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**Gender Bias, Male Vulnerability and
The Need For Gender-neutral Laws In India: A Comprehensive Study****Dr. Palak Saxena**

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ABSTRACT

India's legal structure has traditionally prioritized women's protection, reflecting decades of patriarchal traditions and systemic disadvantages. Laws such as Section 498A of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act were enacted to protect women from domestic violence and social injustice. While these measures remain vital, recent research suggests that males are becoming more vulnerable, including false charges, domestic violence, mental suffering, and high suicide rates among married men.

This study uses uxoricide case studies, National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data, social and cultural views, and scholarly literature including insights from Normal Lewis to investigate gender disparities in legal and societal reactions. The document proposes for gender-neutral legislation, institutional changes, judicial enlightenment, media accountability, and mental health treatments to promote equal justice for all genders.

INTRODUCTION

Justice is ideally blind, unbiased, and based on equitable principles. However, social and legal institutions frequently reflect historical, cultural, and patriarchal beliefs. Laws protecting women from domestic abuse, dowry harassment, and cruelty have been appropriately stressed in India due to women's structural oppression and vulnerability (Lewis, 2018). These rules were intended to balance centuries of masculine supremacy and social

Keywords

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inequality.

However, contemporary Indian culture shows a more nuanced reality. Men are more exposed to domestic abuse, which can include false accusations, emotional harassment, financial pressure, and even fatal assault. According to NCRB data, 81,063 married males committed suicide in 2021, whereas 28,680 married women did, with many cases linked to familial difficulties, marital disagreements, and suspected abuse of Section 498A (Deccan Herald, 2023).

As a result, there is an increased desire for gender-neutral laws. Men's problems are increasingly being highlighted on social media and advocacy channels, revealing the emotional, financial, and legal costs of an uneven structure. While safeguarding women is still critical, modern legal systems must develop to understand male vulnerabilities, provide equal remedies, and prevent tragedies like uxoricide and suicide. This research paper uses a multifaceted approach to critically investigate male victimization in India, including an investigation of uxoricide instances, an examination of legislative provisions, an assessment of sociological and cultural effects, and a review of male mental health literature. It aims to make concrete proposals for gender-neutral legislation, institutional reforms, and public awareness campaigns.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Domestic Vulnerability in Men

Chauhan and Deol (2023) discuss the "silent suffering" that males endure in situations of domestic abuse, emphasizing underreporting, social shame, and insufficient legal acknowledgment. According to the International Journal of Environmental Science (2025), males are socially conditioned to bear adversity without complaining, which perpetuates emotional isolation and a reluctance to seek out legal or psychological

support. According to studies by Ghosh and Kumar (2023), cultural prejudices often portray men as offenders rather than victims, underscoring the undervaluation of male narratives in domestic violence research. Financial difficulty, mental health problems, and broad emotional anguish are all exacerbated by this narrative mismatch.

Abuse of Laws Specific to Gender

Although the Domestic Violence Act and Section 498A IPC were historically justifiable, studies indicate that they are occasionally misused. Men and their families may suffer serious psychological and financial repercussions as a result of false charges, extortion, and harassment (International Journal of Environmental Science, 2025). Critics contend that the current judicial system occasionally puts ideological narratives ahead of the fundamentals of justice, thereby hurting innocent individuals in the process.

Views of Masculinity in Society - In Indian culture, being a man has always been linked to resilience, financial support, and emotional control (International Journal of Environmental Science, 2025). Men are discouraged by these cultural standards from reporting abuse, obtaining treatment, or displaying vulnerability. Hegemonic masculinity isolates males, causing them to repress their emotions and be reluctant to admit their victim status, according to Claire Duncanson (2023). There are serious repercussions: male victims of domestic abuse frequently feel alone, ashamed, and hopeless, which raises their risk of mental health problems and suicide. The idea that males cannot be mistreated is reinforced by social conventions, which exacerbates psychological stress.

Case Studies: Uxoricide and Male Vulnerability

To illustrate the lived reality of male victimization, four uxoricide cases from 2025 are examined. These cases highlight disparities in societal sympathy, media portrayal, and legal outcomes:

Case	Location	Motive	Motive	Motive
Meghalaya Honeymoon Murder	Meghalaya	Love triangle	Low; initial media narrative favored wife	All accused in custody; SIT investigation ongoing
Maharashtra Axe Murder	Maharashtra	Domestic discord	Minimal; media focused on marital stress	Accused arrested under IPC 302
Karnataka Affair Killing	Karnataka	Jealousy	Low; media framed wife as provoked	Both accused arrested; trial ongoing
Delhi Poisoning Case	Delhi	Marital dissatisfaction	Negligible; social media debated husband's "failings"	Accused in custody

ANALYSIS:

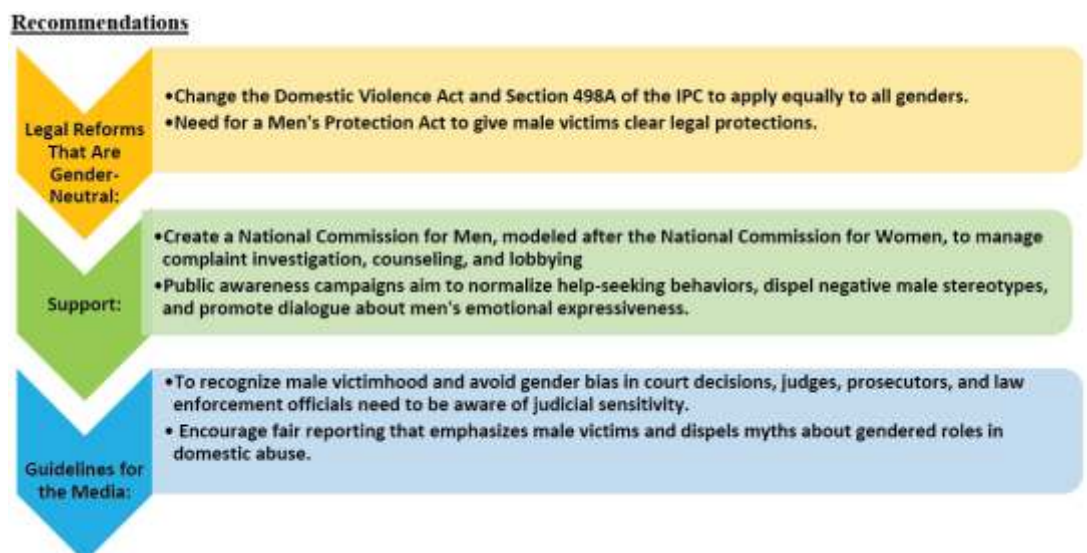
Provocation and emotional suffering are common sympathetic narratives for female criminals. The media, society, and occasionally the court system mostly overlooks the pain of male victims because legal protections are not gender neutral, male victims have little options for redress.

1. Socio-cultural Aspects of the Discussion- Men have traditionally been characterized by patriarchal standards as providers, guardians, and emotionally strong (Lewis, 2018). Although these positions had a social purpose in earlier ages, they currently make men less visible in domestic violence instances. Men are socialized to keep emotional and financial obligations to themselves, which discourages them from talking about marriage or family problems.

2. Gender Bias and Legal Inequalities- Although they are necessary to rectify past injustices, gender-specific regulations may unintentionally lead to new legal disparities. While there is no comparable provision protecting males from abuse by wives or in-laws, Section 498A of the IPC presumes male guilt in specific marital conflicts. Under these laws, making false accusations can lead to financial loss, psychological suffering, and harm to one's reputation

3. Impact on the Mind Emotional Repression, Cultural Expectations, and a lack of legal assistance all combine to cause psychological pain in males- Research indicates that male victims of domestic abuse face the following: elevated risk of suicidal thoughts and actions; high levels of anxiety and despair; and reluctance to seek treatment because of social stigma (International Journal of Environmental Science, 2025). Over 81,000 married males committed suicide in 2022, according to NCRB statistics, which highlights this epidemic and is a result of systematic legal failings, cultural negligence, and unresolved home tensions.

4. Media Representation - The media frequently marginalizes male victims while humanizing female criminals. The narrative bias in reporting is exemplified by cases in Meghalaya, Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Delhi, where social media conversations reduce male pain while portraying women as "betrayed" or "provoked." In order to change public attitudes and raise awareness of male victimization, balanced reporting is essential.



CONCLUSION

India's legal, social, and economic changes have significantly advanced women's emancipation. Today, women have equal access to social life, work, education, and government. However, the legal system has not yet completely adjusted to these changes in society. Male vulnerabilities are still not well understood, especially when it comes to suicide, uxoricide, domestic violence, and false accusations.

Equitable justice requires treating male mental health, fostering media responsibility, instituting institutional monitoring, and including gender-neutral legal safeguards. Women's rights are not diminished by acknowledging male victimhood; rather, it fortifies society's moral and legal underpinnings and guarantees fair, inclusive, and evidence-based justice. Moving Towards Fair and Inclusive Justice in Modern-Day India Significant changes in the social, legal, and cultural status of women have occurred in India during the last few decades. In the past, Indian culture was characterized by deeply ingrained patriarchal structures that restricted women's access to personal autonomy, economic freedom, and education. Systemic violence, spousal abuse, and dowry harassment were among the practices that made women vulnerable and, frequently, silenced them. The Indian legal system recognized these past injustices and enacted laws to protect women from domestic violence, including the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (2005), the Dowry Prohibition Act, and Section 498A of the Indian Penal Code.

1. These laws were intended to be tools of empowerment rather than just punishment, giving women the protection, legal redress, and social acceptance that they had long been denied. In a society that had traditionally failed to protect its female inhabitants, the emphasis on women's safety in legislation was both morally and practically necessary. Numerous women

would still have faced mistreatment, coercion, and social exclusion in the absence of these regulations, with little options for legal recourse.

2. The India of 2025, however, is very different from the India at the time these laws were created. These days, women hold influential positions in the political, social, intellectual, and professional domains. They are civil officers, business owners, decision-makers, and involved in many facets of both public and private life. These days, men and women work together as equal partners, sharing duties at work and at home. Women's economic and social freedom has increased rapidly, and society views them less as passive objects of protection and more as independent actors.

3. Even while historically justified, the continued existence of gender-specific legal frameworks in such a setting begs the question of their continued exclusivity. The complicated realities of modern marriage, family, and society relationships are no longer reflected in the presumption that males are default abusers and women are default victims. Although cultural beliefs and legal safeguards sometimes make men invisible, men are nevertheless vulnerable to domestic abuse, false accusations, emotional manipulation, and, in extreme situations, deadly assault (Deccan Herald, 2023).

4. Recent uxoricide cases serve as a harsh reminder of the disconnect between legal safeguards and actual reality. When Raja Raghuvanshi was brutally murdered by his newlywed wife and her co-conspirators in the Meghalaya honeymoon murder (BBC News, 2025), the public first sympathized with the female killer since she was portrayed as a kidnapped or persecuted bride. Media narratives gently humanized her acts even after strong proof surfaced, and Raja's agony and the magnitude of his loss were relatively hidden.

5. A similar pattern can be seen in the Nagpur axe

murder (NDTV, 2025), the Karnataka affair killing (India Today, 2025), and the Delhi poisoning case (Hindustan Times, 2025), where male victims of deadly domestic abuse are given little sympathy from the public while female offenders are framed in terms of emotional provocation, annoyance, or betrayal. The systematic invisibility of male suffering is further shown by other incidents, such as the Atul Subhash Bengaluru case (Deccan Herald, 2023) and the Uttar Pradesh drum murder (NDTV, 2025).

6. Beyond personal disasters, this inequality has far-reaching effects. In 2021, 81,063 married males and 28,680 married women committed suicide, according to data from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) (Deccan Herald, 2023). The psychological effects of social neglect, financial strains, false accusations under Section 498A, and family strife were responsible for a sizable percentage of these deaths. The combined impact of social and legal institutions that fail to sufficiently acknowledge male suffering and cultural norms that males must suffer in silence is reflected in these numbers, which are more than just numerical facts; they are a social critique of systemic racism. Despite being strong in combating female victimization, the existing legal system does not provide males similar safeguards, resulting in a systemic prejudice that is out of step with modern society.

7. The value of protective legislation is not diminished by India's growth in women's empowerment; rather, it emphasizes how important it is to provide safeguards to both genders equally. A society where both sexes share rights and obligations has been created as a result of women's empowerment via social recognition, professional opportunity, legal protections, and education. By 2025, women and men are partners in all areas, including social, professional, and home.

Therefore, it is essential that the legal system change in step with these social changes so that, when harmed, males may also obtain protection, compensation, and social acceptance. Failing to do so sustains injustice, marginalizes the pain of men, and creates an environment where systemic injustices can lead to deadly outcomes, such as homicide and suicide.

8. This reform has a clear philosophical and constitutional foundation. Equal protection under the law, protection against discrimination, and equality before the law are all guaranteed under Article 14 and Article 15 of the Indian Constitution, respectively. A assumption of gendered fragility that ignores scientific facts and upholds legal inequalities cannot be sustained by a secular, egalitarian state. By definition, justice must be unbiased and grounded in facts rather than gender-role stereotypes. India would respect constitutional ideals and embody the egalitarian spirit that has been essential to its social development by including male victimization into legal acknowledgment.

9. A multifaceted approach is required to attain such fairness. Any victim, regardless of gender, should be able to seek legal protection from abuse, harassment, or coercion through legislative revisions that make Section 498A IPC and the Domestic Violence Act gender-neutral. In addition to the current National Commission for Women, a National Commission for Men would be established to offer supervision, guidance, and policy lobbying. In order to combat cultural prejudices and guarantee fair adjudication, judicial sensitization programs must teach judges, prosecutors, and law enforcement to identify male victimization. Guidelines for the media must encourage fair portrayal, humanizing victims of both sexes while bucking the trend of portraying female offenders as naturally empathetic. Last but not least, male victims should get mental health services including counseling facilities, helplines, and public awareness campaigns that normalize

asking for help and lessen the psychological effects of social indifference and invisibility.

10. By include these steps, it is ensured that legal safeguards change in tandem with society changes. Historical safeguards for women are still crucial because they acknowledge enduring dangers and systemic injustices. In modern India, however, a more comprehensive conception of justice is required, one in which women and men are equally protected and have equal rights in society. By acknowledging men's vulnerabilities, the judicial system's moral and legal integrity is strengthened rather than women's rights or safeguards being diminished. Adopting gender-neutral protections will allow India to create a system where protection, compassion, and restitution are given according to human need, evidence, and circumstances rather than gendered assumptions.

In the end, pursuing equal justice is required by law and morality. Male suicide rates, uxoricide incidents, and systematic indifference in the media and society underscore the negative effects of ignoring male victimization. In addition, the historical background of women's empowerment highlights the ongoing need for legal safeguards that address previous injustices. In a contemporary, egalitarian society, the problem is to balance these two imperatives: protecting women from past and new kinds of violence while also recognizing and defending males who are as vulnerable.

In summary, India is at a critical crossroads. The social fabric of the country has changed as a result of decades of social, legal, and cultural transformation that empowered women. Though the law has not yet completely embraced this fact, men and women today work, take on responsibilities, and have equal opportunities. Ensuring gender-neutral rights satisfies constitutional objectives while also acknowledging the complexities of modern society.

Recognizing vulnerability as a human condition, overcoming gendered presumptions, and guaranteeing that all citizens men and women alike can live, work, and prosper with dignity, safety, and equal legal protection are all necessary for true secularism and justice. India can only achieve its goal of a just, equitable, and progressive society one in which the lessons learned from the past guide current actions and all people are equally protected from harm and given the opportunity to thrive by implementing such changes.

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