victim, and outside observer. When studying the causes and consequences of gender-based violence, it is important to consider the cultural discourse that normalizes gender inequality in economic and social standing, which in turn objectifies women and sexualizes violence. In this article, we aim to promote more nuanced and multi-level methods for studying gender-based violence by shedding light on how it manifests differently for men and women. While it is important to understand how gender impacts violence against women and men in general, our focus on gender-based violence against women reflects the necessity to narrow our purview. Violence is a social behaviour that can arise from or be a response to interpersonal interactions. So, we have to look at how many kinds of violence exist. Please see the histogram below

Figure 1: Prevalence of different types of gender based violence
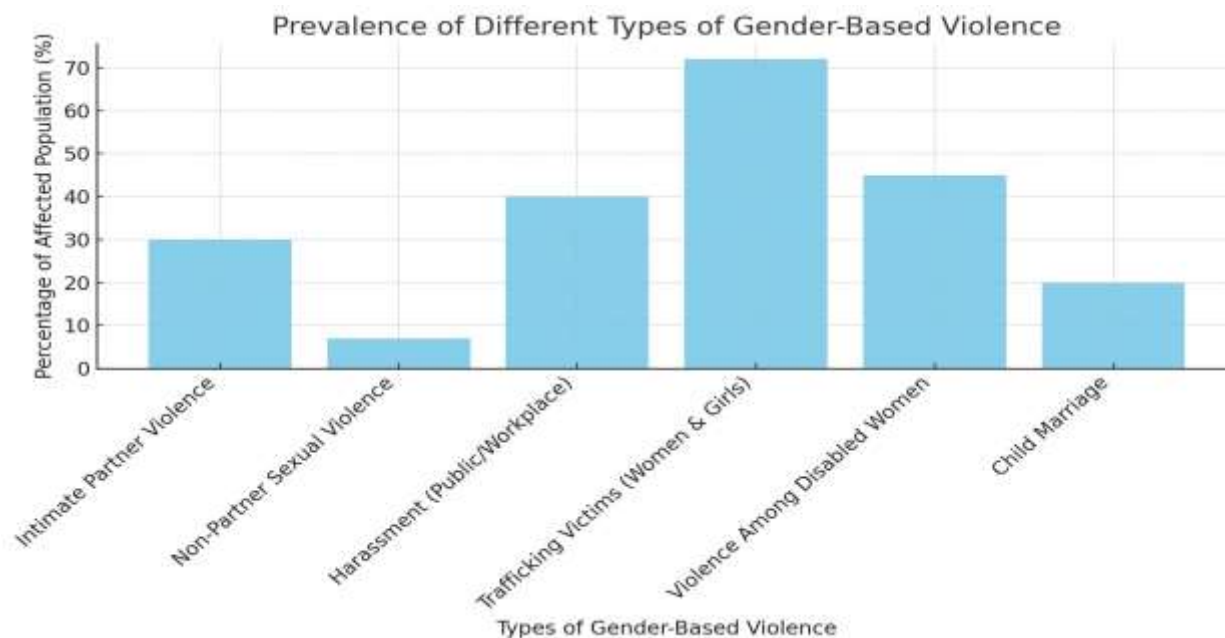
Theoretical Perspectives

Tragically, studies that have looked at how men and women differ in terms of violence against women tend to treat gender as binary. As a result, gender is seen as an individual trait (Archer,

2003). Nonetheless, "sex difference" models have long since given way to more modern theoretical understandings of gender. While these models do provide some important information, they do not provide much light on the present conceptualization of gender dynamics (Anderson 2005) are works present gender as a multi-level cultural construction that defines what it means to be male or female in any given setting. Gender is usually assigned at birth in Western societies according to biological sex, which can be described in many ways depending on the context—anatomically or genetically—and organized around the social categories of male and female. Do not mistake the category itself for the cultural bundle that makes up the meaning of a person's gender assignment. Various aspects of gender, such as gendered characteristics, feelings, beliefs, standards, roles, contexts, and institutions, all interact with one another and undergo change and evolution both historically and culturally. In addition to being a "master," a status that dictates the social position, gender usually grants men more privilege, power, and resources than women. Gender influences our self-perception and determines the developmental appropriateness of male and female behavioral, psychological, and social traits. In doing so, it interacts with other aspects of social difference, and the way these factors work may vary from person to person based on their unique combination of social identities and responsibilities. For instance, being a good mother who gives her everything to her children is the ideal wife role in some cultures, and the two roles could not be more complementary. However, there is another setting in which a decent wife is seen as little more than a trophy for her husband's achievements and the sender of children to boarding school so that she may devote herself fully to meeting her husband's wants. Researchers should cultivate a "diversity mindfulness" that recognizes the intricate relationship between gender and other forms of difference. Russo and Vaz (2001) argued that this is necessary to understand the complexities of social identity and difference.

Gender-based Violence against Women
According to the United Nations, "any act that results in, or is likely to result in physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life. According to this definition, gender-based violence is any form of abuse that targets women. At the United Nations Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, this definition was adopted, reflecting a global consensus on how to comprehend the dynamics of gender-based violence. Problems like stalking, intimate partner violence, rape, coercive sex, and abuse of children fall under this category. Societal gender roles and status impact this type of violence, as the phrase "gender-based" emphasizes. It should be emphasized that this definition does not encompass all unlawful acts perpetrated against women, such as being threatened with a weapon during a robbery. According to several studies (Koss et al., 1994; Russo, 2006), the victims of intimate partner abuse often receive little to no help from society and its institutions, which are influenced by gender-related cultural values, beliefs, and conventions. The legitimization, obfuscation, sexualization, and perpetuation of violence against women can be traced back to gender norms and expectations, as well as to masculine entitlement, sexual objectification, and power inequalities.

Recognizing Gender-based Violence as a Problem
For instance, gender has legitimized male aggression against women, which affects how society views violent acts perpetrated by men and women. Keller (1996) and Stark et al. (1979) victims have become invisible due to this legitimacy. Many have argued that marriage gives males the right to treat their spouses badly, whether it is through physical or sexual abuse (Finklehor & Yllö,

1985). As Koop (1985) points out, the U.S. Surgeon General did not recognize intimate partner violence as a significant public health concern for adult women until the late 1980s. It is shocking how pervasive male aggression is against women and how devastating it is for their health, society, and the economy.

This violence's validity and opacity have been under growing scrutiny since the rise of a worldwide women's movement. (Amnesty International) Gender-based violence against women by men is now recognized globally as a major problem impacting human rights, economic development, and health. According to a recent worldwide survey data study (Krug et al., 2002), intimate partner physical violence affects 10% to 69% of women at some point in their lives.

A staggering 22.1% of American women will be physically assaulted at some point in their lives, with 7.7% of those victims being sexually assaulted by an intimate partner, according to the National Violence Against Women Survey. Over 201,394 women were raped by an intimate partner in the last year, and about 1.3 million women were assaulted physically (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). Among women between the ages of 15 and 44, injuries caused by intimate partner violence outweigh those caused by robberies, automobile accidents, and cancer put together (Dwyer et al., 1995). According to Koss (1988) this problem impacts women of all ages, races, and sexual orientations, as well as those who are married and those who are not.

New Conceptualizations

Researchers today are uncovering new approaches to understanding, studying, intervening with, and preventing gender-based violence against women. Researchers trying to grasp this complicated subject better face roadblocks caused by the numerous methodological issues that have emerged due to the pursuit of new frameworks (Brush et al., 2006). (Edwards 1991 and Marin) and both note that feminist viewpoints have considerably altered the ways in which scholars characterize and examine the many manifestations of gendered violence across the lifespan. As a result of these viewpoints, researchers no longer limit themselves to studying family dynamics and the mental characteristics of specific offenders or victims. Russell (1975) reframe rape and other male violent acts as manifestations of dominance and control. Despite the fact that physical disparities can impact gender-based violence dynamics, the dominant theories place more emphasis on the social construction of male violence than on individual biology or pathology.

Some have begun to see male-on-female violence as a separate problem, while others see violence more broadly, with context determining its manifestations (Koss et al., 1994). It is increasingly understood that concepts like social position, objectification, power dynamics, and gender-based entitlements play a significant role in the dynamics of gender-based violence. According to (Koss et al. 1994), patriarchal values are upheld by major institutions such as the criminal justice system, healthcare, academia, science, the military, athletics, and religion. These values, in turn, support these entitlements, promote gender-based violence, and stifle dissenting voices. The complexity of the issue is becoming more widely acknowledged, while the roles of gender, power, and structural elements in violence are still not fully understood (Frieze, 2005). Gender, power, and violence theories have progressed beyond black-and-white explanations that connect patriarchal ideals or gender role ideas to particular violent acts committed by men and women. (Dutton, 2006) criticize the oversimplified approaches; although their interpretation of feminist perspectives is somewhat narrow, their call for more nuanced approaches is timely; research, treatment, interventions, and public policy have not kept pace with these theoretical advancements.

(Dutton, 2006) and others have highlighted the critical need for new information derived from integrative techniques incorporating transdisciplinary and biobehavioral viewpoints.

Methodological Issues

The methodology for studying gender-based violence (GBV) involves diverse, multi-layered approaches to capture its complexity and impact. Researchers commonly use both qualitative and quantitative methods. Quantitative data is collected through large-scale surveys, such as the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS), which assess the prevalence, types, and patterns of violence across different demographics. Qualitative data, gathered through in-depth interviews and focus groups, explores personal experiences and cultural attitudes toward GBV, providing context beyond statistics. Sampling techniques vary, with random sampling ensuring representative data, while purposive sampling focuses on specific groups, such as survivors or underserved populations. Ethical considerations are central to GBV research due to its sensitive nature. Researchers prioritize informed consent, ensuring participants understand the study's purpose and confidentiality. Trauma-informed methods are applied to reduce participant distress, while safety protocols protect researchers and respondents alike. Challenges include underreporting, due to stigma and fear, and variability in cultural definitions of GBV, which complicates data comparability. This methodology provides a comprehensive, ethical approach, allowing for actionable insights to combat gender-based violence globally. In this study, we also used qualitative analysis related to the study. When we are androcentric or biased towards men, we tend to focus on the most salient details, which impacts our ability to recall and make sense of past events and ultimately shapes our ideas of what constitutes normalcy and abnormality. No area reveals androcentric bias more clearly and systematically than male violence against women, according to Edwards 1991.

The term "intimate partner violence" (IPV) refers to the physical, sexual, and psychological abuse that occurs inside an intimate relationship and is primarily focused on gender. A partner's freedom can be restricted through a variety of controlling behaviors, such as isolating them from family and friends, as well as through physical attacks, verbal abuse, and forced sexual actions. Researchers have utilized a variety of qualitative and quantitative approaches to analyze violence, drawing on a wide range of data sources, including nationwide surveys that specifically looked at gender-based violence (Hamby, 2005). One of the most popular behavioral checklists for determining the frequency, intensity, and kind of interpersonal violence is the Conflict Tactics Scales (Straus et al., 2003) or one of its variants.

The pros and cons of various data sources are outlined by Hamby (2005), who draws attention to problems such as underreporting, false positives and negatives, difficulties with reporting periods, respondent weariness, and the influence of societal norms on disclosures. Concerns regarding the reliability of self-report checklists are warranted in light of the gender gap in reporting violent occurrences. A more trustworthy way to collect sensitive information could be audio computer-assisted self-interviews (audio-CASI), according to Hamby (Hamby, 2005, p. 739). In addition, she brings attention to several underappreciated methods that have successfully investigated stigmatized behaviors and relationship misery. These include electronic diaries collected over the internet or mobile devices and weekly calendar methods.

It is critical to go beyond just recording violent acts and think about their contexts and meanings (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 1998; Dutton et al., 1994) because cognitive science has shown that assessments are important in connecting stressors to mental health outcomes (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004). In the framework of coercive control, violent acts have the potential to

influence how other seemingly harmless behaviors are seen. Additional studies should focus on developing new theories of violence dynamics and investigating the function of coercive control in cases of gender-based violence (Dutton & Goodman, 2005).

Additionally, new ideas and approaches are introduced by postmodern viewpoints, which emphasize the socially created character of meanings. According to (McHugh, 2005), "multiple, varied, and even inconsistent views" regarding intimate violence are fostered by these viewpoints. All the way from choosing a topic to interpreting and sharing the results, the sociohistorical setting affects research and their study assists researchers to recognize this. Methodological, ethical, and conceptual concerns hinder researchers from studying IPV (Saltzman, 2001). Research participants must be kept safe, and their privacy must be respected. They must also be informed about support resources that are available to them. To encourage disclosures of violent events, interviewers must be sensitive and trained to conduct interviews in a nonjudgmental and sympathetic manner (Kishor & Johnson, 2004).

The incidence of violence against women around the world is being better documented through community-based survey research (Kishor & Johnson, 2004). Unfortunately, cross-national surveys run into the same self-reporting problems we discussed before (Hamby, 2005) and also need to take cultural differences in the significance and relevance of particular behaviors into consideration, so they do not always capture every facet of gender-based violence. The cultural circumstances in which women encounter acts of violence and coercion must be investigated through qualitative study (WHO, 2001).

Gender-based Violence, Entitlements, and Social Control

The relationship between intimate partner violence (IPV) and patriarchal views of women's subordination in society and politics is beginning to be investigated by researchers (Koss et al., 1994; Marin & Russo, 1999). Abuse is more common among men who view dominance and control as masculine traits (Goodrum et al., 2001). The disparity between men's perceived and actual levels of power over their partners may give rise to gender-based violence. Physical dominance can be a coping mechanism for men who feel they are not as powerful as they should be (Dutton, 1988). Although the causes of aggressive conduct vary by gender, studies show that both men and women are more likely to resort to violence if they are unhappy with the power dynamics in their romantic relationships (Kaura & Allen, 2004).

Various controlling behaviors are associated with male intimate partner violence, according to research from different cultures. Kishor and Johnson (2004) discovered a strong correlation between intimate partner violence (IPV) and controlling behaviors displayed by husbands. These behaviors include: (1) getting angry or jealous if their wife talks to another man, (2) constantly accusing her of being unfaithful, (3) limiting her social interactions, (4) cutting off contact with family, (5) demanding constant vigilance over her whereabouts, and (6) not trusting her with money matters. Regardless of cultural background, the more controlling behaviors husbands exhibited, the higher the probability of violence (Kishor & Johnson, 2004). To better comprehend the ways in which violence and the threat of violence are used to control women in different circumstances, further research is necessary.

A potent tool of social control, stigmatization, and shame work hand in hand. According to Buchbinder and Eisikovits (2003) and Eisikovits and Enosh (1997), gender-based violence is shameful and stigmatizing. Women may be less likely to seek help after experiencing violence if they feel shame about doing so (Giles-Sims, 1998). Furthermore, humiliation might affect the results of aggression; one research indicated that it was a significant predictor in the correlation

between psychological abuse and post-traumatic stress disorder (Street & Arias, 2001). Despite a plethora of recent studies examining the link between stigma and interpersonal or psychological dynamics, very little is known about how stigmatization interacts with shame, power, and gender-based violence. Despite the fact that social, political, and economic power are the bedrock of stigma, assessments of stigma tend to gloss over the intricacies of power dynamics. "Rather than focussing on the power differences between people who have those stigmatizing conditions and those who do not, there is a tendency to focus on the attributes associated with those conditions.

Additionally, additional research is required to determine the nature of the relationship between gender role violations and stigma, as well as the accompanying consequences such as social isolation and rejection. With this knowledge, we can begin empowering women in the face of societal messages stigmatizing them. Research on self-esteem and stigma reveals complex causal dynamics. One example is that optimistic women do not exhibit the same pattern of low self-esteem, heightened threat perceptions, and exposure to sexism as pessimistic women do. Simultaneously, studies are required to push for societal shifts that lessen stigmatization as a tool for maintaining gender norms that back gender-based violence. According to Link and Phelan (2001), if we want to stop stigma in its tracks, we need to do one of two things: (1) people's views and attitudes need to change, or (2) the power dynamics that enable dominant groups to act on stigmatizing ideas need to be changed. Knowing the connections between privilege, power, shame, and gender-based violence is crucial for the effectiveness of either approach.

Links among Gender, Power, and Sexuality

Unequal gender relationships, reflected in social structures, legitimize masculine aggression. In many contexts, including the workplace, the home, the medical field, and athletics, there are shared structural and ideological features that keep women in a subservient position to men. As a result of these disparities, patriarchal views that normalize and demand women's submission persist, and strong, competent women are stigmatized. According to studies conducted in the US, certain men, particularly those who engage in sexual harassment, may find it sexually desirable to subjugate women. While the exact nature of this link is still a mystery, research by (Bargh et al., 1995) suggests that males who are inclined to harass sexually are more likely to experience sexual impulses when they feel power is highlighted, rather than the other way around. Based on the findings of numerous studies, including those by Frederickson and Roberts (1997), it is clear that sexual objectification has a profound effect on women's mental health and behavior in Western societies. Some results imply that sexualizing violence and objectifying women can increase exposure to violent events. However, further study is needed to confirm this. For example, according to Burnett (1995), often experiencing objectification was significantly associated with being called degrading, gender-stereotyped names and being subjected to inappropriate (sexualized) gestures, as well as daily stresses and coercive sexual encounters. This was the case for college women suffering from depressive symptoms. Nevertheless, this association was moderated by the impact of other people's opinions.

The media significantly impacts how men and women in industrialized nations are portrayed in social interactions. The media contributes to a culture where gender influences violence against women by sexualizing violence, objectifying women, and promoting gender disparities and male domination. The media's role in normalizing and promoting these ideologies—and the unconscious connections they create between sex and power—can shed light on gender-based violence.

Media Influences

Various forms of mass media, including radio, television, films, periodicals, and the Internet, influence how we think about and act in relation to gender and violence. Researchers interested in the causes of gender-based violence against women in technologically developed societies are quite concerned about the impact of media exposure to sexual and violent content, such as pornography Half of a teenager's waking hours are devoted to media consumption; on a daily basis, they spend over three hours in front of the TV, around 1.5 hours listening to music, about half an hour reading, and half an hour on computers (Brown et al., 2002). According to research, a 7-year-old will have logged 7–10 years of TV viewing by the time they are 70 years old (Roberts, 2000). Approximately 100,000 acts of violence, including over 8,000 killings, are shown on television by the time a typical American youngster reaches the age of fourteen (Huston et al., 1992). The impacts of sexual degradation and exposure to violence on women have been demonstrated in experimental research, although correlational studies have difficulty proving causality. According to (Branson, 1992), media portrayals of sexual assault against women tend to support preexisting stereotypes about the crime. Some examples of these myths are the following: (a) the victim is inherently promiscuous; (b) the victim is somehow responsible for the rape; (c) the victim desired to be raped; (d) the victim is exaggerating or concealing the truth about the rape; and (e) the rapist has the mental or physical capacity to control his sexual desires. Media portrayals of rape, particularly in cases when the victims and offenders do not conform to preconceived notions, can give the impression that the crime is sometimes justified. Both men and women may be impacted by violent pornography; studies have shown that it impacts men and women (Corne et al., 1992). Adolescents and younger children learn social standards for a variety of behaviors—including aggressiveness and sexuality—through media exposure (Bryant & Zillman, 1994). One study found that 61% of 13–15-year-olds get their news on sexuality, sexually transmitted diseases, drugs, alcohol, and violent crime from the media (Kaiser Family Foundation, 1999). Half or more of the girls acquire their sexuality education from magazines, and over half of the teens get their information about pregnancy and birth control from television (Princeton et al., 1996). Many studies by communications scholars have found that the media distorts the truth about these crucial topics. The media's impact on gender-based violence is not fully understood despite its potential to transmit values, establish standards, and shape expectations for behaviour.

Table 1: Literature summary

Statistic	Data
Exposure to Violent Media and Attitudes	Studies show that individuals exposed to gender-stereotyped or violent media are more likely to hold permissive attitudes toward GBV (e.g., 20% increase in tolerance among young male viewers) (Gentile et al., 2014).
Influence of Social Media on GBV Awareness	Campaigns like #MeToo have led to a 30% increase in reported cases in certain regions due to increased awareness (UN Women, 2019).
Misogyny on Social Media	37% of young women report experiencing online harassment linked to misogynistic or sexualized comments, often contributing to increased offline gender-based violence (Pew Research Center, 2020).
Influence of Pornography on GBV	Consumption of violent or degrading pornography has been linked to an increased likelihood of aggressive behaviors and a 22% higher tolerance for GBV among male viewers (Hald et al., 2010).

Role of News Coverage on Public Attitudes	Sensationalist or biased media coverage on GBV cases can reinforce harmful stereotypes, with 25% of viewers reporting increased blame on victims in cases with biased media portrayals (Anderson, 2018).
Media Campaigns Reducing GBV	Media campaigns promoting gender equality have reduced the prevalence of GBV attitudes by up to 15% in some areas (UNICEF, 2018).
Impact of Digital Campaigns Against GBV	Digital campaigns against GBV, such as the UN's "Orange the World," reach millions globally, and have increased awareness and prevention efforts, correlating with a decrease in GBV in regions with active campaigns (UN Women, 2019).

Findings

The extensive psychological, physiological, social, and economic effects of violence on women and their families are now beyond dispute. Women who experience violence often face a range of psychological consequences, including anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and low self-esteem, which can have long-lasting impacts on their mental health and well-being. Physiologically, the effects of violence can manifest as chronic pain, injuries, and in severe cases, disability or reproductive health issues, further compounding the trauma experienced by survivors. Socially, violence isolates women, damaging their relationships with family, friends, and communities. This isolation can perpetuate a cycle of abuse, as victims are often cut off from sources of support. In addition, the stigma surrounding domestic violence can lead to feelings of shame and guilt, preventing women from seeking help or disclosing their experiences. Families affected by violence may experience a breakdown of family dynamics, strained parent-child relationships, and long-term emotional scars, particularly for children who witness the abuse. Economically, violence against women can be devastating. Many women who experience violence face job loss, reduced earning capacity, or the inability to work due to physical injuries or emotional trauma. This not only affects their financial independence but also increases their vulnerability to further abuse, as they may feel trapped in violent relationships due to economic dependency. The overall cost of violence against women extends beyond individual families, placing a significant burden on healthcare systems, legal institutions, and social services, further illustrating the widespread impact of this issue on society as a whole. The creation of effective prevention and treatment techniques is made more complicated by the current focus on finding the routes connecting different forms of intimate partner violence (IPV) to its diverse effects (Babcock et al., 2004). According to Dutton et al. (2006), there is a need for new theoretical frameworks that are integrative and interdisciplinary, as well as multilevel methodologies that include sociocultural and biobehavioral viewpoints.

Table 2: Global data on violence

Statistic	Global Data
Prevalence of Intimate Partner Violence	30% of women globally experience intimate partner violence in their lifetime.
Violence by Non-Partner **Murder by Partner/Family Member**	7% of women report experiencing sexual violence by a non-partner by an intimate partner or family member (2017 data).
Economic Impact of Gender-Based Violence	Gender-based violence costs countries an estimated 2-5% of GDP, due to lost productivity and health care costs.
Violence Against Girls Under 18	1 in 4 girls experience sexual violence before the age of 18.
Human Trafficking Victims (Women & Girls)	72% of human trafficking victims worldwide are women and girls.
Violence Experienced by Women with Disabilities	Women with disabilities are up to 10 times more likely to experience gender-based violence.
Child Marriage Rates	12 million girls are married before age 18 every year.
Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)	Over 200 million girls and women alive today have undergone FGM in 30 countries.

Conclusion

There are many distinct ways in which gender-based violence impacts both men and women. We need more sophisticated theoretical and methodological frameworks to investigate the elements that shape the gender gap in intimate partner violence. Media portrayals of violence contribute to its persistence and its origins in patriarchal societal institutions and cultural gender roles. Individuals, families, and communities are profoundly and persistently affected by the psychological, social, and behavioral effects of this type of violence. A multi-level strategy that takes cultural differences into account and works on the individual, interpersonal, and structural levels is necessary to address, predict, and prevent gender-based violence.

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a deeply entrenched issue that permeates societies across the globe, affecting individuals, families, and communities. The recognition of GBV as a violation of human rights has led to increasing global awareness, prompting various legal responses designed to address and mitigate its impacts. While significant progress has been made, much work remains to be done to ensure that legal systems effectively protect victims, hold perpetrators accountable, and foster environments that prevent such violence from occurring in the first place. This conclusion reflects on the overarching themes explored in discussions on GBV and legal responses, highlighting the successes, gaps, and future directions in the fight against gender-based violence. One of the most concerning aspects of gender-based violence is its prevalence, affecting women, girls, men, and non-binary individuals in various forms, including domestic violence, sexual violence, trafficking, female genital mutilation, and early marriage. The ubiquity of GBV is not limited to any one region or demographic; it transcends race, socioeconomic status, religion,

and culture. This universality underscores the complexity of addressing GBV, as it involves dismantling deep-rooted cultural norms and gender inequalities that have persisted for centuries. Despite widespread awareness, underreporting remains a significant barrier to understanding the true scope of gender-based violence. Victims often face social stigma, shame, and fear of reprisal, preventing them from coming forward. In many cases, the legal and judicial systems themselves discourage reporting due to inadequate protections, lengthy legal processes, and insensitive treatment of survivors. The reluctance of victims to report their experiences continues to hinder accurate data collection, limiting the effectiveness of legal and policy reforms aimed at combatting GBV.

Over the past few decades, legal responses to gender-based violence have expanded, with many countries enacting specific laws to protect victims and criminalize various forms of GBV. International treaties and conventions, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Istanbul Convention, have set important legal frameworks that call on states to take proactive measures in addressing violence against women and gender-based violence. At the national level, many countries have enacted legislation targeting GBV. Domestic violence acts, sexual assault laws, and human trafficking statutes are common legal tools used to address violence. These laws often define GBV broadly to include physical, emotional, psychological, and economic abuse, acknowledging the multifaceted nature of the violence. In some cases, legal systems have gone a step further by creating specialized courts or legal units focused on GBV cases to ensure that survivors receive appropriate and sensitive legal handling. One of the positive outcomes of these legal efforts has been the increased availability of legal protections for victims, such as restraining orders, safe housing provisions, and support for access to legal representation. These measures not only provide immediate protection but also empower survivors to take legal action against their abusers. Furthermore, legal frameworks have prompted governments to establish prevention and support programs, including crisis hotlines, shelters, counseling services, and financial support for survivors. However, challenges remain in ensuring that these legal responses are consistently applied and that victims have equitable access to justice. In many regions, especially in developing countries or areas with weak governance structures, the enforcement of laws related to GBV is inconsistent, often leaving survivors without effective remedies. Additionally, legal systems may lack the necessary resources, training, or sensitivity to handle GBV cases appropriately. Police, judges, and prosecutors may not have adequate knowledge or understanding of gender dynamics, resulting in victim-blaming, discriminatory practices, or lenient treatment of perpetrators. Several significant barriers prevent gender-based violence victims from accessing justice effectively. In many countries, victims must navigate complex and often intimidating legal systems that fail to prioritize their safety and well-being. Long legal proceedings, the fear of retaliation, and a lack of confidence in the system deter many survivors from pursuing justice. Moreover, cultural norms and gender stereotypes continue to influence legal processes, with survivors sometimes being disbelieved or pressured to reconcile with their abusers instead of seeking justice. In some cases, victims encounter institutional barriers, such as a lack of specialized GBV units or insufficient legal aid services. Without proper legal representation or access to information, many survivors find themselves unable to navigate the system or secure the justice they deserve. For those in rural or marginalized communities, these barriers are even more pronounced, as legal and support services may be scarce or non-existent. Financial barriers also pose a significant challenge. Victims of GBV may lack the economic means to leave abusive relationships or pursue legal action, especially when they are financially dependent on their abusers. The costs associated with legal proceedings, including

hiring lawyers and attending court, can further exacerbate the financial strain on survivors, preventing them from accessing justice. International law has played a pivotal role in shaping national responses to gender-based violence. Human rights frameworks, including the aforementioned CEDAW and Istanbul Convention, have placed GBV firmly within the context of human rights violations. These treaties not only call for the criminalization of GBV but also emphasize the need for prevention, protection, and support for victims. They encourage countries to adopt a holistic approach that goes beyond punitive measures, focusing on education, awareness, and cultural change to prevent violence from occurring in the first place. Moreover, international organizations such as the United Nations and the World Health Organization have advocated for multi-sectoral approaches to addressing GBV. This includes collaboration between legal, healthcare, educational, and social service sectors to provide comprehensive support to survivors. Such collaborations are critical in ensuring that survivors receive medical care, psychological counseling, legal representation, and protection from further harm. Despite these international efforts, gaps remain in implementing and enforcing international standards at the national level. While many countries have ratified key treaties, they often fail to implement the required legal and policy changes fully. Additionally, enforcement mechanisms within international law remain limited, meaning that countries can face little to no consequences for failing to uphold their obligations under these treaties.

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