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Research Report

Topic 2: The question of reducing violence against women



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Introduction

Over many decades, the global issue of violence against women has continued to be a major problem in most societies around the world. It is one of the “most persistent yet underrecognized violations of human rights in the world”¹. There are many types of violence that affect women, however the most common one is intimate partner violence. According to national studies, 70 per cent of women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence from an intimate partner in their lifetime². This continuous violation happens because of discrimination and power differentials. In some cases, perpetrators who commit violence against women are not disciplined by local authorities which can lead to continuous discrimination and gender inequality.

Globally as many as 38% of all murders of women are committed by intimate partners. Many countries have taken measures to prevent gender-based violence, however, there is still a lot do because the problem still persists. This global issue is strongly related to one of the Sustainable Development Goals which is to achieve gender equality and thus, justice.

Definition of Key Terms:

The United Nations defines **violence against women**: "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life³."

¹ <https://unfoundation.org/blog/post/a-global-issue-we-cant-ignore-violence-against-girls-and-women/>

² <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/facts-and-figures>

³ <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-women>

Intimate partner violence refers to behaviour by an intimate partner or ex-partner that causes physical, sexual, or psychological harm, including physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse and controlling behaviours.

Sexual violence is "any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, or other act directed against a person's sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting.

LDCs are least developed countries which are highly disadvantaged in the process of development.

IGO's are intergovernmental organizations composed primarily of sovereign states.

MEDCS stands for more economically developed country.

NGO's are non-governmental organizations which provide a major role in international development and aid.

OECD stands for the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.

Context

According to the World Health Organization, one in three women experience sexual or physical violence in their lifetime. Experts describe it as a global women's health problem. In addition, evidence shows that women who've been abused are more likely to suffer health problems such as depression, injuries, anxiety disorders or fatal outcomes like homicide and suicide.

Furthermore, economical, and social forces are also responsible for violence against women. For example, economically disadvantaged women are more vulnerable to sexual harassment and sexual slavery. In addition, the denial of economic independence for women is a major driver of violence against women as it prolongs their vulnerability and dependence. Studies reveal that women exposed to sexual violence may suffer inability to work, loss of wages,

lack of participation in regular activities and all this can affect the care of themselves and their children. This global pandemic not only affects the economy of families or communities, for instance, in some countries, it is estimated that violence against women costs up to 3.7% of their GDP, however, the issue also entails a significant cost for the future.

Another important aspect is the impact on children which is a major setback for the younger generation. Children who grow up in families with a hostile environment may suffer a range of behavioural and emotional disturbances. These factors can turn out to be damaging for their future development. For instance, children can experience or perpetuate violence later in life due to having a childhood associated with domestic violence.

Within recent years, there has been an elevated attention to the issue of violence against women. The spark was caused by different grassroot movements and it was spread by social media such as #TimesUp, #MeToo, #Niunamenos⁴. All these hashtags have served the purpose of raising awareness of the problem. In addition, this has helped people to raise their voice and share their unpleasant experience in order to recognize and prevent the issue which affects women around the world. In some countries such as Mexico, millions of women took to the streets to peacefully protest against gender-based violence. It is estimated that 10 women are killed each day in Mexico; it seems that the problem is getting worse and the government has been criticized for their passivity on the matter.

Additionally, the lack of communication between victims and law enforcement. In some instances, women fear to report their cases due to a lack of trust in the national institutions. For example, a national study in Sudan, showed that 33 per cent experienced sexual violence (including rape, attempted rape, or any other unwanted sexual acts) by a non-partner (can include police officers or other armed actors, strangers or known persons). In the majority of countries with available data, less than 40 per cent of the women who experience violence seek help of any sort⁶.

⁴ <https://unfoundation.org/blog/post/a-global-issue-we-cant-ignore-violence-against-girls-and-women/>

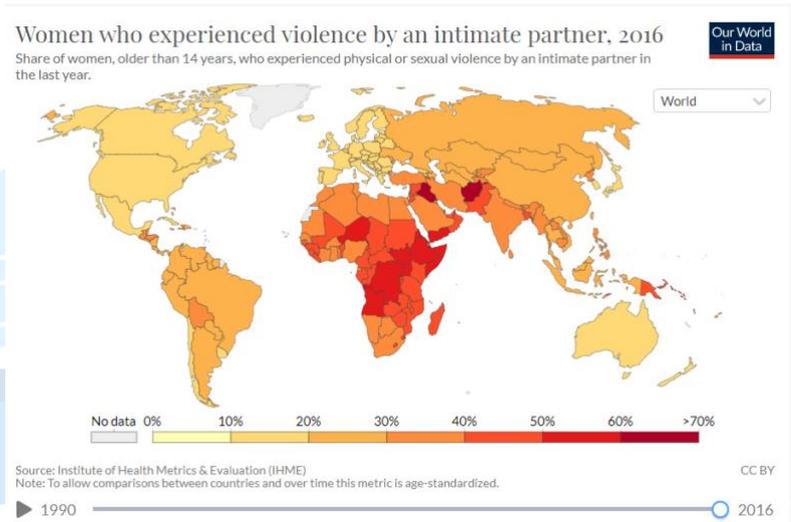
⁵ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-51811040>

⁶ <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/facts-and-figures>

The diversity of culture has always been a controversy due to the challenge of finding common ground in global issues such as violence against women. Social norms tend to dictate the behaviour of people from a particular group or culture. For instance, in emerging

countries, acceptance of violence against women can be considerably high – “34% of women in Indonesia and 61% of women in South Africa say that spousal violence is justified”⁷. In this case, social acceptance of domestic violence against women is an obstacle for the functioning of legal frameworks. In four

countries of the OECD, domestic violence is not a criminal offense which allows perpetrators to escape unpunished and not face any charges for crimes committed.



⁷ <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/008fcef3-en.pdf?expires=1599202921&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=0195AAA4451378E3BF3E798FD4F26F9A>

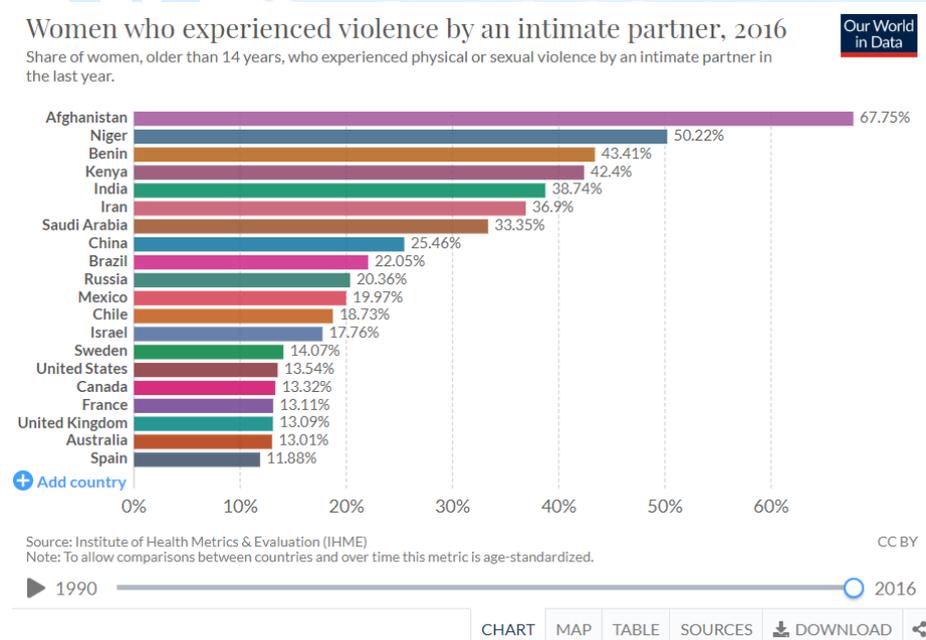
Major Actors

UN Women is the global champion for gender equality, working to develop and uphold standards and create an environment in which every woman and girl can exercise her human rights and live up to her full potentials.

Poland is to withdraw from a European Treaty aimed at preventing violence against women, due to the requirement of teaching about gender in schools⁹.

For example, in **Nigeria**, where the country's police chief stated that there were 717 rapes between January and May this year which amounts to one rape every five hours. It is, therefore, important to understand that it is vital to have cooperation between the law enforcement and non-governmental organizations in order to successfully tackle the issue¹⁰.

The **World Bank** has given \$300 million in development projects aimed at addressing gender-based violence. It is focused on recognizing the scale of the challenge and to improve the response when violence occurs.



<https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/women-violence-by-an-intimate-partner?year=latest>

⁸ <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/facts-and-figures>

⁹ https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-53538205?intlink_from_url=https://www.bbc.com/news/topics/c340r11jgrzt/violence-against-women&link_location=live-reporting-story

¹⁰ <https://www.bbc.com/news/topics/c340r11jgrzt/violence-against-women>

Possible solutions

The increase of the availability of data is one of the measures which improves the awareness of the issue and therefore, prevent further violence against women. The increasing of knowledge and awareness can have an impactful change on how we view the society we live in, or the beliefs and attitudes of men and women. There are cases where women are not aware of their rights and therefore, they cannot claim them. An accumulation of understanding and awareness is a major key to stop all forms of violence.

In a similar manner, the creation of laws on domestic violence is another possible solution to the issue, however, it does not mean that these laws will be implemented or comply with international standards. The complexity of the problem is that many cultures believe that the imposition of these laws is not adequate since it does not comply with different social norms that are based on culture rather than gender.

Another solution is for communities and local regions to create safe public spaces where any form of violence and sexual harassment are prevented so that it improves women's safety in local and urban areas. However, violence also occurs in a private domain which would need another type of solution, such as coordinated services and responses for women who are subjected to violence. These can include, access to police and justice, health care and support services.

Previous/Relevant UN Resolutions

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