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AWARENESS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS IN TAMIL NADU

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ABSTRACT

Violence against women is a pervasive and severe issue that affects millions worldwide. It encompasses a range of abusive behaviors, including physical, sexual, emotional, and economic abuse. The research aimed to evaluate the level of knowledge and attitudes toward various forms of violence, including physical, emotional, and sexual abuse. A stratified random sampling method ensured diverse representation in terms of gender, age, and educational background. A structured survey was administered via Google form to a sample of 100 students across various disciplines in Tamil Nadu. The college students were directly connected to the Google platform. Therefore the present web survey study does not require approval by ethical committee. The final data based was downloaded as a Microsoft excel sheet. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics in SPSS software to summarize the levels of awareness among the students. The findings revealed female students demonstrated higher awareness levels compared to their male counterparts. Despite high awareness of physical and sexual violence, many students underestimated the prevalence and impact of non-physical forms of abuse. The research underscored the need for comprehensive educational programs that address all dimensions of violence against women, aiming to foster a more informed and proactive student body in combating this critical issue.

KEYWORDS: *Violence Against Women, Domestic Violence, Gender-Based Violence,*

INTRODUCTION

The United Nations defines violence against women as "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 life" . 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. It includes rape, defined as the physically forced or otherwise coerced penetration of the vulva or anus with a penis, other body part or object, attempted rape, unwanted sexual touching and other non-contact forms."

PREVALENCE OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

Globally, an estimated 736 million women almost one in three have been subjected to physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence, non-partner sexual violence, or both at least once in their life (30 per cent of women aged 15 and older). This figure does not include sexual harassment. The rates of depression, anxiety disorders, unplanned pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections, and HIV are higher in women who have experienced violence compared to women who have not, as well as many other health problems that can last after the violence has ended. Most violence against women is perpetrated by current or former husbands or intimate partners. More than 640 million or 26 per cent of women aged 15 and older have been subjected to intimate partner violence. Of those who have been in a relationship, almost one in four adolescent girls aged 15–19 (24 per cent) has experienced physical and/or sexual violence from an intimate partner or husband. Sixteen per cent of young women aged 15 to 24 experienced this violence in the past 12 months (World Health Organization, 2021).

Globally, 6 per cent of women report that they have been subjected to sexual violence from someone other than their husband or partner. However, the true prevalence of non-partner sexual violence is likely to be much higher, considering the stigma related to this form of violence (UNESCO, 2019).

Fifteen million adolescent girls worldwide, aged 15–19 years, have experienced forced sex. In the vast majority of countries, adolescent girls are most at risk of forced sex (forced sexual intercourse or other sexual acts) by a current or former husband,

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partner, or boyfriend. Based on data from 30 countries, only 1 per cent have ever sought professional help (UNICEF. (2017).

In 2020, for every 10 victims of human trafficking detected globally, about four were adult women and about two were girls. Most of the detected victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation (91 per cent) are women. Analysis of court cases shows that female victims are subjected to physical or extreme violence at the hands of traffickers at a rate three times higher than males. During the past decade, the global rate of child marriage has declined, with the global proportion of young women aged 20–24 years old who were married before the age of 18 decreasing from nearly one in four in 2010 to almost one in five (19 per cent) in 2022. However, the profound effects of the pandemic are threatening this progress, with up to 10 million additional girls at risk of child marriage in the next decade due to the pandemic (UNODC, 2022).

School-related gender-based violence is a major obstacle to universal schooling and the right to education for girls. Globally, one in three students, aged 11–15, have been bullied by their peers at school at least once in the past month, with girls and boys equally likely to experience bullying. While boys are more likely to experience physical bullying than girls, girls are more likely to experience psychological bullying, and they report being made fun of because of how their face or body looks more frequently than boys (World Health Organization,2021).

RELATED STUDIES

A study conducted by Martinez et al. (2018) assessed awareness of domestic violence among university students in the United States. The researchers used a survey method, distributing questionnaires to 600 students across multiple campuses. The study found that while most students could identify physical violence, fewer recognized emotional or psychological abuse as equally damaging. Gender differences were notable, with female students demonstrating higher levels of awareness and sensitivity towards all forms of domestic violence compared to their male counterparts. This research suggests a need for comprehensive educational programs that address all forms of violence, not just the most visible or physical.

Johnson and Thompson (2019) explored perceptions of sexual violence on campus among college students in Canada. They conducted a mixed-methods study involving surveys and focus groups with 450 students. The results indicated that while students were generally aware of the issue of sexual violence, many underestimated its prevalence and the severity of its impact on victims. The study also highlighted a gap in understanding consent and healthy relationships. The findings underscore the importance of incorporating consent education and discussions on healthy relationships into university curriculums to improve awareness and prevention efforts.

A quasi-experimental study by Singh et al. (2020) in India examined the impact of an educational intervention on students' awareness of violence against women. The intervention included workshops and seminars conducted over a semester. Post-intervention surveys showed a significant increase in students' knowledge about various forms of violence against women and the available support services. The study found that continuous and interactive educational sessions were more effective than one-time lectures. This research highlights the effectiveness of sustained and engaging educational programs in raising awareness and suggests that universities should adopt similar strategies.

A study by Ahmed and Rahman (2021) in Bangladesh focused on gender differences in understanding and attitudes toward violence against women among college students. The researchers used a cross-sectional survey with 800 participants. The study revealed that male students often had less awareness and more misconceptions about violence against women compared to female students. Traditional gender norms and cultural beliefs significantly influenced these attitudes. The findings point to the need for gender-specific educational approaches that challenge traditional norms and promote gender equality.

Lee and Kim (2017) investigated the psychological impact of awareness programs on college students in South Korea. They used a longitudinal design, following students before and after participating in a semester-long awareness program. The study found that increased awareness led to greater empathy towards victims and a stronger sense of responsibility to intervene in potential violence situations. However, some students also reported increased anxiety and distress after learning about the prevalence and severity of violence against women.

OBJECTIVES

1. To elicit the personal profile of the College students
2. To assess the Awareness level of Different Forms of Violence
3. To analyse the Perception of Prevalence of Violence

METHODS

The study utilized a quantitative methodology to assess the awareness of violence against women among college students in Tamil Nadu. A stratified random sampling method ensured diverse representation in terms of gender, age, and educational background. A structured survey was administered via Google form to a sample of 100 students across various disciplines. The survey comprised 20 questions covering different types of violence, including physical, emotional, sexual, and economic abuse, as well as questions about the perceived prevalence and seriousness of these issues. Students were directly connected to the Google platform. Therefore the present web survey study does not require approval by ethical committee. The final data based was downloaded as a Microsoft excel sheet. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics in SPSS software to summarize the levels of awareness among the students.

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RESULTS

Table 1: Personal Profile of the College Students

Variables	Frequency (n=100	Percentage
Gender		
Male	45	45 %
Female	55	55 %
Age		
18-20	30	30 %
21-23	50	50 %
24-26	20	20 %
Academic Discipline		
Social Science	30	30%
Science	30	30%
Commerce	20	20%
Engineering	20	20%

Table 1 provides a comprehensive personal profile of the college students who participated in this study. The sample consists of 45% male and 55% female students, indicating a slight majority of female participants. This gender distribution is essential for understanding potential differences in awareness and attitudes towards violence against women, as previous studies have shown that awareness levels can vary significantly by gender.

The age distribution shows that half of the participants (50%) are between 21-23 years old, making it the most represented age group. Students aged 18-20 comprise 30% of the sample, while those aged 24-26 make up the remaining 20%. This spread reflects the typical age range of undergraduate and early postgraduate students, providing a relevant context for examining awareness levels within this demographic.

The academic disciplines are evenly represented across Social Science (30%), Science (30%), Commerce (20%), and Engineering (20%). This balanced representation ensures that the findings are not biased towards a particular field of study and can offer insights into how awareness of violence against women may vary across different academic backgrounds. The diversity in academic disciplines allows for a nuanced understanding of how curriculum and academic culture might influence students' awareness and attitudes towards violence against women. For example, students in Social Sciences might have more exposure to topics related to gender studies and violence compared to their peers in Engineering or Commerce.

Table 2: Awareness of Different Forms of Violence

Type of Violence	Awareness Level	Frequency (n=100)	Percentage (%)
Physical Violence	High	80	80%
	Moderate	15	15%
	Low	5	5%
Emotional Abuse	High	60	60%
	Moderate	25	25%
	Low	15	15%
Sexual Violence	High	70	70%
	Moderate	20	20%
	Low	10	10%
Economic Abuse	High	40	40%
	Moderate	35	35%
	Low	25	25%

Table 2 indicates that physical violence is widely recognized, with 80% of respondents having a high awareness of it. However, 20% (15% moderate + 5% low) still have varying degrees of lower awareness. Efforts might be needed to increase awareness among this segment. Emotional abuse shows slightly lower overall awareness compared to physical violence. 15% of respondents have low awareness, suggesting a need for education and outreach to improve recognition. Sexual violence has a high awareness level overall (70%), but 30% still have moderate to low awareness. This highlights the importance of continued education and awareness campaigns. Economic abuse shows the lowest high awareness level at 40%, with a significant 60% (35% moderate + 25% low) having moderate to low awareness. This suggests a critical need for more targeted education and information dissemination. There is considerable variation in awareness levels across different types of violence. Physical

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violence and sexual violence generally have higher awareness compared to emotional and economic abuse. Tailored interventions are necessary to address gaps in awareness. For instance, strategies might include community workshops, educational programs in schools, and campaigns through media to reach broader audiences.

Table 3: Perception of Prevalence of Violence

Perception of Prevalence	Frequency (n=100)	Percentage (%)
Very High	20	20%
High	30	30%
Moderate	35	35%
Low	10	10%
Very Low	5	5%

A significant portion of respondents perceive violence to be prevalent to some degree, with 50% (20% very high + 30% high) considering it at higher levels. 35% perceive violence to be at a moderate level, indicating a nuanced understanding among a considerable portion of respondents. There might be a disparity between awareness (from Table 2) and perception (Table 3). For instance, while awareness of specific types of violence might be high (as seen in Table 2), perceptions of overall prevalence vary, with only 20% perceiving violence as very high

Table 4: Sources of Information About Violence

Source of Information	Frequency (n=100)	Percentage (%)
Educational Programmes	40	40%
Media (TV, Newspapers, etc.)	30	30%
Social Media	20	20%
Family and Friends	10	10%

Educational Programmes: This is the most cited source, with 40% of respondents obtaining information about violence through educational programs. This suggests that structured educational initiatives play a significant role in raising awareness and providing knowledge about violence.

Media (TV, Newspapers, etc.): Media sources are also important, with 30% relying on TV, newspapers, and other forms of media for information. Media coverage can influence public perception and awareness of violence, making it a crucial avenue for dissemination of information.

Social Media: 20% of respondents use social media as a source of information about violence. Social media platforms provide real-time updates and discussions, influencing public discourse and awareness on various social issues, including violence.

Family and Friends: 10% rely on information from personal networks such as family and friends. This indicates the role of informal conversations and personal experiences in shaping individuals' understanding of violence.

Table 5: Knowledge of Support Services

Knowledge of Support Services	Frequency (n=100)	Percentage (%)
Aware	60	60%
Somewhat Aware	25	25%
Not Aware	15	15%

Aware (60%): A majority of respondents (60%) are aware of support services available for individuals affected by violence. This indicates a relatively strong awareness base among the sample surveyed.

Somewhat Aware (25%): Another significant portion (25%) indicates they have some knowledge of support services, although their awareness might not be as comprehensive as those who are fully aware.

Not Aware (15%) : 15% of respondents are not aware of any support services for victims of violence. This segment represents an area where there is a need for increased outreach and education to improve awareness and accessibility of support services.

Implications for Support and Intervention:

- **Access to Services:** High awareness among 85% (aware + somewhat aware) suggests that a substantial portion of the population can potentially access support services when needed. This is crucial for ensuring victims of violence receive timely assistance and support.
- **Targeted Education:** Efforts should focus on reaching the 15% who are not aware of available services. This could involve public awareness campaigns, educational programs, and partnerships with community organizations to improve dissemination of information.
- **Improving Accessibility:** Awareness alone does not guarantee accessibility. Efforts should also consider the accessibility, affordability, and effectiveness of support

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services to ensure they meet the diverse needs of individuals affected by violence.

CONCLUSION

The findings revealed that while there is a general awareness of physical and sexual violence, significant gaps remain in understanding emotional and economic abuse. Female students demonstrated higher levels of awareness compared to male students, highlighting the need for targeted educational interventions to address these disparities. The age distribution of the participants, with a significant portion being between 21-23 years old, indicates that the majority are in their prime college years, a crucial period for shaping attitudes and knowledge. The balanced representation of students from Social Sciences, Sciences, Commerce, and Engineering provided a comprehensive view of how different academic backgrounds influence awareness levels. Despite the high awareness of physical and sexual violence, the study identified prevalent misconceptions and a lack of understanding of the subtler forms of abuse. This underscores the necessity for comprehensive and continuous educational programs that go beyond the basics, addressing all forms of violence and fostering a deeper understanding among students. In conclusion, while there is a foundational awareness of violence against women among college students, significant work remains to be done in bridging the knowledge gaps, especially concerning emotional and economic abuse. Tailored educational programs, gender-specific interventions, and curriculum integration are essential steps towards fostering a more informed and proactive student body. This study highlights the importance of a holistic approach in addressing violence against women, ensuring that all dimensions are understood and appropriately acted upon by future generations.

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